The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought

Tauseef Ahmad Parray

Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India

INTRODUCTION

Although there are many encyclopedias on Islam and its history, classical to contemporary, in general, like 12 volume new edition of *Encyclopedia of Islam* or others with a modern approach like Richard C. Martin's 2 volume *Encyclopedia of Islam and the Muslim World* (2004), or John L Esposito's *Oxford Encyclopedia of Modern Islamic World*, (1995, 4 vol.s; and 2009 edition, 6 vol.s), among others, *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Islamic Political Thought (EIPT)* is a single-volume, comprehensive, richly informative and innovative, wide-ranging, first encyclopedia and reference work on the Islamic political thought. *EIPT* includes articles ranging from classical to the contemporary period and incorporates the eras from Prophetic time to the present, with many articles that are not only *purely* "political" in nature and scope but fall in socio-political, politico-economic and (a)political category as well. *EIPT* includes 418, alphabetically arranged, entries/articles, written by 249 "international team of specialists" (in their respective fields) and, for easy access, have been divided and listed into five categories: (1) "Central Themes" and sources of Islamic political thought (15 entries); (2) "Historical Developments, Sects and Schools, Regions and Dynasties" (108); (3) "Modern Concepts, Institutions, Movements and Parties", (91); (4) "Islamic Law and Traditional Islamic Societies"(106) and (5) "Thinkers, Personalities and Statesmen" (98).

lthough most of the contributors have contributed one or two entries, however 24 scholars have contributed 4, 5 and 6 entries each. The inclusion of new entries and the articles on contemporary trends in political thought will provide framework for understanding ongoing events in Islamic history. *EIPT* also contains maps of Muslim empires, populations; guides readers to further research through bibliographies, cross-references and an index; and includes an "Alphabetical List of Entries" (pp. xxi-

xxiii), "Topical List of Entries" (pp. xxv-xxvii), which are its plus points, as these are informative and very useful and helpful, for the readers.

Among the editorial team, Devin J. Stewart has contributed 12 entries, which is the maximum number of articles contributed by a single author to the *EIPT*; and besides this, Gerhard Bowering, Editor-in-chief, has contributed a comprehensive "Introduction" as well, which is, for me, a book in itself – a book on the genesis, development and modern trends in Islamic political thought and includes the discussions on the "Islamic World Today in Historical Perspective", as well as on the evolution, "Rudimentary Foundations" of Islamic political thought and its development, especially in the middle ages to the present.

Although there is a wide-ranging and diversity of the topics that are included in this encyclopedia, but here – to show the innovative, comprehensive and up to date approach – in this review is provided a brief assessment and evaluation of some the selected inter-related articles that have gained importance due to the recent trends and developments in the discourses and discussions in the post-9/11 scenario, among others, namely Consultation (*Shura*) and democracy; minorities and jurisprudence of minorities; and secularism.

"Consultation" (pp. 116-7 by Roswitha Badry) and "democracy" (pp. 128-30, by Mirjam Künkler) are two major important concepts as far as Islam-democracy discourse is concerned – both in Islam and in Muslim societies: a discourse that gained much importance in post-9/11 scenario and now again in the wake of the 'Arab Spring' as well. Here both the contributors have approached the concepts from this perspective. For example, Badry argues that *Shura*, although a Qur'anic concept, has become, from the 19th and especially from the final decades of 20th century, a "core value of a newly propagated Islamic system", commonly referred as "Islamic democracy" and Muslims have provided a broad

Corresponding Author: Tauseef Ahmad Parray, Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, India
E-mail: tauseef.parray21@gmail.com

spectrum of theories, especially "four tendencies", ranging from "radical Islamists" to their opposites and from "pragmatic moderate Islamists" to "secular scholars and intellectuals" (pp. 116, 117). For Badry, in practice, the idea of consultation has proven to be "compatible" with various political systems, whether "monarchial or republican" and with "assemblies of different kinds" (p.117).

While as, for Künkler, who approaches the concept of democracy from the general conceptual perspectives as well as its place in and *vis-a-vis* Religion, Islamic law and in the Muslim world, democracy does not require a "strictly secular order in institutional terms" (p.129). Künkler is of the view that there is an "Arab democracy-gap", as far as Muslim countries of Middle East are concerned, which although has now been changing after the 'Arab Spring'.

Similarly, the authors of "minorities" (pp. 340-46, by Yohanna Friedman) and "minorities, jurisprudence of [Muslim]" (pp. 346-8, by Alexandre Caeiro) approach the concepts and issues from twin perspectives: Friedman treats both "Muslim Minorities under Non-Muslim Rule" and vice versa and also tackles and raises the issue of *fiqh al-aqalliyyat*, which is then further elaborated by Caeiro in a separate article. Friedman, in a nutshell argues that (a) the question of majority-minority relationship has been relevant to Muslims since the emergence of Islam (p.340); (b) hardly "any Muslim minorities lived under non-Muslim rule", during the era of Ottomans, Safavids and Mughals – the three great empires (p.341); and (c) from the 1990s, the emergence of significant Muslim minorities in non-Muslim countries provided the "impetus" for the development of "legal theory of Muslim minorities" (p.341); and for him, on the other hand, the question of non-Muslim minorities in Muslim majority countries, which although was there especially from the earlier times (and in Medieval period, "the *dhimma* system was the legal framework" for this question), has entered a "new phase in the 20th century" with the emergence of numerous new states in the Middle east, Asia and Africa (p. 343).

Moreover, Caeiro puts forth that since the WWII, this issue/theory has emerged as a "distinct field of Islamic legal research" and it has been called a "modern phenomenon", although Muslims have lived under non-Muslim rule throughout history (p.346). It is still a contentious issue, although Taha Jabir al Alwani and Yusuf al-Qaradawi, the two pioneering figures in promulgating this theory, have made efforts to make it an established issue and its success depends on

"envisioning Islam as a 'civil' religion contributing to the common good" (p.348).

Furthermore, with regard to the issue of the place of secularism in Islam, Henri Lauziere in "Secularism" (pp: 489-90) argues that as such, in general terms, it means the "institutional separation between religion and state", but in theory and practice, this separation can take on various "forms" (p.489); and Muslim proponents of it argue that Islamic history is replete with examples of "de facto secularism". In the 21st century as well, Muslim thinkers, like [Abdullah] An-Naim and [abdulkarim]Soroush, continue to defend the validity and even the necessity of institutional secularism" (p.490).

These few examples show, very clearly the innovative, informative, scholarly and contemporary approach and methodology that has been adopted in the scholarship in *EIPT*. It also makes clear that the editors have been successful in their goal – i.e. to provide "a solid and innovative reference work that would trace the historical roots of Islamic political thought and demonstrate its contemporary importance" (p. xviii) – in creating the *EIPT*, which took them almost four years to complete this "venture". Also, as far as the extensive and wide-ranging scope of entries included in this encyclopedia is concerned, being of various nature(s) and covering all the three periods, classical to contemporary, they have been not only successful but at the same time they have filled emptiness and the gap that was in the literature on Islamic political thought, as far as a comprehensive reference work on the core conceptions and institutions, thinkers and movements of Islam and politics is concerned.

It seems that the work could have done well, than it is, had there been an addition of topics and themes such as global jihad, Islamism, Islamophobia, multi-culturalism, inter-faith dialogue; Muslims in and of the West and other related topics, keeping in view the popular demand, debate and discussion on these themes and topics, as they have highly intensified and gained prominence and importance after 9/11 and now in the wake of 'Arab Spring' as well. Also, there is no direct entry on 'Islamic State', which seems an amazing thing for a work on Islamic political thought.

Keeping these shortcomings aside, the *EIPT* presents a combination of broad, comprehensive articles on core concepts and shorter entries on specific ideas, movements, leaders and related topics and the editors have been, to a large degree, successful in making the *EIPT*, not only "accessible, informative and comprehensive with respect to the contemporary political

and cultural situation of Islam", but also in providing an " in-depth examination of the historical roots of that situation" (p. xviii).

In sum, the editors of *EIPT* have done a marvelous and stunning job by bringing out such an all-inclusive and rich volume on the various aspects, trends and perspectives, of Islamic political thought. Taken as a whole, this work is quite a comprehensive and concise guide, providing positive and reasonably balanced views on a wide range of topics relating to Islam and politics. It could also be recommended for use as an essential and important reference guide; a must read for everyone interested in Islamic political thought. And keeping in view the richness and comprehensiveness, lucidness and coherence, wide-ranging and diverse approach and nature of the entries, as well as the integration of the latest scholarship, *EIPT* is not only one of the most essential, but is a must-have and must-read reference work both for the students and specialists of Islamic political thought in particular and a best one volume comprehensive work, that brings together concepts and issues, personalities and movements, for undergraduates and graduates of Islamic studies in general.

Tauseef Ahmad Parray is a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Islamic Studies, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU), Aligarh, India. His several works, research papers and book reviews, have been published internationally in various reputed Journals of Islamic Studies, Social /Political Science, from 10 different countries of the world: USA, UK, UAE, Malaysia, Philippines, The Netherlands, Pakistan, Turkey, China and India. He is on the 'Editorial Board' of various Journals and magazines, like *Journal of Humanity and Islam* (JHI), Malaysia; *History Studies – International Journal of History*, Turkey; *Bannu University Research Journal* (*BURJ),* Bannu, Pakistan; and New York based magazine, *Encompassing Crescent*; and is 'Book Review Member' of *Muslim World Book Review*, UK. His major areas of research interest include: Islam and Democracy; Modern Islamic Political Thought and Institutions; Islamic Social Sciences (esp. Political Science); Islamic Modernist/Reformist Thought; Contemporary Thinkers of South Asia (India & Pakistan); and *Qur'anic* Studies. A regular 'Book Reviewer', he has published more than 30 reviews from 2010, including two in *Intellectual Discourse*. Email: tauseef. parray21 @gmail.com