Rebellion and Civil Disobedience in Islam
The Need for a Paradigm Shift

“Say: If it be that your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your mates, or your kindred; the wealth that you have gained; the commerce in which you fear a decline; or the dwellings in which you delight, are dearer to you than Allah, or His Apostle, or the striving in His cause; then wait until Allah brings about decision; and Allah guides not the iniquitous.” (9:24)

This booklet tries to answer such questions as: what has tyranny done to the Ummah? Why is rebellion so much discouraged by the majority of Muslim jurists? Were the old scholars, whose sincerity and bravery were beyond doubt, political quietists? What is the nature of the balance-of-evils analysis undertaken by jurists to reach their decision against rebellion? What are the meanings of the vague terms fitnah and jama‘ah widely used by people without full understanding of their connotations and implications? How can we understand the Prophetic traditions about obedience? What are the dynamics of the juristic culture? What is the first revolution in Islam? Why most revolutions of Islamic history failed? What about civil disobedience and the required plans to be prepared beforehand? How should these plans relate to Islam and the experiences of other civilizations? What is the relationship between culture and material success? The booklet ends by examining the required paradigm shift; the process of change that we must undertake before Allah (swt) changes our state.

Before moving to the introduction, I must say, “My opinion is correct, but I am very cognizant of the fact that it may be wrong. The opinions of others are wrong, but I am very cognizant of the fact that they may be correct.”¹ May Allah (swt) guide us on his true path and protect us from arrogance and ignorance.

Introduction:

To many Muslim jurists, revolution is considered the most heinous of crimes. The most remarkable manifestation of this attitude is the legal maxim, ‘sixty years of tyranny are better than one night of civil strife’². This type of thinking cannot be solely ascribed to the assertion that the jurists are political quietists because, in fact, many jurists, who espoused this idea, adopted a firm stance against ruling powers. This position was mainly an application of the principle of choosing ‘the lesser of the two evils’. In other words, if

¹ This saying is attributed to a number of scholars including al-Shafi‘i.
² See, for example, ‘Majmo‘ al-Fatawi’ and ‘al-Siyasah al-Shar‘iyah’ by Ibn Taimayah.
people do not rebel against evil, injustice, corruption, and tyranny prevail. On the other hand, if people rebel, bloodshed and chaos become rampant. Withstanding injustice is preferred to resisting it because such resistance does lead to armed confrontations between Muslims and thus to a serious state of instability and lawlessness. This type of thinking is analogous to the ideas of Thomas Hobbes who considered violence to be the state of nature. In the beginning, individuals fought with each other for survival. Such life was harsh, uncertain, and anti-progressive. People were compelled to come together and surrender some of their freedom to a government whose main task is to sustain order and stability. If this government turns out to be despotic and unjust, patience will be the most preferred method of dealing with this injustice lest the community falls in the abyss of the violent state of nature. However, there are several legitimate questions to ask: is tyranny really better than chaos and bloodshed associated with rebellions? What actually constitutes the greater evil? Do the Islamic texts, represented by the Quran and the Sunnah, authentically encourage such type of passive behavior or do they advocate fighting injustice with all the means possible? To answer these questions, I will start by discussing the concepts of ‘authority’ and ‘individual responsibility’ in Islam. Knowledge of these two concepts is central to the understanding of our relationship with Allah (swt) and our mission in life.

The Juristic Culture:

All men and women are vicegerents of Allah (swt) on earth. Allah (swt) created us to worship him. This worshipping is not only confined to ritual performances but encompasses all aspects of life. Regarding religious knowledge, Muslims are divided into two groups: special agents and common agents. Special agents are the jurists who are qualified to interpret the Divine message. Although Islam does not have clergy, a person must have a number of qualifications to be capable of doing Ijtihad. Ijtihad is the total expenditure of effort by a jurist to infer, with a degree of probability, the rules of Shari‘ah from their detailed evidence in the authentic sources. Ijtihad is the most important source of Islamic law next to the Quran and the Sunnah. The main difference between Ijtihad and the revealed sources lies in the fact that Ijtihad is a continuous process of development, whereas the divine revelation and the prophetic legislation discontinued after the demise of the Prophet (saw). In this sense, Ijtihad will continue to play its role as the instrument of interpreting the Divine message and relating it to the ever-changing circumstances of the Muslim Ummah in its aspirations to attain salvation, truth, and justice.

Many ‘ulama proposed different classifications of the required qualities and conditions which permit an ‘alim to be considered a mujtahid. Notwithstanding all these existing variations, the works of the scholars in this field can be synthesized as follows. In addition to uprightness, piety, and competency, the mujtahid must attain:

1) Knowledge of the Quran, the first and most important source of legislation.
2) Knowledge of the Sunnah of the beloved Prophet (saw).

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3 Definition from Muhammad Kamali’s ‘Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence.’
3) Knowledge of cases of indisputable consensus.
4) Knowledge of Arabic language to the extent that enables him\(^4\) to correctly understand the Quran and the *Sunnah*.
5) Knowledge of the science of *Usul al-Fiqh* and the different methodologies for understanding and inferring rules from the Quran and the *Sunnah*.
6) Knowledge of his historical, social, and political context. That is, the situation of the people and the state of their affairs, their traditions, customs, and the like.
7) Knowledge of the ideals and higher objectives of the Islamic *Shari‘ah*.

Since not all people have the time or capacity to learn thoroughly how to do *Ijtihad*, the majority of people (the common agents) choose to recognize the ‘authoritativeness’ of one or a group of jurists (the special agents) whom they trust and thus follow. It must be taken into consideration that following a jurist or a school of thought does not absolve a Muslim of individual accountability and responsibility before Allah (swt) in the Hereafter. Seeking knowledge is an obligatory duty on every Muslim whether male or female (on the authority of an authentic *Hadith*). A Muslim should choose the juristic opinion that he trusts as closer to the truth. A Muslim surrenders his will to a jurist only after the latter displays, in addition to knowledge and piety, his diligence, honesty, comprehensiveness, reasonableness, and self-restraint while dealing with the sacred texts. Following a jurist because of nationality, charisma, less demanding opinions, and/or the compatibility of his determinations with one’s own whims, severely undermines one’s relationship with Allah (swt), which is the essence of his physical and metaphysical existence. Understanding this principle of individual responsibility is an important element of the required paradigm shift discussed below.

It is also important to understand that the juristic culture, *i.e.*, the body of jurists and their discourses, has an inertia that can be defined as a tendency of keeping the status quo and resisting abrupt and substantial changes. Of course, this does not mean that the juristic culture is rigid. Once a paradigm is established, it is incrementally modified and adapted in response to new socio-historical circumstances. Nevertheless, there is always a certain time lag between the occurrence of an event that stimulates change and the change itself. Revolutionary changes are rare but can be induced by the severe social and political crises that face the *Ummah*.

Approximately all jurists of our days prefer withstanding tyranny to revolutions. Some jurists are actually affiliated with the corrupt regimes and dedicate their lives to legitimize and serve the private interests of such regimes instead of serving Islam. It will be completely wrong to infer that all the jurists who oppose revolution are of this treacherous type. In fact, many jurists vehemently oppose the current political structures but they do believe that trying to change it by force will yield greater evil. This idea is circulating in the Islamic legal culture for centuries and it is quite strange that only very few (or may be no one at all) start to re-evaluate this question: which is the lesser evil, the chaos and violence associated with revolutions or the centuries of tyranny that marred the

\[^4\] Or ‘her.’ Men and women are absolutely equal in their eligibility for carrying out *Ijtihad* and discharging their religious obligations. In this booklet, and unless the context dictates otherwise, ‘he’ means ‘he or she.’
Islamic history and pushed Muslims, who are supposed to carry the light of Islam to the world, to the very back of the train of civilization. When the jurists say that sixty years of tyranny are better than one night of civil strife, they miss the point that the sixty years became centuries! The people of the Islamic civilization are being defeated by the imperialistic West for about three centuries. In the old colonial system, Muslims (and other peoples of Asia and Africa) were enslaved, all their attempts at modernization were thwarted, and all their revolutionary movements were crushed. In the post-colonial era, the West was keen to install puppets that suppress any true penchant for true independence and keep the flow of the wealth to the West. Now, Muslims are the most miserable people on the planet. Very pitiful, isn’t it? The people, who should dedicate all their lives to free mankind from worshipping idols and from the servitude of caprice and power, and who should establish absolute justice are now being targeted mercilessly by all other civilizations. A very reasonable question to ask is: what went wrong? What disaster has befallen Muslims rendering them so powerless and helpless? The answer is clear: Tyranny. Some may say that the reason is that people have forsaken Islam. Some may say that the reason is poor management. Some may say that the West pursued knowledge and power while we were still fighting over futile issues. I agree to all these. Nevertheless, they are all symptoms. The disease is tyranny and the symptoms are the damage of both the religious and the secular aspects of life.

The Disasters of Tyranny:

In the Quran, corruption is associated with tyranny. Here is what tyranny does to people:

1) On the mental level, tyranny is the main cause of ‘mental ossification’. Oppression and injustice annihilates any capability of creative thinking. The oppressors only condone thoughts that help to perpetuate the corrupt regime and suppress the masses. When injustice prevailed over the Muslim world for several centuries, Muslims ceased to contribute to scientific theories, discoveries, and inventions and became only receptors of technologies imported from the West.

2) On the management level, tyranny destroys the proper conduct of the affairs of people. A basic tool of destruction is to confer official positions to those who are blindly loyal to the political authorities whether they are competent or not. In fact, incompetence may be a basic requirement, for the tyrant desires to appear as the only person of intelligence and erudition. This point is well illustrated by the Prophetic Hadith, “If honesty is lost, then be prepared for the Judgment Day.” The Companions asked the

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5 Two points should be noted. (a) Muslims are responsible for the quagmire they are living in. As will be elaborated later, Muslims should focus on themselves instead of blaming the other. (b) I am not attempting to demonize the whole West. No reasonable and fair person can ignore the positive contributions of the West. No one also can deny the existence of a considerable number of Westerners who fight injustice and imperialism, and combat racism.

6 “Who committed tyranny in the cities, so they made great corruption therein,” (89:11-12).
Prophet about how honesty can be lost. He answered, “If incompetent persons are granted the power to manage people’s affairs, then honesty is lost.”

3) On the economical level, tyranny always undertakes useless economical projects that waste the people’s money and deprive them from what they really need in their lives. Money is spent to gratify the capricious whimsies of the ruler and his nomenklatura. The mega-projects of the despotic regime are concerned with either diverting the masses or oppressing them. Security apparatuses are granted enormous clandestine budgets to safeguard the system and smash mercilessly all forms of dissention. Spending huge amounts of money on prisons is also a notorious feature of oppressive regimes. Prisons, rather than being the place of criminals, become the abode of the thinkers, intellectuals, and the sincere citizens whose only sin is their aspiration to justice and freedom. Also, a large proportion of the wealth of the nation, which is supposed to be utilized for their welfare, is given to the external forces that support the tyrant and delight in seeing him perpetuating the state of backwardness and misery of his people.

4) On the moral level, tyranny demotes all virtues and promotes all vices. Hypocrisy, mendacity, treason, deceitfulness, obsessive fear, and self-indulgence become rampant in the society.

5) On the religious level, tyranny undermines the foundations of religion. It either fights religion vehemently or at least encourages a sort of passive religiosity. Islam is emptied from its core tenets and code of ethics and is ultimately reduced to a number of rituals that are performed without any impact on the one’s worldview. Salvationist messianic discourses become prevalent among the overwhelming majority of people. People become obsessed by the ‘end of days’ scenarios and wait for their fates in a completely helpless and powerless manner. People never think about changing the status quo and eventually espouse, even unconsciously, the doctrine of unqualified predestination in which man has no choice, no free will. Tyrants are the happiest persons to see the society adopting such a doctrine, for their heinous acts will be perceived as a part of Allah’s scheme. The plight of religion was aggravated, in the modern era, when the religious institutions lost their endowments and hence their autonomy, which they had enjoyed throughout most of the Islamic history even in the presence of tyranny. Religious scholars lost their dependence and became on the payroll of the corrupt nation-state.

6) On the military level, the main objective of the army is to protect the regime. The concept of Jihad, which is of paramount importance in Islam, is obliterated. The corrupt regime never thinks about fighting from a purely Islamic perspective. Instead of fighting the true enemies of the nation, the corrupt regime allies itself with them and uses the army to crush any internal propensity towards genuine reform and modernization. When the army is used against an outside nation, it is done to pillage their resources or to bestow fake glory on the personage of the great leader.
The Quranic and Prophetic Exhortations to Establish Justice and Fight Evil and Injustice:

The Quran is replete with verses calling upon Muslims to enjoin the good and forbid the evil and to establish justice without any distinction on basis of gender, race, or religion. In (3:110) enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is mentioned as a crucial criterion for the pre-eminence of the Muslim *Ummah*. In (9:71) Allah (swt) says, “The Believers, men and women, are protectors, one of another: they enjoin what is just, and forbid what is evil: they observe regular prayers, practice regular charity, and obey Allah and His Messenger. On them will Allah pour His mercy: for Allah is exalted in power, Wise.” There are two striking observations in this verse: the first is that women are explicitly commanded to discharge the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil like their male counterparts. The second is that the obligation itself is mentioned before the obligation to pray. Regarding justice, in (5:8) Muslims are warned against departing from justice because of hatred of others. In (4:135) Muslims are commanded to stand out firmly for justice, even against themselves, their parents, or their kin. Justice is an absolute value in Islam. Period.

The verses (4:105-106) clearly underscore the position of justice in Islam. Allah (swt) says: “We have sent down to you the Book in truth, that you must judge between people as guided by Allah: so be not used as an advocate by those who betray their trust. But seek the forgiveness of Allah for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.” The occasion of revelation of these verses was that a Jew was accused unjustly for stealing some property from a Muslim. The real thief was a Muslim from the Helpers (*al-Ansar*) and he faked evidence to incriminate the innocent Jew. The verses were revealed promptly to defend justice by exculpating the non-Muslim and castigating the Muslim. The Prophet (saw) was instructed to realize justice between all people and not only between Muslims. *Al-Ansar* were the ones who supported the Prophet (saw) and dedicated all their resources to help him establish the city-state of *al-Madinah*. The Jews were the ones who rarely observed their treaties with the Prophet (saw) and even conspired to assassinate him. Yet justice is categorically uncompromisable.

The Quran mentions another insightful historical incident concerning a community of Jews. There were three groups of people: the first group transgressed against the

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7. "You are the best of the nations raised up for the benefit of men; you enjoin what is right and forbid the wrong and believe in Allah."

8. "O you who believe! Be upright for Allah, bearers of witness with justice, and let not hatred of a people incite you not to act equitably."

9. "O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of Allah's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, Allah is nearer to them both in compassion; therefore do not follow (your) low desires, lest you deviate; and if you swerve or turn aside, then surely Allah is aware of what you do."

10. (7:163-165), “And ask them about the town which stood by the sea; when they exceeded the limits of the Sabbath, when their fish came to them on the day of their Sabbath, appearing on the surface of the water, and on the day on which they did not keep the Sabbath they did not come to them; thus did We try them because they transgressed. When some of them said: ‘Why do you preach to a people whom Allah will destroy or visit with a terrible punishment?’— said the preachers: ‘To discharge our duty to your Lord, and
enactments of Allah (swt). The second group admonished the first group, to free themselves from blame and guilt before Allah (swt) and in an attempt to guide the evildoers back to the path of Allah (swt). The third group did not participate with the first group in their transgression but, at the same time, they did not advise them. People of the third group were astonished at the second group and asked them about the usefulness of preaching a people whom Allah (swt) was about to destroy or punish with an awful doom. The preachers replied that they were discharging their duty of forbidding the evil and that there might be a chance that the iniquitous people would fear Him (swt) and stop their infraction. Verse (7:165) expounds what happened next. It is only those who forbade evil that were rescued. Punishment befell the profligates and those who failed to forbid the evil.

In (11:113), Muslims are warned against inclination to the unjust. This verse is evident in forbidding any type of aid that helps the unjust to entrench his tyranny and corruption. In fact, in (22:39), Muslims are permitted to fight to reverse the injustice that has befallen them. The verse (4:75) has the same purport: “And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: "Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You one who will protect; and raise for us from You one who will help!”

To summarize, the main lessons from all these Quranic verses are:
1) The paramount importance of realizing justice without any sort of discrimination.
2) The utmost importance of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.
3) Muslims should do whatever possible to eliminate injustice.
4) Failure to forbid the evil is tantamount to indulging in it and, thus, makes one liable to a severe punishment from Allah (swt).

If we move to the Sunnah of the beloved Prophet (saw), we find him (saw) saying:
1) “The best form of Jihad is a word of truth spoken before an unjust ruler.”
2) “The master of martyrs is Hamza and a man who stood before an unjust ruler enjoining the good and forbidding the evil and was consequently killed.”
3) “If Muslims see an unjust man and fail to resist him, Allah (swt) will overwhelm them with punishment.”

perchance they may fear Him.’ So when they neglected what they had been reminded of, We delivered those who forbade evil and We overtook those who were unjust with an evil chastisement because they transgressed.”

11 Many commentators do not adopt this exegesis. They argue that the people of the third group were saved. My reply to this is that the exposition given here is more compatible with the manifest meaning (zahir al-nass) of the verse and pursuant to verse (5:79), “Nor did they forbid one another the iniquities which they committed: evil indeed were the deeds which they did.” Allah (swt) castigates those who do not discharge their obligation of forbidding the evil. And Allah (swt) knows best.

12 “And incline not to those who do injustice, or the Fire will seize you; and you have no protectors other than Allah, nor shall you be helped.”

13 “To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged; and verily, Allah is Most Powerful for their aid.”
4) “If you see my Ummah failing to say to the unjust that he is unjust, they are about to be doomed.”14
5) “If a Muslim sees evil, he should try to change it by his hand, and if he cannot, he should change it by his tongue, and if he cannot, he should change it by his heart.”
6) “Let not the fear of people prevent you from uttering the truth, for speaking out the truth does not shorten your life, or drives away what is prescribed for you (your rizk).”

And in many other reports, he (saw) commanded Muslims to enjoin the good and forbid the evil. He (saw) warned that if Muslims fail to do this, they will suffer the fate of the previous nations who were damned by Allah (swt) for failing to discharge this uncompromisable obligation.

Traditions of Obedience:

There are several Prophetic traditions that call upon Muslims to obey their rulers and that are often quoted by jurists to justify withstanding injustice. These Sayings must be analyzed in the light of the aforementioned verses and aHadith before reaching a judgment about the stance of Islam on rebellion against unjust rulers. The Prophet (saw) said: “Whoever sees something from his leader that he dislikes, he should be patient. For whoever abandons the jama’ah (community) dies a death of ignorance.”

The first point about this tradition is the interpretation of the word jama’ah. It is reported that Ibn Masoud said that the jama’ah means those who follow the straight path even if it is a single person15. Ali is reported to say that jama’ah means being affiliated with the people of truth even if they are a few and forqa (disarray and disunity) means being associated with the people of falsehood even if they are many16. Commenting on the inquisition of the createdness of the Quran, Ibn al-Qayyim argued that the vast majority of scholars deviated from the truth and Ahmed Ibn Hanbal persevered on the right path. Hence, he alone became the jama’ah, and the rest of the people deviated from the jama’ah. What can be inferred from these views is that jama’ah never means the majority of people. In fact, the Quran explicitly mentions in many verses that the majority could deviate from the truth and adhere to falsehood17. It is sorrowful that many Muslims believe that jama’ah either means the majority of people or the established regime regardless of whether it is just or unjust, incorrupt or corrupt. This is contrary to the well-established Islamic doctrine which puts all emphasis on following the truth, as defined by the Shari’ah.

14 Transliteration: edha ra’aytun ummati tahab al-zaleem ‘an taqoul lahu ‘anta zalem faqadd tewoudde’a menhum. Some scholars, such as al-Albani, challenged the reliability of the chain of transmitters of this Hadith. Nevertheless, it was accepted by other scholars (al-Hakim and al-Dhahabi) in addition to being fully harmonious with a large array of Quranic verses and other aHadith.
15 Transliteration: al-jama’a ma wafaqa al-shar’ wa law kana rajulan wahedan.
16 Transliteration: al-jama’a mujama’et ahl al-haq wa ‘en qallou, wa al-forqa mutaba’et ahl al-batil wa ‘en katharou.
17 Here are four Quranic verses expounding this idea. Verse (6:116) says, “Were you to follow the common run of those on earth, they will lead you away from the Way of Allah. They follow nothing but conjecture: they do nothing but lie.” Verse (11:40) says regarding Noah’s story, “But only a few believed with him.” Verse (12:21) says, “And Allah has full power and control over His affairs; but most among mankind know it not.” Verse (5:49) says: “And truly most men are iniquitous.”
The second point about this *Hadith* is that many believe the purport of this saying, *i.e.*, obeying the ruler even if one dislikes his decision, means accepting injustice and corruption. To investigate this point, we should resort to another Prophetic saying: “Obedience is required from the Muslim in what he likes or dislikes if he is not ordered to disobey Allah (swt). If the Muslim is ordered to do evil and disobey Allah (swt), no obedience is due.” The first part of this saying is consistent with the purport of the first saying. The second part resolves the ambiguity (see below) about how one should obey the ruler even if he dislikes his command. In a third Prophetic tradition, a man was put in charge of a military expedition and the Prophet (saw) ordered the other men to obey him. The man was facetious and at a certain point, he ordered a fire to be lit. He reminded his soldiers that they have an obligation to obey him and ordered them to jump into the fire. The soldiers refused to comply with this order and when the Prophet (saw) was informed of the incident, he said: “If someone orders you to commit a sin, you should not obey. Obedience is due only in what is just and good.” No obedience is owed to a created if it entails disobeying the Creator (swt).

Now combining the three *aHadith*, it is clear that what one dislikes is something very different from accepting injustice which blatantly contravenes the basic principles of Islam as mentioned in the Quran and the *Sunnah*. It is well known that many issues in Islamic jurisprudence have different solutions predicated on different plausible interpretations. The reason for this is that the Islamic textual sources can be of speculative or definitive authenticity and can have speculative or definitive meanings. Texts that have definitive authenticity and meaning comprise the immutable tenets and principles of Islam. Apart from these constants, scholars disagree over other issues depending on many factors. It is these disputable issues that the Prophet (saw) meant when he talked about obeying the ruler, the leader, or the government even if the Muslim dislikes the ruling.

This issue is complicated. It is related to the question of how an Islamic state should deal with the different plausible interpretations. Does the Islamic state have the prerogative to impose a certain interpretation of Islamic *Shari‘ah* while excluding other interpretations? If the answer is sought within the confines of Islamic *Shari‘ah*, then several principles must be taken into account. For example, (a) the aforementioned principle of individual responsibility which implies that following a jurist, a council of jurists, or a specific school of jurisprudence does not absolve the Muslim of his individual accountability before Allah (swt). (b) The need for unity, order, and stability. (c) The balance between the interests of the individual and the interests of the society. The answer should be based on striking a balance between these competing principles. Also it seems that the answer should be context dependent. For example, contrast the issue of identity cards with photographs with the issue of organ donation. Assume that an

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18 The question of the plausibility of a certain interpretation is very important to answer. In general, two necessary conditions for a plausible interpretation are (a) being consistent with the rules of Arabic language, and (b) being consistent with the definitives of the Quran and the *Sunnah*—the principles and rules mentioned in the Quran and the authentic *Sunnah* in a self-evident language upon which no two persons of sound intellect and proper understanding on the Arabic language could disagree.
Islamic government has required all the citizens to have identity cards with personal photographs. Some Muslims believe that photography is prohibited. Many other scholars believe that photography is lawful so long as nothing obscene or unlawful is being photographed. Now, the government has a substantiated and plausible interpretation. Not only this but that requirement appears to be in the best interest of the community as a whole. My inclination is that obeying the government in this issue is mandatory even if some Muslims dislike this ruling. On the other hand, assume an Islamic government that takes a position against organ donation on the basis of the interpretation that body parts belong to Allah (swt) and it is not up to the individual to denote them. Some Muslims may adopt another interpretation based on the analogy between property, which also belongs to Allah (swt), and body organs---an analogy which leads to the conditional permissibility of organ donation. My inclination is that the government’s opinion is not to be imposed especially as organ donation is not related to a security issue that concerns the whole society as the issue of identity cards with photographs. In a similar vein, my inclination is that a Muslim soldier should plead conscientious objection when it comes to a war which he sees as unjust despite being sanctioned by his Islamic government. Refraining from participating in this war is an obligation for those soldiers who, after diligent analysis and investigation, view the war as unjust and unjustified. Their decision should be unpunishable because it is their religious conscience that should be given deference. However, if a soldier decides to join the war, he is under obligation to obey the military plan agreed upon by his superiors, so long as the plan itself is consistent with the Islamic military principles. If, during the course of war, every soldier operates on the basis of individual opinion, defeat is inevitable. Put simply: as long as the ruler is following a plausible interpretation or is adopting a respectable school of thought, obedience is due, in regard to some issues, even if some of the citizens dislike the ruler’s determinations. Nevertheless, if the ruler decrees a law that obviously contravenes the Islamic Shari‘ah, i.e., it orders something that is definitely prohibited or forbids something that is definitely lawful, it is not to be obeyed. The ruler should be admonished and if he does not recant his position and repent, the sincere Muslim masses should work on ousting him and installing a ruler who acts in accordance with the Shari‘ah.

Some scholars surprisingly argue the traditions of obedience specify the general of the verses and aHadith of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil, meaning that the ruler is not subject to these general principles. Moreover, some argue that the ruler’s injustice is his own problem. If the ruler is unjust, people can still go on with their lives

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19 I use the word “inclination” not to imply a lack of confidence in this opinion but to highlight that these issues require the collective effort of many qualified Muslims in order to reach a fair, reasonable, and balanced opinion.

20 A pertinent incidence from the Seerah is when Amr Ibn al-`As ordered his soldiers during the military campaign of Zaat al-Salasel not to light any fire despite the intense cold and not to pursue the fugitives despite the Muslims’ victory. Notwithstanding their resentment, the soldiers obeyed Amr but reported his decisions to the Prophet (saw) who asked Amr for justifications. Regarding the fire issue, Amr said that fire would have revealed their position and hence jeopardized the whole mission. Regarding the fugitives and booty issue, he said that, despite the victory, Muslims were largely outnumbered and hence if they were to follow the enemy, their victory would have been turned into a defeat.

21 I am using the terms “ruler” and “government” synonymously.

22 And that can be the interpretation of the Hadith mentioned at the beginning of this section. This interpretation is consistent with the Quran and the other aHadith.
so long as they, themselves, adhere to the Shari`ah. This logic is fundamentally faulty. The ruler is not a mini-god and to say that he is above the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil is mere conjecture that goes against many conclusive and self-evident verses and Hadith. Also, it is unreasonable to assume that people can go along with a tyrant while remaining committed to their religion. If there is an unjust ruler, is it reasonable that the ruler himself will kill his opponents, or usurp the property of the people, or imprison and torture those who aspire to truth and justice, or collect the heavy taxes levied on the poor hard-pressed people? The answer is no. To carry out all this evil, which has been rampant all over the Muslim world for centuries, the unjust ruler establishes a huge hierarchy of morally weak people who are willing to serve him even against all religious and moral values.

For example, if the tyrant wants to crush one of his opponents, he will order a high rank official who in turn will command another official of a lower rank and the process goes on till the instruction reaches the group of policemen who will detain and torture the poor dissident. What many scholars tend to discount is that the machine of injustice and repression is a tremendous one with many participants. Injustice, when carried out by a government is rarely an individual process. When it starts, even people who are not inherently evil will join because of fear, for their lives and the lives of whom they care about, if they do otherwise. This is how tyranny always starts. When a tyrant emerges, people think that fighting him will result in chaos and bloodshed. So they choose to be patient and try to observe the Shari`ah in their own lives. But then more and more people join the ranks of the corrupt regime because of fear and/or the normal human desire for power and immediate worldly gains. Tyranny entrenches its foothold in the society and the good people decrease in number and grow more powerless and helpless. After a while, tyranny overtakes everything and devastates everything. It is illogical and preposterous to call upon people not to obey if they are ordered to transgress and, at the same time, instruct them to be patient on injustice. If injustice is left alone from the beginning, it develops its tools of control and power, and people find it impossible not to comply.

The last point in this issue is the Prophetic saying narrated by Hudhifah Ibn al-Yaman that commands Muslims to obey the ruler even if he strikes their backs and usurps their property. This is a version that appears in Sahih Muslim. In al-Bukhari and in another version in Muslim, the Prophet (saw) ordered Hudhifah to stick to the jama`ah. The concept of jama`ah was previously discussed. In no way, it means following the ruler regardless of the substantive quality of his reign. It means seeking and adhering to the truth as defined by the principles of Islam. In another report, the Prophet (saw)

23 Sahih Muslim, “It has been narrated on the authority of Hudhaifa b. al-Yaman who said: Messenger of Allah, no doubt, we had an evil time (i.e., the days of Jahiliyya or ignorance) and God brought us a good time (i.e., Islamic period) through which we are now living Will there be a bad time after this good time? He (the Holy Prophet) said: Yes. I said: Will there be a good time after this bad time? He said: Yes. I said: Will there be a bad time after good time? He said: Yes. I said: How? Whereupon he said: There will be leaders who will not be led by my guidance and who will not adopt my ways. There will be among them men who will have the hearts of devils in the bodies of human beings. I said: What should I do, Messenger of Allah, if I happen to live in that time? He replied: You will listen to the Amir and carry out his orders; even if your back is flogged and your wealth is snatched, you should listen and obey.”
declared that whoever dies trying to protect his property from a usurper dies as a martyr. The usurper is a general word and refers to any oppressor even if he is the established ruler. The Prophet (saw) also said that it is unlawful to take the property of a Muslim without his express consent. The Quran says, “Devour not each other’s properties unlawfully unless it is through trade by your consent,” (4:19). Saying that unjust rulers, who usurp people’s properties, are above these revelations is baseless and, in fact, mocks a whole array of Quranic verses and Prophetic sayings that demand justice as an absolute value and urge Muslims to eliminate injustice.

**Concept of Fitnah:**

Many scholars equate rebellion with the idea of fitnah that is mentioned in Quran in many verses. To them, revolution against injustice leads to the spread of fitnah and fitnah is a very bad thing even when compared with tyranny. The only recourse against injustice is patience, which is much better than civil strife that accompanies revolutions.

The word fitnah is mentioned in the Quran several times. The meanings of the word include:

1) Worldly temptations: “Your riches and your children may be but a fitnah,” (64:15). And “And know you that your possessions and your progeny are but a fitnah; and that it is Allah with whom lies your highest reward,” (8:28).
2) Testing: “Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, ‘We believe,’ and that they will not be tested (yuftanoon)?” (29:2). And “Every soul shall have a taste of death: and We test you by evil and by good by way of trial. To us you must return,” (21:35).
3) Attacking: “When you travel through the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten your prayers, for fear the unbelievers may attack (yaftenakum) you: for the unbelievers are unto you open enemies,” (4:101).
5) Persecution and oppression: “Those who persecute (yaftenoon) the believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the penalty of Hell: they will have the penalty of the burning fire,” (85:10). This is a very important and pertinent verse as fitnah is described as a state of oppression by an unjust regime. Fitnah is never used to refer to an action of resistance against injustice. It will be dishonest to argue that revolutions are free from turmoil, but it is this turmoil that must be withstood to destroy injustice and establish the state of justice. The reason is simple, injustice is the true fitnah. The same is clear in verse 2:217: “Tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter,” and “And fight them on until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah altogether and everywhere; but if they cease, verily Allah does see all that they do,” (8:39). These are two clear verses that oppression is worse than bloodshed that usually accompanies revolutions against corrupt regimes.” When one finds scholar saying that withstanding oppression is better than chaos and killings of revolutions, we cannot say but Subhan Allah. The
point is that if revolution comprises some fitnah, injustice and oppression are the epitome of fitnah and the emblem of sedition.

Were the Muslim Scholars Political Quietists?

Despite the ‘sixty years of tyranny’ maxim, no one can accuse Muslim scholars, especially the early generations, of being political quietists. I will dedicate this section to understand their position which may, incorrectly, give the impression that they were propelled by political expediency rather than principle. The following points should be taken into consideration.

1) The majority of scholars advocated a lenient treatment of rebels that is mandatory on the ruler whether he is just or not. If the jurists were in cahoots with the corrupt political authorities, they would not establish a discourse of treating rebels humanely and benevolently. To elaborate on this point, we will discuss al-Shafi’i’s discourse on the law of rebellion. Al-Shafi’i was not the inventor of this field of jurisprudence, but can be considered as the first scholar to engage it in a systematic manner. In Islamic law, the rebels are referred to as the bughah (literally the transgressors). Many scholars mentioned that this word does not connotate censure but is rather a technical term derived from the Quranic verse (49:9). According to al-Shafi’i, the baghi is the one who refuses to obey al-Imam al-‘adel (the just ruler). He cited the precedents of Abu Bakr and Ali in support of his arguments. Al-Shafi’i’s imperative to rely heavily on these precedents is the Quranic (and also the Prophetic) praise of the early Companions. A baghi, from al-Shafi’i’s point of view, must have an interpretation, must commit an overt action of rebellion, and must be a part of a larger group of rebels. If the rebel does not satisfy the third criterion, he is treated as a criminal as was done to Ibn Muljim, the assassin of Ali. The rebels are not held liable for life and property destroyed during the course of rebellion. Before fighting them, they must first be warned and debated. If they mention

24 “If two parties among the Believers fall into a quarrel, make peace between them: but if one of them transgresses beyond bounds against the other, then fight against the one that transgresses (‘al-lati tabghi) until it complies with the command of Allah; but if it complies, then make peace between them with justice, and be fair: for Allah loves those who are fair (and just).”
25 From al-Shafi’i’s ‘al-Umm’.
26 Abu Bakr when he fought those who refused to pay Zakah and Ali when he fought al-Khawarij.
27 “The vanguard of Islam, the first of those who forsook their homes and of those who gave them aid, and also those who follow them in all good deeds, well-pleased is Allah with them, as are they with Him: for them, He has prepared Gardens under which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that is the supreme Felicity,” (9:100). Another verse is, “Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah; and those who are with him are strong against Unbelievers, but compassionate amongst each other. You will see them bow and prostrate themselves in prayer, seeking grace from Allah and His good pleasure. On their faces are their marks, being the traces of their prostration. This is their similitude in the Torah; and their similitude in the Gospel is: like a seed which sends forth its blade, then makes it strong; it then becomes thick, and it stands on its own stem, filling the sowers with wonder and delight. As a result, it fills the Unbelievers with rage at them. Allah has promised those among them who believe and do righteous deeds, Forgiveness, and a great Reward.” (48:29). And the verse, “Allah's good pleasure was on the Believers when they swore fealty to you under the Tree: He knew what was in their hearts, and He sent down tranquility to them; and He rewarded them with a speedy victory,” (48:18).
an injustice, it must be redressed. If they complain about an oppressive governor, he must be dismissed. The rebels are not fought with the intention of eradicating them but only to fend off their harm. Weapons of mass destruction and indiscriminate killing such as mangonels (catapults) cannot be used against them save in cases of dire necessity that means, for example, that the rebels use it first. Rebel captives are not to be killed or tortured. Wounded among rebels should not be killed and the fugitives should not be pursued and dispatched. The corpse of a dead rebel must be washed and buried without mutilation. The properties of rebels should not be confiscated. This lenient treatment afforded to rebels was adopted by many other scholars. In Western law, till the nineteenth century, rebels were treated as traitors and received the harshest penalties. In Islamic law, many scholars differentiated between rebellion, apostasy, banditry, and treason. Rebels have plausible interpretations while others act on basis of blind tribalism, greed, and immorality. The law of rebellion is completely consistent with the fact that there is no clergy in Islam that monopolizes the interpretation of the religious texts. It is incumbent among every Muslim, male or female, to seek knowledge for he will be individually held accountable for his deeds and decisions before Allah (swt) in the Hereafter. More importantly, the law of rebellion refutes any claim that religious scholars succumbed to power and material incentives.

2) Opposing rebellions was based largely on a balance-of-evils analysis. The scholars realized that one of the main functions of law is to sustain order and stability in the society. The state of chaos, lawlessness, and instability cannot receive unequivocal support from jurists. The jurists faced the very difficult problem of judging rebellions against unjust rulers. Injustice is abhorrent to Muslim mind but, at the same time, revolutions are associated with a state of turmoil and bloodshed. Many scholars consider that being patient is the best solution while at the same time trying one’s best to advise the rulers and guide them to the right path.

3) Although some scholars vehemently opposed rebellions, they called upon people never to join the forces of the established unjust ruler against rebels. Again, this indicates that the moral imperative stimulating the scholars was present and was strong. It is preferred to withstand injustice but helping the unjust is not permissible. Even in the Ja’fari school, resorting to taqayyah (dissimulation), which is normally permitted, is forbidden if the ruler issued an order to kill someone. In other words, one should protect his life but not transgress against other lives whatever the consequences are.

4) Scholars who called for unqualified obedience to the rulers even if they are unjust adopted a consistent stance of resistance to the powers of the ruler. For example, Ahmed Ibn Hanbal stood steadfast against three Abassid Caliphs. He refused to espouse or encourage the doctrine of the createdness of the Quran. Despite the fact that many other scholars outwardly adopted the doctrine to save themselves from persecution, Ibn Hanbal realized that if he forsook his position, the Islamic dogma would be jeopardized. We can agree or disagree with this theological position, but what deserves attention is Ibn Hanbal’s stance against what he considered a wrong interpretation in spite of his opposition to the idea of rebellion against tyrants.
5) There are some scholars among various schools who deemed rebellion lawful and even obligatory to remove injustice, and not just *kufr* (infidelity)\(^{28}\). Ibn Hazm went as far as declaring the ruler who ordered his soldiers to cause corruption on earth, as a *muharib* (bandit). To him, the *baghi* is not the one rising against the ruler; he is rather the one who transgresses. The ruler himself can be a *baghi* or even a bandit under certain circumstances\(^{29}\). The Hanafi scholar al-Simnani argued that if the ruler becomes unjust, it becomes incumbent upon the jurists and Muslims to overthrow him\(^{30}\). Ibn Muflih\(^{31}\) (Hanbali) noted that the two Hanbali jurists, Ibn al-Jawzi and Ibn ‘Aqil, permitted rebellion against an unjust ruler. The Shafi‘i scholar Al-Juwayni argued that if a man possesses enough power, it is legal for him to rebel for the sake of realizing justice and “may Allah aid him to victory.”\(^{32}\) In another book\(^{33}\), he argued that if a ruler becomes oppressive, the possessors of power\(^{34}\) in society may cooperate in resisting and correcting him, even if it means that they would have to resort to the use of force and the waging of war against the ruler. Many Zaydi, Ibadi, and Mu‘tazili scholars encouraged armed insurrections to overthrow the unjust rulers. Some among them added the condition that if someone wants to establish justice, enjoin the good, and forbid the evil, it is obligatory on him to rebel if he believes he has the qualifications, material power and human support that guarantee him a reasonable chance of success. This condition is imposed to make sure that sincere men would not be quickly defeated and crushed and thus people would suffer perpetual injustice and oppression. I personally espouse this position, that rebellion is lawful and even obligatory to eliminate tyranny, because I believe that the moral imperative should be given preference over the legal imperative for sustaining order and stability. Put differently: if we leave ourselves to be propelled by the legal imperative of maintaining order, the moral imperative which is based on absolute values will be relegated to a secondary role. Maintaining stability is good and required but not on the expense of Jihad, establishing justice, and discharging the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil.

### Back to the Juristic Culture:

Now, I will shift emphasis to contemporary scholars. My point in this section is to show how the juristic culture heavily depends on prior authority and how its inertia (discussed above) is affecting its views regarding rebellions. I must emphasize that many

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\(^{28}\) For a comprehensive account of the positions of the various jurisprudential and theological schools on rebellion, refer to Abou El Fadl’s book, ‘Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law.’ I vehemently disagree with his analysis which, in many cases, casts doubt on the Sunnah. And with his insistence on describing the juristic culture as both creative and selective, an assertion that doubts the sincerity and correct belief of the jurists.

\(^{29}\) Ibn Hazm, ‘al-Muhalla.’

\(^{30}\) Al-Simnani, ‘Rawdat al-Qudah wa Tariq al-Najah.’

\(^{31}\) In his book, ‘Kitab al-Furu’.’ He, however, argued that rebellion is never permitted, and that impatience and ignorance are the causes of all rebellions.

\(^{32}\) See al-Juwayni, ‘Ghiyath al-Umam fi Iltiyath al-Qulam.’

\(^{33}\) Al-Juwayni’s ‘Kitab al-Irshad ila Qawati’ al-Adilla fi Usul al-I’tiqad.’

\(^{34}\) *Ahl al-hall wa al-‘aqd*, literally, the people who loosen and bind.
scholars, like their predecessors, are not of the sort of those who sell their belief and souls to appease the corrupt rulers. Nevertheless, the balance-of-evil analysis dominates their thinking and this, sometimes, leads to inconsistency or issuing fatwas (legal opinions) that lack sophistication.

IslamOnline website has a very decent fatwa section in which a number of respectable scholars respond to people’s legal questions. I do think that the majority of scholars participating in IslamOnline are motivated by principle rather than expediency. I do feel the sincerity of IslamOnline and its willingness to serve Islamic causes all over the world. I tried to understand the position of scholars on rebellion by sending several questions to IslamOnline. Below is a discussion of the questions and responses followed by an analysis of the problem at hand.

1) I sent IslamOnline asking about the revolution of Ibn al-Ash`ath. The text of the question was: “Assalamu Alykum. Why did Said Ibn Jubayr, the prominent jurist, and a number of other religious scholars participated in the revolution of Ibn al-Ash`ath against the Umayyads? What were the manifestations of explicit infidelity that appeared in that era?” The answer was very insightful about the dynamics of the juristic culture, its imperatives, and its inertia. The replier mentioned that the question is a historical not a legal question.

In my humble opinion, the purpose of the question was clear. If a large number of religious scholars were active in a revolution against the established government to the extent that the revolution itself was called the ‘revolution of the jurists,’ and if these jurists included some prominent scholars whose religious conscientiousness is indisputable, then there were deep religious imperatives and commitments motivating those scholars. In other words, these scholars found it obligatory, or at least permissible from the religious point of view, to participate in an armed insurrection to fight injustice. Nevertheless, the replier continued to say that he felt from the second part of the question that I was insisting to know the manifestations of explicit infidelity that appeared in the Umayyad era. He asked me about the benefit of knowing the answer to this question and about what work could be inferred from it. Again, my point was probative and not actually interrogative. From my reading to history, I think what is going on nowadays is much worse than what has happened in the Umayyad reign. Yet, the scholars of today encourage patience while the scholars of the past sacrificed their souls to combat corruption and tyranny and to establish justice. The replier finished the fatwa by directing me to previous fatwas about the phenomenon of calling Muslims infidels, its dangers, and the reasons of its spread!

2) Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi issued a fatwa about foreign military bases on Muslim lands. He mentioned that the acceptance of these bases amounts to treason and being disloyal to Allah (swt), His Prophet (saw), and all the believers. I sent a question to IslamOnline on Sheikh Mawlawi’s fatwa asking why he did not mention explicitly that the rulers, who admitted the military bases, are infidels\(^{35}\) that should be fought based on

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\(^{35}\) I used this term in the question just for this study of the juristic culture. In this booklet, I tried to underscore the supreme position of justice in Islam. Whether the rulers are kuffar, or otherwise, is an
the authentic saying of the Prophet (saw) that fighting is permissible if Muslims see explicit infidelity from their rulers. The reply, which quoted a fatwa by Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, emphasized the difference between arguing that someone is infidel and that some deed is an act of infidelity. Then, the replier told me to talk directly to Sheikh Mawlawi if I wish. So let us analyze the situation. Some rulers, who are supposed to be Muslims, approved the existence of non-Muslim military bases on Muslim land. These bases serve foreign interests and constitute a direct intervention in Muslim affairs that has serious repercussions on the independent decision-making process in Muslim countries. The religious scholars decreed such acts as completely forbidden in Islam. The rulers have paid no attention to the juristic opinion and the bases are still there. Then what should we do? The next logical step is never taken.

I sent the question to Sheikh Faisal himself. He replied saying that even if the presence of foreign military bases amounts to treason to Allah (swt), His Messenger (saw) and the believers, it does not constitute kufr. Consequently, there is no ‘sultan’ from Allah (swt) to fight those rulers. Despite committing a kabira (grave sin), there is unanimity among the people of the Sunnah and the jama`ah that the one who commits a grave sin is not kafir. Sheikh Faisal then urged me to study Islamic jurisprudence and creed before hastening to such conclusions. He added that the regimes say that they are obliged to accept the military presence of foreign forces. Those who are advocating fighting the regimes are exactly doing what the enemies desire while claiming Jihad and heroism. He elaborated by saying that the clash between the Muslim masses and their rulers is an imperial goal to cleave the Ummah apart to overtake it. Thus it is forbidden to accomplish what the enemies want under the pretext of fighting the rulers even if fighting them is lawful, let alone that it is unlawful in the first place.

What is interesting in Sheikh Faisal’s reply is the assertion that the hegemonic powers want to sow rancor and animosity between the Muslim masses and their rulers as if the rulers are not the extension of colonialists. Many thinkers including Westerners know that the puppet governments that prevail over the Muslim world are supported by the West to perpetuate the state of misery and backwardness and to secure the flow of wealth and resources to the West. The despicable regimes of the Muslim countries ruled for decades without the slightest attempt to serve the peoples’ interests. They have not established military forces capable of doing anything other than oppressing the masses and crushing dissidence. And when they are confronted by external threat, they hastened to their masters asking for help despite paying out billions and billions of dollars to stock arms and advanced weaponry. Then these same rulers come and say that they have no other option but to participate in slaughtering thousands of Muslims! This fatwa lacks sophistication and proper understanding of power dynamics and international realities. I do not have the least intention of belittling Sheikh Faisal. However, his fatwa is not reflecting the reality of Muslim countries and the state of its affairs. Also there is this point of rebelling against rulers only if they become kuffar. Muslims should wait for

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important, but very often an irrelevant, question. Deciding that someone is kafir is a very complicated matter. Also, it is extremely implausible that someone will publicly declare his kufr. Whether the ruler is just or not is the real question.

36 The military expenditure of the Gulf countries is an obvious example.
their rulers to come in public and announce that they are infidels. Is not their injustice, iniquity, treason, and corruption sufficient to induce the masses to move for the sake of Allah (swt)? Is not injustice alone sufficient, according to many verses and aHadith, to stimulate the people to eliminate it? Why do we rely on traditions that are unequivocally inconsistent, if understood in a certain way, with other Prophetic traditions and Quranic verses that call upon Muslims to enjoin the good and forbid the evil, to establish justice and to fight injustice?

3) A third question that I sent to IslamOnline was concerned with the previously mentioned Hadith in Sahih Muslim that instructs Muslims to obey their rulers even if they strike their backs and usurps their properties. The reply emphasized that the Hadith is related to days of fitan. The replier did not attempt at defining what exactly is meant by fitnah, but he went on to mention two Prophetic sayings with the purport that a Muslim, during a fitnah, should try to be the killed not the killer, the oppressed not the oppressor!

4) In an array of fatwas, IslamOnline provided the religious foundations of boycotting the Israeli and American products. The scholars argued that boycotting would help establish national industries and eliminate the dependence of Muslim countries politically and economically on the Western powers. Boycotting will force the Muslim governments and businessmen to initiate and support important industries that Muslim Ummah desperately needs. I cannot deny the insightfulness of such statements nor do I underestimate the boycotting process. In fact, the moral imperative of boycotting is enough to propel Muslims to undertake it. On the one hand, helping the Ummah’s enemies by any means is a grave sin. On the other hand, boycott is a means of combating the spirit of consumerism grabbing the Muslim World. One feels ashamed when he reads about the Prophet (saw) living for consecutive months on water and dates. Nonetheless, the other reasons for boycott mentioned in the fatwas are based on a hidden assumption: the presence of a truly Islamic government. Establishing vital industries like weapon industries, requires the enormous resources of a government that is willing to acquire power and serve the interests of its citizens. An Islamic government is concerned not only about worldly affairs but also about the Hereafter by implementing the teachings of Allah (swt). The point is that what the scholars have mentioned is completely correct but totally dissociated from reality. An important legal maxim is that what is necessary for discharging an obligation is an obligation in itself. Before talking about establishing industries for the benefit of the Muslim Ummah, one should be concerned with the establishment of the very authority that should initiate and oversee those industries.

These examples show the change-resisting characteristic of the juristic culture. At one moment, many religious authorities adopted the stance of preferring tyranny to the turmoil of revolutions. The majority of the subsequent scholars espoused the same principle and most of them did so not to appease the political authorities but rather to accomplish what they consider to be one of the highest objectives of law — preservation of order and stability.
The juristic culture relies on prior authority and in many ways is encumbered by it. The persecution of Ibn Taymiyyah for his opinions on divorce\(^{37}\), because they were contrary to the established opinions of the four schools, is but one example of how advocating new ideas, that are inconsistent with prior authorities, inevitably meets resistance. This phenomenon is not only confined to jurists but is found in all other disciplines. A very famous example, demonstrating this phenomenon among physicists, is Einstein’s general theory of relativity. Einstein discovered that his theory predicted an unstable universe—-one that would either expand or contract, but would not remain stationary. But since almost all scientists at Einstein’s time believed in a stationary universe, he inserted a fudge factor (cosmological constant) into his equations to make them predict a stationary, eternal universe. When astronomer Hubble discovered that the universe is expanding, Einstein removed the fudge factor and admitted that it was the biggest blunder of his life. This unequivocally shows the influence of prior authority and pre-existing ideas and concepts on the development of any discipline. Yet, scientific revolutions do occur and so do juristic revolutions. The big gap between reality and juristic rulings, between theory and practice, is what stimulates juristic revolutions\(^{38}\).

I will finish this section by analyzing the effect of historical imperatives on the juristic culture. Although it is legitimate to say that Islamic jurisprudence and Hadith sciences could not have escaped the reigning intellectual, political, and social climate, it is safe to say that the concerned Muslim scholars did all what was humanly possible to rise above their prejudices and free themselves from these constraints. Yet the socio-political circumstances have influenced the various scholars. For example, al-Ghazali legitimated usurpation as a means of taking power as long as the usurper pledged his allegiance to the Sunni Caliph and mentioned his name in speeches and on the coinage. This position, which a superficial researcher will attribute promptly to political expediency, should better be explained within the confines of the political circumstances of those days. Al-Ghazali was very concerned about the dangers posed by the external enemies and the threats of the esoteric movements. He felt that he was under the obligation of defending the Sunni Caliph al-Mustazher against his Ismaili Fatimid rival in Cairo. He thought that as long as the usurper recognized the Sunni Caliph, this would be an advantageous step against the Fatimids and their esoteric beliefs.

Many revolutions that took place throughout the Islamic history claimed that they sought the faithful establishment of the Shari’ah. Yet, they were actually motivated by lust for power and material incentives and/or tribalism. This factor also contributed to the negative image that the majority of jurists have against revolutions, as there is no benefit in ousting a tyrant and installing another in his place. In the next section, I will talk about some revolutions that took place in Islamic history. I will confine myself to the revolutions that, according to my reading of history, were really for justice and not for worldly affairs.

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\(^{37}\) Ibn Taymiyyah’s life was full of persecutions, mainly for his opinions regarding Allah’s attributes, Sufis, divorce, and the visitation of graves.

\(^{38}\) A fact that must always be kept in mind is that the constants of Islam are not subject to neither revolutionary nor incremental change lest Islam itself turns from a religion into a type of secularism.
Islamic Revolutions:

1) The first Islamic revolution is Islam itself. Islam came to establish the religion of pure monotheism. Islam came to free mankind from worshipping idols and to guide them to worship Allah (swt). Islam came to realize justice among all people without any discrimination. Islam came to combat bad habits of infanticide, belittling females, drinking wine, usury, etc. Islam came to reveal the fact that the only criteria of superiority in the sight of Allah (swt) is obeying Him and keeping Him present in everyday life. Islam came with legislations that fit all people at all times in all places.

2) The most famous revolution in the history of Islam is that of al-Husayn against the Umayyad Caliph Yazid. Mu`awiyah Ibn Abi Sufyan unexpectedly took bay`ah (pledge of allegiance) for his son Yazid despite the presence of a number of prominent companions who were much more qualified to lead the Muslim Ummah. Mu`awiyah resorted to threats and temptations to get the approval of Muslims on nominating his son as the next Caliph. The majority of people in Hijaz refused to give their pledge and the opposition was concentrated in al-Husayn, Ibn Abbas, and Ibn al-Zubayr. Yazid was known for his indiscretions and thus the unsuitability for assuming the office of Caliphate. Also, this act from Mu`awiyah amounted to transforming Caliphate, which was based on consultation and the consent of people, to kingship with faked bay`ah. The Kufans wrote numerous letters urging al-Husayn to come to their city and offered their bay`ah and complete support. Al-Husayn sent his cousin Muslim Ibn `Oqayl to make sure that the Kufans are committed to their promises. Ibn `Oqayl saw large masses of people pledging to die for al-Husayn and thus sent him a letter assuring him that the people of Kufah are loyal to him. Knowing what happened, Yazid was outraged and sent ‘Obayid Allah Ibn Ziyad to replace the governor of Kufa. He killed Ibn `Oqayl and crucified him. On the way to Kufa, al-Husayn knew of what had happened to his cousin. However, he continued his march to find himself with a few of his supporters facing a large army without any help from the Kufans. Ibn Ziyad insisted that al-Husayn should surrender himself as a captive and refused any other deal. Al-Husayn refused any humiliating solution and fought till he was martyred in 61H (680) along with many members of the Prophet’s family.

3) Abd Allah Ibn al-Zubayr’s rebellion in Makkah against the tyranny of Yazid and the Marwanids was particularly serious, and posed a formidable challenge to the Umayyads. Ibn al-Zubayr effectively controlled Hijaz, Iraq, and Egypt. However after the Umayyad were able to consolidate their power, Abd al-Malik recaptured Egypt and Kufa from Ibn al-Zubayr and directed al-Hajjaj to besiege Makkah. Makkah was bombarded with mangonels, and water and food were cut off from the city in 73H (692). Several notable individuals including Ibn al-Zubayr himself, were killed in the siege.

4) The rebellion of Ibn al-Ash`ath was called ‘the rebellion of the jurists’ due to the large number of religious scholars who actively participated in the rebellion against the Umayyadis and their bad practices. In 81H (701) Ibn al-Asha`ath was defeated by al-
Hajjaj and many rebels were killed. Al-Hajjaj executed some jurists such as Sa`id Ibn al-Jubayr who was known for his erudition in Islamic jurisprudence.

5) Zayd Ibn Ali, another member of the Prophet’s family, rebelled against the Ummayyad Caliph Hisham Ibn Abd al-Malik in Kufa in 122H (740) but was defeated, killed, and crucified. Abu Hanifah supported Zayd’s rebellion and provided Zayd with a considerable sum of money\textsuperscript{39}. In fact, when the Umayyads ordered Abu Hanifa to assume a judicial position in Kufa, he refused to do so because this would have been a valuable symbolic gesture in favor of the legitimacy of the Umayyads. As a result of his refusal, Abu Hanifa was mercilessly tortured but he never recanted his position.

6) Yazid Ibn al-Walid Ibn Abd al-Malik led the first rebellion against the Umayyads in their capital and locus of power in the Levant in 126H (744). The rebellion ended in killing the notorious Umayyad Caliph al-Walid Ibn Yazid Ibn Abd al-Malik who inflamed the religious feelings of the masses by his immoral iniquitous behavior. After getting the pledge of allegiance of Muslims, Yazid declared that the political system would resuscitate the principle of shura (consultation) and the right of people to overthrow the unjust Imam and participate actively in choosing the next Caliph. He also declared the establishment of justice among people whether they were Muslims or non-Muslims. Yazid is considered the only Umayyad Caliph who has risen to power after being freely chosen by the community\textsuperscript{40}. He has not reached his position by heredity or usurpation but rather by bay`ah and shura. He was named al-Naqes (the reducer) because he decreased the grants given to the Umayyad family from the public treasury.

7) Muhammad a-Nafs al-Zakiyyah Ibn Abd Allah Ibn al-Hasan revolted against the Abassid Caliph al-Mansour in 144H (761). The Muslims in al-Hijaz pledged their allegiance to al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah despite their preceding pledge to al-Mansour. When Imam Malik was asked about the bay`ah to al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, he responded that it was legal because the bay`ah given to al-Mansour was obtained under duress and therefore was invalid. Al-Mansour defeated al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah in al-Madinah and when the news reached Muhammad’s brother Ibrahim in Iraq, he and his followers did not panic but rather insisted on fighting injustice till victory or martyrdom. Abu Hanifa who had supported the Abassids, because of the corruption and injustice of the Umayyads, was outraged by al-Mansour’s brutality. When one of al-Mansour military commanders asked him if he could repent after he had participated in killing rebels, Abu Hanifa replied that he could, on the condition of abstaining from killing any more Muslim and sacrificing his life if ordered to smash Ibrahim’s rebellion. Ibrahim was defeated and Abu Hanifa paid the price of his sincerity and belief as he previously did with the Umayyads.

\textsuperscript{39} There is disagreement as to why Abu Hanifa was not able to join the actual fighting. According to one report, Abu Hanifa said that if he did not know that the people would betray Zayd and allow him to be killed, he (Abu Hanifa) would have joined Zayd. According to another report, Abu Hanifa was unable to join Zayd because of illness, and in yet another version, Abu Hanifa was unable to join the revolt because he was responsible for many trusts. Abu Hanifa asked the jurist Ibn Abi Layla to take over the responsibility of the trusts, but Ibn Abi Layla refused. Unable to find anyone to take responsibility of the trusts, Abu Hanifa had no choice but not to join the battle.

\textsuperscript{40} It can be argued that Mu`awiyah also reached power after the community agreed on him in ‘am `aljama’a. Evaluating what happened in that year is outside the scope of this booklet.
The majority of revolutions aiming at enjoining the good and forbidding the evil failed because only few people (compared to the whole population) participated in them. Imagine what would have happened if the majority of Muslims had joined al-Hussein’s revolution against Yazid. The balance of power would have shifted in favor of those seeking justice. Unfortunately, many Muslims at that time were reluctant to engage in a fighting against fellow Muslims. They thought of the whole situation as a *fitnah* to be avoided. Actually, several companions advised al-Hussein against rebelling against Yazid. Again, it was the imperative of maintaining order and preventing bloodshed that induced the majority not to join al-Hussein’s forces in spite of the Quranic verse that oppression is worse than bloodshed. As a result, he was martyred, many of his followers were slaughtered, and Yazid remained in the position of power. The problem here should be identified accurately. Revolutions failed, in Islamic history, due to lack of popular support and the lack of popular support was due to a variety of reasons. Some people defended the unjust Caliph out of blind tribalism or out of fighting for those in power regardless of whether they were just or not. Some people did not have the bravery and determination to defend the truth even if they know it without any ambiguity. Some people are only pre-occupied by their day-to-day affairs. Some people argued for the prevention of bloodshed between fellow Muslims in spite of the Quranic injunction to fight those ‘believers’ who transgressed.

**Civil Disobedience:**

Rebellion is mainly an act of resisting and defying the political authority. Acts of rebellion can vary from a mere passive non-compliance with the orders of those in power to full armed insurrections. Throughout the Muslim history, most revolutions to establish justice were crushed. In the era of nation states, the problem is exacerbated. Because one of the major features of modern nation states is the monopolization of power by the state. ‘Nine men out of ten detest me. But what is the importance of this if only the tenth is armed?’ The nation state developed its security apparatuses and its relentless tools of control and social engineering.

This history of failure and the new powers of the state make the contemporary Muslim jurists believe that there is no hope in challenging the unjust rulers. The missed point, as previously discussed, is that establishing justice and fighting injustice are obligations repeatedly emphasized by the Quran and the *Sunnah* in a clear, definitive, and self-evident language. They constitute an integral part of protecting religion, the most important component of our identity. The temporary, and even repeated, defeat of the truth before tyranny and falsehood should not push us into accepting injustice and corruption. This acceptance actually aggravates the problem and this is what the majority of our history and present is about. The correct approach is to internalize the paramount
importance of justice in Islam and then to analyze the reasons of failure of revolutions, as in the previous section, rather than accept servility and humiliation\footnote{It is surprising that many non-Muslim nations rejected injustice and fought for their rights. The repercussions of the difference in attitude between those who fought for their rights and those how forfeited their religious obligations are clear-cut.}.

Since, power in modern states is concentrated in the hands of the protectors of the corrupt system, I propose ‘civil disobedience’ as a plausible first step towards saving the \textit{Ummah} from the plight of tyranny and injustice. Civil disobedience is a form of passive yet effective revolution. In the democratic countries, workers resort to civil disobedience to get what they think is their justifiable right. For example, workers stop working till their demands are responded to or at least till a satisfactory compromise is set between them and the government. No one can deny that a civil disobedience throughout the country will result in inevitable harms. But again, a proper balance-of-evils analysis that takes into account the utmost importance of realizing justice in Islam, will favor withstanding the harms of civil disobedience till tyranny, which has paralyzed Muslims for centuries, is completely eliminated.

An effective civil disobedience requires the participation of the vast majority of people. It requires people of both conscience and consciousness. It will be a means of seizing people's rights from the unjust regimes while limiting the bloodshed that is an evitable consequence of violent revolutions. The first step of civil disobedience should be convincing people that the time has come to stand up against the ongoing injustice. Tyranny is the source of all degradation of religion, morals, economy, politics, and management. The sad plight of Muslims throughout the World is sufficient to exhort the masses to seek a change. If the corrupt regimes are not willing to give people their rights peacefully, then there is no other choice but to rebel. Since the people do not have the arms, the least thing to do is to resort to civil disobedience.

An obvious example showing the failure of achieving justice in a peaceful manner in the Muslim World is Algeria. The Islamic Salvation front helped to defuse highly explosive human bombs made of clusters of thousands of deprived and trivialized youth who had been driven into desperation by the system. Through the activities of the Islamic Salvation Front, these young youth had something useful to do for their present, gained hope for their future, and were convinced of accepting and engaging in a peaceful process of change and reform through the ballot box. But when the ballot boxes were crushed by the military, when the party was outlawed, when the leaders were sent to prison, and when the supporters were banished to desert concentration camps, these young men had no other choice but to take to the mountains from where they undertook to fight those who, cheered by the local secularists and condoned by the West, turned the Algerian dream into a horrible nightmare. You can find plenty of examples here and there showing how a peaceful call of reform is always faced with extreme violence. The Muslim Brothers of Egypt declare, in unequivocal terms, that they apply themselves to peaceful reform. They call for the establishment of an Islamic state but reject the use of violence. Yet the Egyptian authorities crack down on them and other Islamic activists. I
am not condoning here the ideas and doctrines of the Muslim Brothers but their plight shows how the unjust regimes fight for keeping the status quo.

**Criteria for the Required Planning:**

Before embarking on civil disobedience or any act of rebellion, we as Muslims should have full-fledged plans about what we should do next. We are not living in vacuum. We are living in a world of nation states, each with its own agendas and interests. The economies of different countries are linked. Powerful countries work for perpetuating their supremacy and hegemony over weak countries.\(^{42}\)

In our planning, Islam should be the only and ultimate point of reference. The achievements of other civilizations, such as the Western civilization, should be invoked only in procedures and logistics. Since the beginning of the colonial era, many Muslims have been infatuated by the West exactly as Ibn Khaldoun argues in his *Muqademah*.\(^{43}\) Many leading Muslim scholars, like Muhammad Abduh, thought that Islam is compatible with the West. Islam could be adapted to modernity. Under the influence of Western hegemony, they forgot that it is not Islam that needs to be relevant to modern knowledge. It is modern knowledge that needs to be made relevant to Islam. Islam is a priori relevant for all times. You can easily discern this infatuation by the West in a field like economy. When you read about Islamic economy, you feel Islam is just capitalism minus *riba* plus *zakah*, or Islam is communism minus strict state control plus Allah. You do not feel the ideals or higher objectives of Islam implemented. Why? Because Muslims, consciously or unconsciously, lost confidence in their religion. Muslims lost confidence in their civilization. We are satisfied ogling at the Western technological advancements. We are happy gasping at the Western scientific achievements. We became a group of re-acting people incapable of taking initiatives, original thinking, or planned action. Our highest objective became catching up with the West, a task that is surely doomed to failure.

We should always remember that the reconstruction of the Islamic civilization requires the effort of a multitude of scholars, coming from different educational background and disciplines, all focusing and concentrating their talents on the interdisciplinary endeavor of reconstructing the Islamic civilization. A global quest requires, naturally, a global effort. A problem facing Muslims is that they think that ‘working alone’ is sufficient. If everyone works without any attempt at co-ordination and co-operation, we will be like a Brownian motion.\(^{44}\) Our efforts will sum to zero. We need to orient our efforts towards the top priority of the era: getting rid of tyranny and establishing the state of justice. At the same time, each one, according to his knowledge and capacity, should prepare for the coming moment. We should have plans derived form

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\(^{42}\) Brzezinski, the former US national security advisor said in his book “the Grand Chessboard” that the US should make preventing “the barbarians from coming together” one of its top national security priorities.

\(^{43}\) “Al-Maghloub mula’un abadan beleqtada’ belghaleb fee she’areh wa-zayyehe wa nahlatehe wa sa’er ‘ahwalehe wa ‘awa’edeh.” In English, the vanquished always want to imitate the victor in his distinctive characteristics, his dress, his occupation, and all his other conditions and customs.

\(^{44}\) The peculiar, rapid, vibratory movement exhibited by the particles of substances when suspended in water, air, or other fluids.
a deep belief and conviction in and about Islam. Of course, this does not mean creating a group of identical people. In fact, we need diversity to have the whole greater than the sum of its parts.\footnote{The members of the Islamic party Hizb al-Tahrir are proud that if you ask a member in India about a certain opinion and a member in the US, we will get exactly the same answer. I do not think this is good. There should be a degree of doctrinal unity but diversity is the \textit{sine qua non} of success.}

Another challenge facing those thinking about the Islamic state is that Islam is uncompromisingly universal while the state is unquestionably parochial. Minds dominated by the European idea of the nation-state will find it so hard to think of a form of a state urging its citizens to be loyal to Allah (swt) and His messenger first. A state that carries the flag of \textit{da`wah} and works hard to serve the worldly and over-worldly affairs of its citizens. A state that tolerates different interpretations espoused by some of its citizens because they feel that they are closer to Allah (swt) by adopting such interpretations.

So we should restore our confidence in our Islam. Islam is a comprehensive, holistic, and multi-dimensional world-view. We should realize that the West is not the West because of their ideas or values. And we are not what we are because of our religion. This extremely important point requires further investigation.

**Culture, Power and Material Success:**

Why power and material success? Islam regards our life as a temporary state that should not make the Muslim oblivious of the everlasting afterlife. A very superficial understanding of this matter may lead to the conclusion that material power and success are not to be sought by Muslims. In fact, some believe that the more powerless and helpless the Muslim, the better he is. The message of Islam, according to many, is simple and direct: be good and virtuous and you do not need to do anything else. However, serious investigation of the Quran and the \textit{Sunnah} reveals without any shred of doubt the utmost importance of acquiring material power. Humans are considered the agents of Allah (swt) as mentioned explicitly in the Quran. Discharging the obligations of vicegerency requires power. In fact, the Muslim is required to “construct” till the very end of this life. The Prophet (saw) said that if the Day of Judgment were to come and someone has a shoot in his hand, he should plant it if he can. The Prophet (saw) here is not talking about prayer, he (saw) is talking agriculture and, hence, the continuous process of work and construction. Not only agency requires power, the whole array of obligations of realizing justice, fighting injustice, enjoining the good, and forbidding the evil requires power to be implemented. The Quran and the \textit{Sunnah}, as emphasized throughout this booklet, are replete with verses and sayings explicating these obligations. The issue of agency and establishing justice may be an indirect indicator to the requirement of power. But, in addition to these concepts, the Quran mentions power explicitly, “And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier,” (8:60). The servants of Allah (swt) are praised when they combine power with insight, “And remember Our servants Ibrahim and Ishaq and Yaqoub, men of power and vision,”
Verse (57:25) is revealing, “Certainly We sent Our messengers with clear arguments, and sent down with them the Book and the balance that men may conduct themselves with equity; and We have sent down Iron, wherein is mighty power and advantages to men, and that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers in the secret; surely Allah is strong, mighty.” Not only did Allah (swt) send down His guidance but also Iron to protect justice and preserve “the balance”.

Acquiring power and succeeding in the material life have sunan, or a set of laws, that seems to be as strict as the laws of physics. To succeed, you need organizational competence and strategic planning. Culture and morals play a role but not as considerable as many people think. After succeeding people often ascribe their success to culture, but this is a mere *ex post facto* explanation. Of course, some cultural aspects help in the process of acquiring power but, on the other hand, it is power that stimulates cultural resurgence and confidence. Take the Mongols as an example. Their culture was not developed if compared to the contemporaneous Islamic civilization. A Mongol was like a machine committed to fighting others and decimating them. A Mongol was brilliant in his military planning and performance. Without a solid culture, they invaded almost all the East wing of the Islamic empire without defeat. In a couple of centuries the Mongols espoused Islam. This might be one of the few cases where Ibn Khaldoun’s thesis did not work. The reason is simple. The Mongols did not have an advanced culture, in the first place, so that Muslims could become infatuated by it. However, they won because they implemented the sunan of winning in a military confrontation.

The West did the same. They sought material power and achieved it. And then, they used it to prevail over the whole world. Their success has little to do with their cultural values. Huntington puts succinctly in his ‘Clash of Civilizations,’ “The West won the world not by the superiority of its ideas or values or religion, but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence.”

The South East Asians, after their economic boom of the late nineties, started talking boastfully about their culture. They ascribed their miracle to their cultural ideas of order, discipline, hard work, family responsibility, collectivism, and abstemiousness. The Westerns, as the Asians argued, are declining, because of self-indulgence, crime, inferior education, sloth, disrespect for political authorities, individualism, and mental ossification. Of course, Asians became silent after problems stormed them. They also ignored to talk about nepotism and cronyism deeply rooted in their culture. Again, this is a clear example of how indigenous cultural resurgence is stimulated by increase of military, political, and economical successes. Yet, it is regarded by the people as cause rather than effect.

Understanding the keys to material success is a must for Islamic resurgence. Many Muslims believe that religiosity is sufficient for success. They think that being moral is enough. A supreme virtue is made out of fatalism and a state of complete ignorance. This type of thinking does not just go against the course of history, but ignores the Quran and the *Seerah* of the beloved Prophet Muhammad (saw). Didn’t Allah (swt) order Maryam to “shake towards you the trunk of the palm tree, it will drop on you fresh ripe dates.”
(19:25). As is evident from the verse, there should be a human input. Allah is omnipotent and He (swt) could make the dates fall to Mariam without any effort. Yet He (swt) is teaching us that there are *sunan* to be followed. The Prophet’s planning of the immigration from Makkah to Madinah is a unique example for the essentiality of planning and strategic thinking. Allah (swt) could have carried the Prophet on *al-Buraq* as what happened in the Night Journey of *al-Isra’.* Yet, He (swt) left the Prophet (saw) to think and plan. The Prophet decided to first move to the South of Makkah, instead of the North where Madinah is. He stayed three days in a cave so as to deceive the polytheists and increase the chances of success of the plan. Asma’, the daughter of Abi Bakr, was given the task of bringing food and water to the Prophet (saw) and his companion. 'Amer Ibn Fuhayrah, the servant of Abu Bakr, was ordered to follow in her footsteps with cattle so as to conceal her traces. The Prophet (saw) and Abu Bakr hired one of the best guides in the desert. After all this planning, when Suraqah Ibn Malik, verged upon them, Allah (swt) directly intervened to protect them. After all the material planning was pursued and implemented, Allah (swt) sent his help directly. If the Prophet (saw) did all this planning and he was the messenger of Allah (swt), would we stay still waiting for Divine victory on a silver plate? Allah (swt) is all wise and we cannot break His *sunan*. We only break ourselves by discarding His *sunan*.

The bottom-line is that although material success is partially dependent on culture, it, in fact, invigorates culture and causes it to flourish. The implications are huge. The West won not because of their culture (as their prophet Huntington said) and we lost not because of our religion. In fact, we lost because we moved far away from our religion. A logical question that could be asked: So where does Islam impinge on our lives if material success has more to do with planning and organizational competence rather than with values and morals? Islam’s role is indispensable. It is Islam that will shape our success by the will of Allah (swt). For Muslims, mundane life is not everything. It is a step towards the Hereafter. We do what we do in this life in preparation of the Hereafter.

Islam will make the coming superpower (and *ensha’allah* it will come even after a thousand years) a superpower of faith and justice. It will be like the state of Zulqarnain. Zulqarnain, the Muslim leader, did his best to understand the plight of the poor people he met. When they offered him money for protection, he asked only for manpower and built a large wall to defend them against the oppressors. He did not attempt to steal their property. He did not attempt to subjugate them. He, as a Muslim understanding very well the role of Islam, lent these miserable people a merciful helping hand. This is where Islam acts. Morals and values alone will not help us to accomplish anything. Only by pursuing the *sunan* of Allah (swt) regarding material success, we will *ensha’allah* succeed and the empire will *ensha’allah* strike back.

46 “Until when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them a people who could hardly understand a word. They said: O Zulqarnain! surely Gog and Magog make mischief in the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute on condition that you should raise a barrier between us and them. He said: That in which my Lord has established me is better, therefore you only help me with workers, I will make a fortified barrier between you and them; Bring me blocks of iron; until when he had filled up the space between the two mountain sides, he said: Blow, until when he had made it (as) fire, he said: Bring me molten brass which I may pour over it. So they were not able to scale it nor could they make a hole in it.” (18:93-97).
Paradigm Shift:\textsuperscript{47}:

The main conclusion of this booklet is that we need to undertake a paradigm shift. If someone is faced by a problem and tries to solve it using a certain methodology and then fails, the first idea to come to one’s mind is that he may have misapplied the methodology. Yet, after a large number of failures and revisions, it becomes clear that the problem lies in the methodology itself. One is forced to question his models and assumptions, \textit{i.e.}, his paradigm that helps him interpret, predict, and appropriately respond to reality. The true question becomes, not ‘how can we do what we do better?’ or ‘how can we do what we do faster?’ The question becomes, ‘why do we do what we do at all?’

The process of genuine change or resurgence is characterized by several distinct features\textsuperscript{48}. The first is that change is certainly not immediate. When we seek about a civilizational paradigm shift, we are speaking about a considerable period of time. If we decide to resort to civil disobedience, we do not dream that, the next days, all people will not go to work to bring about a change, or will wake up suddenly dissatisfied with tyranny and corruption and realizing that the establishment of justice is a fundamental religious obligation. The second is that, although resurgence may arise from a restricted regional base, it must be global in scope or have the clear potential of global influence over the \textit{Ummah}. The third is that it must overturn some of the basic assumptions about the relationship between man and Allah (swt), man and man, and even man and nature. Since we, Muslims, espouse the true religion of Allah (swt), and yet we are failing, then we should re-examine our relationship with the Creator (swt) and see if we really implement His teachings and follow His \textit{sunan}. The fourth feature is that change must be irreversible in its effects, \textit{i.e.}, granted the moderate oscillations characteristic of all processes of change, there could be no return to the \textit{status quo ante}. In other words, if our state remains as it is, then we are not actually changing ourselves, and thus Allah (swt) will not change our own condition.

So what do we need to change?

\textsuperscript{47} A paradigm is a set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitutes a way of viewing reality for the community that shares them. In 1962, Thomas Kuhn wrote ‘The Structure of Scientific Revolution’, and fathered, defined and popularized the concept of ‘paradigm shift’. Kuhn argues that scientific advancement is not evolutionary, but rather is a “series of peaceful interludes punctuated by intellectually violent revolutions”, and in those revolutions “one conceptual world view is replaced by another”. Breaks with ‘normal science’ do occur when the paradigm ceases to pose interesting questions and anomalies are discovered that resist all attempts to incorporate them in the accepted framework. A crisis develops in normal science and can reach a stage when certain scientists are forced to question the paradigm itself. I think that the idea of paradigm shift is the purport of (13:11), “Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition.” It is a process of changing one’s own assumption and ideas, and thus his state. It is Allah’s (swt) rule for change.

\textsuperscript{48} Sardar’s ‘Islamic Futures: The Shape of Ideas to Come’ is an excellent reference for this point.
1) Tyranny is the worst of all sins. The long-standing assumption that rebellion is more evil than tyranny turns out to be fundamentally faulty. Now it is time to understand the utmost importance of justice and the obligation of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. Saying that the ruler could be fought only if he declares *kufr* publicly, contravenes numerous Quranic verses and Prophetic *aHadith*. Tyranny is a sufficient crime in itself. Tyranny destroys religion, smashes morality, and devastates all aspects of life, even the humanity of humans. The story of *bani Isra'eel* is revealing in this regard. After all what Allah (swt) did to save them from the oppression and torture in Egypt, they defied Prophet Musa, refused to fight with him, and worshipped the golden calf. Allah (swt) punished them by making them wander in the desert for forty years. In these forty years, the old servile thick-necked recalcitrant generation became extinct and a new generation brought up in freedom and dignity emerged and undertook the mission forfeited by their predecessors. The old generation was completely corrupted and demoralized by tyranny.

2) There is no priesthood in Islam. The idea of raising the legal pronouncements of scholars to the level of eternal rules is insulting to the *Shari`ah* and should be changed. Our rulers have betrayed the *Ummah*, many scholars are in bed with the corrupt oppressive governments, and now we, the *Ummah*, are the last line of defense. If our scholars insist on mediocrity, if our jurists persist in misreading reality and miscalculating life dynamics, we should remind ourselves that it is the truth and not them that should be given deference. Allah (swt) says, “And We will inherit of him what he says, and he shall come to us alone,” (19:80). Every individual will be brought before the Creator (swt) in the Hereafter and reckoned for his deeds. Every individual is responsible for discharging his obligations. Every individual should seek knowledge and follow the truth after diligent and exhaustive investigation. We, as Muslims, do respect the sincere and honest scholars. However, we must be cognizant of the fact that they are not infallible and thus they do commit mistakes. I dedicated a section in this booklet in defense of the jurists and in an attempt to understand how they have formulated their opinion regarding tyranny and rebellions. I proved by the Quran, the *Sunnah*, and history that they got it wrong in their balance-of-evils analysis. This is not a problem in itself, for Allah (swt) rewards the *mujtahid* even if he errs. The problem is when these opinions go unchallenged by Muslims as if coming from the Divinity.

3) The state of fatalism we are immersed in should be changed. We should rely on hard work, not dreams and visions. Belief and morals are indispensable but not

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49 “They said: O Musa! We shall never enter it so long as they are in it; go therefore you and your Lord, then fight you both surely we will here sit down.” (5:24)

50 “Seeking knowledge is an obligatory duty on every Muslim, whether male or female.”

51 “Defer to your heart even if others advise you, advise you, and advise you.” Of course, a decision made that is not preceded with diligent and exhaustive investigation runs the risk of being a simple exercise of capricious whimsy.

52 Before the battle of Uhud, the Prophet (saw) had a vision that he (saw) interpreted as a sign that Muslims should fight inside al-Madinah. However, the majority of Muslims were of the opinion of confronting the polytheists outside al-Madinah. Despite being a Prophet and despite the vision, the great Prophet (saw) abided by shura, which is the earmark of just regimes.
enough. Material success has sunan to be strictly followed. Allah (swt) says, “And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them, whom you do not know (but) Allah knows them; and whatever thing you will spend in Allah’s way, it will be paid back to you fully and you shall not be dealt with unjustly.” (8:60). We should fully understand the principle of causality. Allah (swt) has sunan that are not subject to change or modification. The vast majority of Muslims cannot realize that sunan of Allah (swt) governing history are as strict as His sunan in physics. People’s life, on small scale, and civilizations' life, on large scale, are governed by a superb set of rules that we should try to understand and act upon. The Seerah of the beloved Prophet (saw) is replete with strategic thinking in spite of being a divinely guided messenger.

4) We should engage in a process of self-criticism instead of wasting our time and efforts on blaming the other. No one expects his enemy to treat him benevolently. What do Muslims gain by putting the blame on the US or the Zionist entity? I am not downplaying the role of the imperialistic powers in the plight of the Muslim Ummah. Yet, we should stand up to our responsibilities and do our best. Success is from Allah (swt). Compare our attitude, of holding others completely responsible for our status, and how the Quran tackles Muslims' defeat in the battle of Uhud. “What! When a misfortune befell you, and you had certainly afflicted (the unbelievers) with twice as much, you began to say: Whence is this? Say: It is from yourselves; surely Allah has power over all things,” (3:165). “It is from yourselves,” Allah (swt) says. A Muslim, as evident from the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (saw), is 'aowaab, which literally means oft returning. All over the course of his life, a Muslim compares his actual conduct with the desired conduct as defined by the Quran and the Sunnah. After calculating this ‘error signal,’ the Muslim changes the parameters of his ‘controller’ so as to bring himself closer and closer to the ideal model. This process never stops for the individual (till his death), or even the Ummah (till the Judgment Day).

5) We should have unequivocal confidence in our religion. The infatuation by the Westerners should stop without denying or ignoring the positive contributions of the Western civilization. They are not what they are only because of their ideas or values. We are what we are because we have forsaken our religion. Allah (swt) is the only source of honor and dignity, “Those who take the unbelievers for guardians rather than

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53 I do not intend at all to de-emphasize the role of Iman and purity of hearts. Iman, morality, abstemiousness, self-discipline, order, hard work, purity of hearts, organizational competence, planning, and strategic thinking, are all needed for success on this earth and in the Hereafter.

54 For you shall not find any alteration in the course of Allah; and you shall not find any change in the course of Allah.” (35:43)

55 This does not mean that we ‘reject’ all their contributions. Rejectionism is tantamount to defining Islam in terms of what it is not, not what it is. This also amounts to considering the West our reference point!

56 Recall Huntington’s comment.

57 A problem facing many (not all) of the second generation Muslims living in Europe and the US is their lack of confidence in Islam. The problem is aggravated by some Muslim scholars in the West espousing the position that Islam is just a way, i.e., Islam is a religion and religions are equally valid. Under the banner of ‘tolerance’ many compromises are made, and the supremacy and perfection of Islam (not Muslims) are de-emphasized. The conditions in the Muslim world fuel this feeling.
believers. Do they seek dignity from them? Then surely all dignity is with Allah.” (4:139). Islam is our ultimate point of reference, “This day have I perfected for you your religion and completed My favor on you and chosen for you Islam as a religion,” (5:3). A genuinely Islamic state should have the Quran and the Sunnah together as its constitution and should have an Islamic frame of reference in regard to its general goals, its method of government, and the theories underpinning its policies in politics, economics, international relations, and war. In addition, insights from all the other civilizational experiences are not to be ignored. Western paradigms and discourses, for instance, can be invoked in logistics and procedures as a human experience one can learn from, like, for example, how to implement the Islamic principle of Shura (consultation).

6) We should get rid of ‘textualism.’ The Muslim mind is dominated epistemologically by Qiyas (analogical thinking). Emergent experiences have to be related to those experiences that took place during the early days of Islam. Solutions are sought only within the confines of earlier precedents. Analogical thinking, in fact, helped the development of Islamic jurisprudence by extending the finite rulings of the Quranic verses and the Prophetic traditions to cover the new conditions facing the Muslim community. Nevertheless, problems occur when there is few in the Texts concerning a specific issue58. Perhaps, the most striking example is the political organization of the Muslim community and the conduct of its affairs. These are obviously left to the discretion of the Muslim community. Yet, some scholars and Islamic movements insist on meticulous archeological digging for clues where none could be found. The result is a complete loss in the maze of precedents that are taken out of context, and thus very quickly become completely irrelevant. I could argue that such epistemological flaw is one of the main reasons that have crippled the political thought in Islam. Some jurists want to apply the methods of government of the city-state of Medina to the contemporary nation-states or even to the anticipated united Islamic state.

7) We should get rid of wishful thinking and reasoning that lacks sophistication. We should properly model reality and understand power dynamics59. The United Nations will not work for us. Others, even if moral and decent, will not help us. We should do it ourselves. We should deal with reality and not with what we think reality should be. For

58 I do believe that when this is the case, it is a dalil (indicator) from Allah (swt) that we should think for ourselves and seek solutions that suit our time and place. This should be confined only to the details that are not explicitly mentioned in the Quran or the Sunnah (like the details of shura). The definitives of the Quran and the Sunnah that are mentioned in a clear self-evident language are eternally valid and are not open to Ijtihad. Claims of the historicity of the Quran, i.e., its confinement to its socio-historical context, are unacceptable and, in fact, amount to forsaking Islam itself.

59 Enormous effort was done and much money was spent to rally Muslims to bloc vote for Bush Jr. as president of the U.S. Yet, the attitude of his administration towards the Islamic world and even the U.S. Muslim citizens and residents is going contrary to the electoral promises. Although the majority of the U.S. Jews voted for Al Gore, Bush proved to be, and as was described by the Israeli PM Sharon, the best supporter of the Zionist entity. Muslim leaders failed to recognize that the elections are basically a competition between two indistinguishable parties to control a single ideology state. When in one previous presidential election, a Turkish politician was asked if Turkey was concerned that a U.S. president with Greek origins would shift the U.S. support from Turkey to Greece, he replied in the negative pointing to the fact that there are ‘constants’ in the American policy. Following wishful thinking and misreading reality wasted the efforts and money of Muslims of the US.
example, humans are instinctively inclined to think in terms of gains and losses. Most humans do good not because it is good, but because doing so may reap them some benefit, or bring them a feeling of enjoyment or delight. Most humans do not do evil not because it is evil, but because they are keen to escape harm, misery, pain, or punishment. In the ideal Islamic society, the pacifying role of the state is kept to a minimum. *Taqwa* and the love for Allah (swt) and His Prophet (saw) stimulate people much more than worldly gains or punishments. However, many reformers mix between our desired goal and our reality. People are caught between two extremes, one extreme putting all emphasis on the state, and another underestimating the state and imagining the possibility of establishing a genuine Islamic society regardless of the existing corrupt regimes. The truth is that both a strong state, and a truly Islamic people are required for our success.

“Surely Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition.” (13:11)

If there is good in what I have said, the praise rests solely with Allah (swt). The blameworthy originates from me.

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60. That is the reason we have *qisas* in Islam.
61. I remember in one discussion, a friend of mine said that the state does not force a man and woman to commit fornication in public. I do agree, but there are three catches: (1) the state encourages promiscuity through the corrupt media it controls, (2) people are ignorant of their religion because of the stagnant educational system controlled by the state, and (3) people are naturally deterred by punishment. Of course I am not advocating a righteous state in which people do good because they are compelled to do so. In fact, this would be antithetical to the Islamic principle of individual responsibility.