



MUHAMMAD ASAD'S DESIGN OF AN ISLAMIC STATE IN POST-COLONIAL PAKISTAN

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Abstrak

Kata kunci:

Negara Islam;
Konstitusi; Politik;
Pakistan

Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menyoroti postulat epistemologis Muhammad Asad tentang politik Islam sebagaimana tercermin dalam karya-karyanya tentang negara Islam. Penelitian ini berusaha untuk menjawab pertanyaan-pertanyaan mendasar berikut: apa dasar hukum yang mendukung dan membangun posisi Asad dalam mendirikan negara Islam? dan bagaimana gagasan ini dapat diakomodasi secara adil dengan gagasan negara bangsa yang berlaku dalam konteks pasca-kolonial. Oleh karena itu, tujuan studi ini untuk menganalisis ide-ide dasar negara Islam yang dianjurkan dalam sumber-sumber klasik, mendefinisikan kerangka kerja konstitusional dasar yang dikembangkan oleh Asad dalam konteks historis Pakistan, memperkirakan implikasi dari penerapan hukum Islam dan dampaknya terhadap politik global serta kesesuaiannya dengan hukum internasional. Dalam hal ini, Asad telah merumuskan gagasan konstitusional negara Islam berisi ketentuan hukum Islam yang mempraktikkan dan menerapkan norma-norma yang dinyatakan dalam Kitab Suci. Gagasan ini sebagian diabadikan dalam hukum konstitusional Pakistan yang pendirian politiknya dibentuk pada tahun 1947. Penelitian ini dilakukan berdasarkan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan. Data dianalisis dengan menggunakan teknik deskriptif, analitis dan komparatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Muhammad Asad telah merumuskan kerangka teoritis yang komprehensif tentang aspek hukum pemerintahan Islam yang disusun dari prinsip-prinsip dasar dan doktrin syariah, dan norma-norma moralnya yang berasal dari teks-teks eksplisit Al-Qur'an dan sunnah, sementara juga mengadvokasi cita-cita dan prinsip-prinsip demokratis yang didasarkan pada praktik-praktik konvensional dan kebutuhan

modern negara bangsa. Berdasarkan temuan utama ini, disimpulkan bahwa ajaran Islam dan norma-norma spiritualnya sesuai dengan cita-cita demokrasi dan nilai-nilai hak asasi manusia, pemerintahan yang partisipatif dan konstitusional seperti yang diimplementasikan dalam ruang demokrasi Pakistan.

Abstract

Keywords:

Islamic state;
Constitution;
Politics; Pakistan

The paper aims to highlight Muhammad Asad's epistemological postulate on Islamic politics as reflected in his works on Islamic state. It seeks to address these fundamental problems: what is the legal basis that support and establish Asad's position of founding an Islamic state? and how could this idea fairly accommodates with the prevailing notion of nation state in post-colonial context. Thus, the study set forth to find the answers based on such range of objectives: to analyse the underlying ideas of Islamic state as advocated in the classical sources, to define the basic constitutional framework as developed by Asad in the context of historical Pakistan, to estimate the implication of implementing Islamic law and its impact on the global politics and its compatibility with international law. In this regards, Asad had formulated the constitutional ideas of Islamic state whose constitution contains the provision of Islamic law that practiced and implemented the norms stated in the Divine Writ. This ideas was partly enshrined in the Pakistan constitutional law whose political establishment was formed in 1947. The paper essentially discussed Muhammad Asad's political ideas and its underlying philosophy as espoused in his works. The study conducted based on qualitative approaches of the type of library research. The data were analysed by way of descriptive, analytical and comparative technique. The finding shows that Muhammad Asad had formulated comprehensive theoretical framework of legal aspect of Islamic governance drawn up from the fundamental principle and doctrine of the shariah, and its moral norms deriving from the explicit Qur'anic and sunnah text, while also advocating democratic ideals and principles based on conventional practice and requirement of modern context of nation state. Based on this main finding, it is concluded that Islamic teaching and its spiritual norms were compatible with democratic ideal and values of human right, participatory and constitutional government as implemented in the democratic space of Pakistan.

Introduction

The paper addresses Muhammad Asad's political ideas, an erudite scholar and diplomat born in July 1900 at Lemberg, and died in 20th February 1992, at Mijas. It provides an overview of the essence of Islamic political theory and the development of its political entity throughout history since the time of the Prophet (saw) and the rightly guided Caliph. The longing of the vast majority of Muslim ummah that anxiously expressing the need for an Islamic state and of restoring their glorious past of expansive sovereignty in the vast territorial border, was succinctly explained by Fazlur Rahman in his article that manifested the spirit of pan-Islamic nationality and solidarity that bind together such highly emotional sentiment: "*Muslims, or at least the vast majority of them, have been very vocal about the necessity of establishing an Islamic state in the world, or, if it is not possible, to set up a unitary Islamic state, at least, several Islamic states. The idea of an Islamic state has many implications touching both the form and the substance of the state and raising questions like unity and multiplicity of such states, the nature of legislation and source of power and whether or not it ought to be democracy.*"¹

Thus the paper aims to highlight the discussion of Islamic state as enshrined in the work of Muhammad Asad and its far-reaching consequences for the ummah. However, he has contributed a lot to Muslims, including in the development of Islamic learning.² It brought forth his profoundly enriching political philosophy with regard to the underlying principles and form of Islamic state in Pakistan. This discussion is important to fill the gap from previous studies, that were particularly lacking in light of its development of theoretical discussion and argument pertaining to the basic ideals and principles of Islamic state. In addition

¹ Fazlur Rahman, "The Principle of Shura and the Role of the Umma in Islam," *American Journal of Islam and Society* 1, no. 1 (1984): 1, <https://doi.org/10.35632/ajis.v1i1.2817>.

² Abroo Aman Andrabi, *Muhammad Asad's Contribution To Islamic Learning* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2007).

there were also certain gap of discussion that need to include the critical elaboration of the principle of *shura* (mutual consultation), the concept of governance based on the scriptural sources of the Qur'an and Sunnah, and its manifestation in modern context which underlie the democratic process and constitutionally-related institutional bodies and structure of Pakistani state.

At the outset, Muhammad Asad's political thought was clearly reflected in his writings such as *The principles of state and government in Islam*³, *This law of ours and other essays*⁴, *Islamic constitution making*⁵, *Journal Arafat*⁷, *The message of the Qur'an*⁸, *Sahib al-Bukhari the early years of Islam*⁹, *Calling All Muslims* (A collection of Radio Broadcast), *Islam at the Crossroads*¹⁰, *The Spirit of Islam*¹¹, *The Road to Mecca*¹², and etcetera. These materials provided the underlying component and insight of Muhammad Asad's political outlook, especially concerning the substantive issues of "the source of power and the nature of legislation" of Pakistan.

³ Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam, The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), <https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.5232965>.

⁴ Muhammad Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1987).

⁵ Mansoor Ahmed, Ghulam Mustafa, and Muhammad Sajid Khan, "Delineations of Governance through Islam in Nascent Pakistan: Department Of Islamic Reconstruction and Islamic Law Commission," *Academic Journal of Social Sciences (AJSS)* 4, no. 4 (2021): 848–60, <https://doi.org/10.54692/ajss.2020.04041274>.

⁶ An essay published under the auspices of the Government of Punjab (1948), then laterly it expanded to the book Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*.

⁷ M Asad, "Arafat: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought," 1946.

⁸ M Asad, *The Message of The Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).

⁹ M Asad, *Sahib Al-Bukhari The Early Years of Islam* (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2013).

¹⁰ Muhammad Asad, *Islam at the Crossroads* (Pakistan: Arafat Publications, 1934).

¹¹ This book is a republication of the first chapter of "Islam at the Crossroads" Asad.

¹² M Asad, *The Road to Mecca* (New Delhi: Islamic Book Service, 2004).

Asad arguably one of the leading architect and key founders of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. Established in May 1947, he was subsequently granted full citizenship in August 1947, thereby legally making him its first citizen. Historically he has played significant part in its formation, as recounted in his autobiography *The Road to Mecca* of an inspiring role as its original conceptor along with the great Muslim poet-philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) who held the formative vision of the Pakistan idea.¹³

In his narrative he recounted his meeting with the visionary Iqbal in early 1930s in India who gave birth to the idea of partition of the Indian Subcontinent, where he had many discussions with Iqbal about the government of a future Pakistan¹⁴: “*To me, as to Iqbal, this dream represented a way, indeed the only way, to a revival of all the dormant hopes of Islam, the creation of a political entity of people bound together not by common descent but by their common adherence to an ideology*”¹⁵. It was Iqbal who persuaded Asad to give up his plans of traveling to Eastern Turkestan, China dan Indonesia and to remain in India to help elucidate the intellectual premises of the future Islamic state¹⁶, and thus to realize the vision of forming a newly Islamic political entity, reflecting an-organized Islamic nation and statehood made up of Muslim community identified with Islamic religious and social identity.

Asad had extensively outlined his political ideals in details in his work *Islamic Constitution Making* which was prepared in his capacity as director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction responsible with

¹³ See: Apriana, “Konsep Negara Islam Muhammad Iqbal (Studi Atas Pemikiran Dan Kontribusinya Terhadap Pembentukan Negara Pakistan)” (Tesis (M. Hum.), IAIN Raden Fatah Palembang, 2008).

¹⁴ M Asad and P H Asad, *Home-Coming of the Heart* (Lahore: Pakistan Writers Co-Operative Society, 2015); See also: Sherwani, ed., “Presidential Address Delivered at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League, 29th December, 1930,” *Speeches, Writings and Statements of Iqbal* (Lahore: Iqbal Academy Pakistan, 1995).

¹⁵ Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, 2.

¹⁶ Asad, 1.

drafting the Constitution of Pakistan and its conceptual basis. This was subsequently developed with its establishment in 1947 by the Government of the West Punjab- Lahore whose task was to “elaborate the ideological Islamic concepts of statehood and community upon which the newly born political organization might draw”¹⁷. It formed the groundwork of the basic conception of political ideology of the Pakistani nation. The Pakistan idea inspired by Iqbal had widely impacted Asad’s future undertaking and role as its foreign ambassador, as highlighted in his book *The Road to Mecca*, that recounted his stimulating experiences and career in the Pakistan Foreign Services, where he dedicated himself to “strengthening the ties between Pakistan and the rest of the Muslim world”; and ultimately in his mission to the United Nations at New York, campaigning for the liberation of colonial countries in North Africa.

His thoughtful insights on the Islamic state and its constitutional basis, underlying the structural formation of political organization, infused with Islamic spiritual values and democratic ideal, found expression in the preamble of the Constitution adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1949.¹⁸ It reflected his profound understanding of the essence and implication of religious spirit and ideals and the consequential legal and cultural impact of Islamic law in practical life, that contributed to establish his reputation as leading interpreter of Islam:

*“For years I devoted myself to this ideal, studying, writing and lecturing, and in time gained something of a reputation as an interpreter of Islamic law and culture.”*¹⁹

The idea of reconstruction was put at his disposal to define and conceptualise the ideological basis of the newly born political organization,

¹⁷ Asad, 1.

¹⁸ See: M Asad, *Undang-Undang Politik Islam, Terj. Oemar Amir Hosein Dan Amiruddin Djamil (Diterjemahkan Dari Islamic Constitution Making* (Jakarta: Pustaka Islam, 1954).

¹⁹ Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, 3.

by Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah.²⁰ It began with connection with broadly intellectual circles who were impressed and passionately interested about the future of Islamic state in Pakistan, “*until that time, Muslims does not have any model of an Islamic state. Most of the writings published before 1940s, focused on Caliphate. It was Asad who started the debate on the likely nature and form of government of Muslim country in the modern age*”²¹. In his article Martin Kramer (1999) pointed out that after his release from British internment camps in India (September 1939-December 1945) in August 1946, Asad, having resolutely tried to consolidate his Muslim identity, had “wholly identified with the cause of Pakistan, which he saw not simply as a refuge, but as the framework for an ideal Islamic polity”. His aims was to establish an Islamic state as a liberal, multiparty parliamentary democracy²², meant to challenge the antithetical perspective toward democracy, by showing evidence in Islamic sources, that favour for elections, parliamentary legislation, and political parties.

The implementation of his democratic ideas nevertheless met with resistance from certain orthodox and fundamentalist groups, claiming the doctrine to be in conflict with Islamic conceptions: “*Some Muslim scholars argue that the concept of democracy is not compatible with the concept of an Islamic state. But of course it is and the Quran outlines the essence of democracy*”²³ The movement to realize the political struggle and ideology of the nation was actively propagated through radio and television broadcasting and regular talks in Radio Pakistan, reminiscent of his aspiring and stimulating activity in drafting the constitutional ideas of Pakistan and delivering lectures in

²⁰ See: Hamidah, “Perjuangan Dan Pengaruh Muhammad Ali Jinnah Dalam Pembentukan Negara Pakistan,” *Kontekstualita* 33, no. 1 (2017): 28–53.

²¹ M Arshad, “Muhammad Asad: Twenty-Six Unpublished Letters,” *Islamic Sciences* 14, no. Summer (2016): 25–66.

²² M Kramer, ed., “The Road from Mecca: Muhammad Asad (Born Leopold Weiss)”, Dalam *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis*, in *Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies*, 1999, 225–47.

²³ Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, 1987.

many occasion on these pertinent topics in Lahore and Delhi, in which he was directly involve in elaborating the principles of Islam and such themes of state responsibility to provide conducive environment for the population to practice their lives in accordance with the principal injunctions of Islam²⁴. In this regards, he recall that: *“if we stand united in these days of upheaval and catastrophe, if we cooperate with one another with consciousness of purpose and honest determination, our long-cherished dream of an Islamic state will come true in spite of all the obstacles which our enemies may place in our way”*²⁵

Following Iqbal’s suggestion, Asad wrote a series of articles on the *raison d’être* of the creation of Pakistan, and these were subsequently published in European periodicals and gazettes, and in Urdu translation and brought to notice in its newspaper outlet. As Asad recounted, it was Iqbal who firstly identified, in clear-cut political terms, the idea of an Islamic state in northern part of India and thus gave the concept “its body and life”. Iqbal was *“a seer who had grasped the innermost reality of Muslim life, of its virtues and its faults, of its errors and its great potentialities”*²⁶. Asad painstakingly devoted his utmost effort in realizing this dream, although his vision of an independent, liberal democracy did not materialize.

In the original document prepared by Muhammad Asad as director of the Department of Islamic Reconstruction (West Punjab, Lahore, 1947-49), whose function was to elaborate the ideological, Islamic concepts of statehood and community upon which the newly born political organization might draw²⁷, Asad delineates its objective and underlying mission, and espoused the drafting of the proposal of the first Constitution of Pakistan. From the outset, the department was formed at the provincial level (Punjab) to influence the Constituent Assembly in

²⁴ Muhammad Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2015).

²⁵ Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, 1987, 123.

²⁶ Asad and Asad, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, 68.

²⁷ Asad, *The Road to Mecca*, 1.

the constitutional making process, in the interest of Islam and the central government, as evident in the 'Memorandum for enforcement of *Sharia* in Pakistan' sent by Asad to Constituent Assembly on 18th August 1948, which suggest that "what is most urgently needed is an unambiguous declaration on the part of the government that the establishment of an Islamic policy was not just a pre-partition slogan but the real aim behind its demand"²⁸.

The memorandum further outlined the essential function and task of the department, and proposed the formation of the regional councils in all cities which should comprised of prominent citizens and social workers to help building up a truly Islamic society, as well as a separate '*Shariah committee*' constituted of 'responsible ulema' of all school of thought to codify laws devised from the Qur'an and sunnah²⁹. In this regards he explicitly stated that "*Shariat Committee must be appointed by the government in near future that should be composed of responsible ulema from all the sects to carry out the codification of the social and economic laws from the Quran and Hadith that can be promulgated in the country.*"

Unfortunately, Pakistan did not work out as Iqbal and Asad had hoped for and his ideas had not been realized. The new state had been "a historical necessity," and without it, "Muslims would have been submerged in the much more developed and intellectually and economically stronger Hindu society." But "*unfortunately it did not quite develop in the way we wanted it to. Iqbal's vision of Pakistan was quite different to that of Mohammed Ali Jinnah [1876-1948, first governor-general of Pakistan], who did not in the beginning want a*

²⁸ Ahmed, Mustafa, and Khan, "Delineations of Governance through Islam in Nascent Pakistan: Department Of Islamic Reconstruction and Islamic Law Commission"; Council of Islamic Ideology, *Islami Nazaryati Council, Idarajati Pase-i-Manzar Aur Karkardagi* (Islamabad: Musa Printers, 2016).

²⁹ Ahmed, Mustafa, and Khan, "Delineations of Governance through Islam in Nascent Pakistan: Department Of Islamic Reconstruction and Islamic Law Commission," 852; Council of Islamic Ideology, *Islami Nazaryati Council, Idarajati Pase-i-Manzar Aur Karkardagi*.

*separation.” Pakistan became a state for Muslims, but its secular founders put aside its mission as an Islamic state’.*³⁰

Thus, the Department of Islamic Reconstruction was ultimately burned down and completely vanished with its archives, after the death of Quaid-e-Azam, without trace. Nevertheless, its memory remains with the historical archives and documents that evidently suggest that it has played a momentous role in that moment, as recorded in the influential *journal Arafat: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought* edited by Muhammad Asad, showing correspondence he made with early generation of freedom-fighters and forefathers of Pakistan movement in its formative years.

The conceptual framework of Muhammad Asad’s political thought was provided in an authoritative references of contemporary survey, as highlighted by Tadzkira Nadiya Tsaurithat examines the influence of Muhammad Asad’s socio-political ideas in the formation of the newly-founded Republic of Pakistan in 1947. It explains the historical background of his life and his moral philosophies and career as well as the traditional influence on his progressive ideas and his significance learning and experiences in India that inspired his projection of Islamic state. In spite of its modern foundation and construct, Asad still emphasized its necessity to be rooted in the basic sources of Islamic tradition and practice. Asad was responsible in drafting and formulating the basic ideas and concept that underlie Pakistan’s constitutional ideologies. He emphatically support the ideas put forth of its moral foundation based on the socio-ethical principles forthcoming from the explicit texts of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Although his ideas were only included in the preamble of the constitution of the governmental structure, which has cease to be in force, it continued to have lasting impact in the historical memory of the nation as its leading founders and formulators.³¹

³⁰ Kramer, “The Road from Mecca: Muhammad Asad (Born Leopold Weiss)”, Dalam *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis*”; M Parker, “Death of a Muslim Mentor,” *Middle East*, 1992.

³¹ Tadzkira nadiya Tsauri, “Pengaruh Pemikiran Muhammad Asad Dalam Pembentukan Negara Islam: Studi Tentang Terbentuknya Negara Pakistan,” *Diponegoro Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy* | Vol. 5, No. 1, November - April 2024

Asad's ideas could be compared to Alija Izetbegovic, another giant intellectual of European Muslim, highly reputed in articulating the concept of Islamic state in the twentieth century and outlining its vision consistent with the original and legitimate ideal of the Shariah and its moral and legal imperative. Both of Asad and Alija's project found expression in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Balkan Peninsula that manifested the highly rigorous and sustained spirit of Islamic ideals and the dynamic force of its political order. Their ideas had inspired the thriving of democratic constitution to propel with its legal and socio-ethical implication for the Muslim nation. Both were staunch advocates of the political and religiously-based entity of nation state, which allowed for the thriving of universal consciousness of Muslim society that invoke wide-ranging of religious-moral and ethical teachings to be realized and find its practical expression³²

The distinguished writings of Muhammad Asad on the classic model of the Shariah state in the context of Pakistan, was highly phenomenal, as highlighted by Pipip Ahmad Rifai Hasan (1998) in his thesis, which deals with constitutional issues relating to the nature and power of various state organs and regulations, the formation of modern Islamic law and its legal basis, the functioning of state mechanism, the status of women, minority and non-Muslims, and the relationship between Muslim and non-Muslim states. According to him, in order to achieve the ultimate goals of Muslim cultural revival, conscious of their intellectual and spiritual potential, Islam should be a program of life, where the establishment of Islamic polity is imperative if Muslims really wanted a vehicle through which they could translate the principles of Islam into action. Otherwise, he believed that freedom and prosperity of Muslims will not be achieved unless their followers submit wholeheartedly to its principles and strive to implement

Journal of Accounting (Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah, 2017).

³² M A Sherif, *Why an Islamic State: The Life Projects of Two Great European Muslims* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2009).

them. Hasan's thesis was developed from historical point of view which chronologically analyses Asad's politico-religious ideas, through his books, articles, foreign reports and interviews. It finally concludes on the reliability and applicability of the Shariah state model that he proposes, in the context of contemporary development and current needs and issues facing Muslim society.³³

Further, his political concept and ideas were comprehensively analysed by H. Idzam Fautanu that addresses the key concepts and nature of constitutional system and parliamentary structure brought forth by Muhammad Asad, widely hailed as reputed thinker and ideologist of the Islamic State of Pakistan. Reflecting on the essences and higher objectives of Islamic law and spiritual teaching, Asad has propounded significance ideas of its universality and coherent worldview, which includes sociolegal and moral ideals, underlying its laws and principles of governance, and its legal philosophy and jurisprudential basis.³⁴

The essence of Asad's legal thought and its influence in projecting the modern structure of Islamic State as articulated in his book *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* was clearly expounded by Acep Bahrul Rivai in his thesis. In his reviews, Acep summarizes particular themes of importance featuring Asad's socio-political ideas, that a country comprising mostly or even entirely Muslims is not necessarily equal to Islamic state. It can only be truly Islamic by the conscious application of its social and political teachings in the life of the community through its incorporation in the basic constitution of the country. Generally, the work

³³ P A R Hasan, *The Political Thought of Muhammad Asad*" (Tesis M.A: Department of Religion, Concordia University, n.d.).

³⁴ F H Idzam, "Konsep Negara Islam Muhammad Asad: Studi Atas Pemikiran Dan Kontribusinya Terhadap Pakistan" (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2007); F H Idzam, "Prinsip-Prinsip Ketatanegaraan Dalam Islam (Perspektif Muhammad Asad). Makalah Diskusi Dosen Madrasah Malem Reboan (MMR)," *UIN Sunan Gunung Djati*, 2017; F H Idzam, "Peran Negara Dalam Subsidi Kepada Masyarakat Dalam Pemikiran Muhammad Asad," *Socio-Politica* 8, no. 1 (2018): 1–9.

looks into Asad's traditional views and arguments in justifying the need for an Islamic state and the *raison d'être* of its formation, as well as the form and context of government he envisages.³⁵

The vision of Muhammad Asad as political advocate was broadly discussed by Mia Oktaviani in her thesis that specifically analyse his political struggle and influences in the formation of Pakistan as well as his indispensable works concerning specific governmental and constitutional issues. She argued that Asad was of the opinion that in forming the state, the form of government is left to the Muslims to develop a model or pattern that conform with the values and ideals of Islam, since there was no stipulation about the concrete form of state expressed in the Qur'an and hadith. He maintained that there is no separation between the two organs of the power-relation between the executive and legislative bodies, which is integrated under the rule of an *amir*, whose functions as the head of the legislative council, and in his executive function as the head of state, can overcome the dualism of power. While the state's relationship with the people was bound by a reciprocal system, with equal rights and obligations, which must be adhered to, that provide protection to the community, equal access to education, and various economic facilities. While the people's interest was safeguarded, they have every right to criticize the ruler, and protect their dignity and honour of their family, defending the state, and adhered to the shariah rule.³⁶

The broad consequence of its political dimension was highlighted by Zaimul Asroor in his book that discussed the contextual interpretation of political verses in the Qur'an by Muhammad Asad, contrasting between his textualist and contextualist approaches in addressing the state and

³⁵ A B Rivai, "Negara Islam Menurut Muhammad Asad: Studi Pemikiran Muhammad Asad Dalam Buku the Principles of State and Government in Islam" (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2012), <http://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/id/eprint/389>.

³⁶ M Oktaviani, "Pemikiran Politik Islam Menurut Muhammad Asad" (Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, 2019).

governmental issues. He analysed his compelling arguments and debates concerning the relationship between religion and state, especially in the constitutional topic of establishing the Islamic State of Pakistan, which involved his direct participation and vocation. Asad's interpretation of the political verses in his writings form the basis of his compelling arguments of Islamic politics from the Qur'anic viewpoints. This has arguably bring forth interesting discourse and interpretations held by other commentators and exegetes, in response to discussions related to the understanding and contextualizing of the *ayah* from scriptural sources.³⁷

Recent publication of Kenneth X. Robbins's "*Four People of the Book: From Foreign Jewish Roots to South Asian Islamic Roles*", reviewing the historical background and lifetime journey of Muhammad Asad in his transformation from Leopold Weiss to Muhammad Asad, was particularly welcomed that analytically described his rising influence and careers and connections made in India and Pakistan. Thus, generally, this paper aims to complement and fill some gaps in previous writings on Muhammad Asad's political thought and its practical application in Pakistan, and further strengthen those findings and efforts, by reinforcing political views as well as providing more comprehensive evidence and reasoning and justifications of Muhammad Asad's compelling arguments and vision.³⁸

The research was designed based on qualitative and documentative analysis. It conducted comprehensive literature review of Muhammad Asad's corpus as the main instruments. The method of analysis is based on analytical and descriptive framework. It studies the influence and relation between Asad's ideas and his coherence approaches in producing his comprehensive corpus of Islamic classics. The data were derived from

³⁷ Z Asroor, *Ayat-Ayat Politik: Studi Kritis Penafsiran Muhammad Asad (1900-1992)* (Tangerang Selatan: Yayasan Pengkajian Hadits el-Bukhari, 2019); See also: Z Asroor, "Tekstualis Vis-à-Vis Kontekstualis (Studi Kritis Penafsiran Ayat-Ayat Politik Muhammad Asad 1900-1992)," *Ilmu Ushuluddin* 18, no. 2 (2019): 152–172.

³⁸ K X Robbins et al., eds., *Four People of the Book: From Foreign Jewish Roots to South Asian Islamic Roles. Co-Edited with Zohaib Ahmad* (Maryland: Kenneth X. Robbins, 2022).

primary and secondary sources, including books, manuscripts, papers, periodicals and journals from Asad's original collection. These were analysed using interpretative heuristic insight and comparative analogy in order to summarily concluded the finding.

Result and Discussion

1) The Islamic State

Asad's defining arguments and insights on the essential framework of Islamic state practically derived from traditional premises relating to the theory of Islamic government and constitutional principle as brought forth in classical works of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence).³⁹ It presents the vision and hope of the Ummah, highlighting “*Our desire to build our socio-political existence in terms of Islam and for the sake of Islam*”⁴⁰, while conceiving on the complex structure and framework of the institution of nation state and its competitive measure invoking for modern policies and structure in the governmental process. The formation of Islamic State of Pakistan, he submits, must take into account the basic requirement of its moral imperatives and sociolegal and ethical basis.⁴¹ The state, in his estimation, was unlikely to sustain if people continue to pursue ignorant culture and habit. Instead it requires conscious commitment toward practical Islamic life, forthcoming from the consciousness of the Muslims of the dream and struggle of the founders to uphold their vision demanding full

³⁹ See: M Asad, *Islam and Politics* (Geneva: Islamic Centre, 1963); M Asad, *Asas-Asas Negara Dan Pemerintahan Dalam Islam (Terj. Muhammad Radjab)*, Jakarta: Granada, Cet (Jakarta: Bhratara, n.d.); T Asad, “Muhammad Asad between Religion and Politics. Kertas Kerja Disampaikan Dalam Simposium ‘Dr. Mohammad Asad – A Life for Dialogue’, Pada April 11, 2011 Di King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies” (Riyad, 2011).

⁴⁰ Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, 1987, 94.

⁴¹ See: M. Ikram Chaghatai, *Europe's Gift to Islam: Muhammad Asad (Leopold Weiss)*, ed. M I Chaghatai (India: Adam Publisher and Distributors, 2006).

integration of religious life: “*if the meaning of our struggle for Pakistan is truly to be found in the words Lā ilāha illā Allāh, our present behaviour must be a testimony of our coming nearer and nearer to this ideal – that is, of becoming better Muslims not only in our words, but in our actions as well.*”⁴²

Such a significant viewpoint was further articulated in his insightful article “*What do we mean by Pakistan*” which was published in *Arafat* journal in February 1947 (p. 66) and reissued in his book titled “*This Law of Ours and Other Essays*” (p. 41):

*“The Pakistan movement...can become the starting-point of a new Islamic development if the Muslims realise - and continue realising it when Pakistan is achieved – that the real, historic justification of this movement does not consist in our dressing or talking or salaaming differently from the other inhabitants of the country, or in the grievances which we may have against other communities, or even in the desire to provide more economic opportunities and more elbow-room for people who – by sheer force of habit – call themselves Muslims’: but that such a justification is to be found only in the Muslims’ desire to establish a truly Islamic polity: in other words, to translate the tenets of Islam into terms of practical life.”*⁴³

In conceiving the basic principle of Islamic government, he outlines its prerequisites which has to be in line with the clear text and evidence of the Qur’an and Sunnah and its explicit word as well as the practice of the *Salaf* (the righteous forebears), thus: “*we must look for guidance to no other sources than the Qur’an and the Sunnah, and to rely on no authority other than the explicit Word of God and the explicit teachings of the Last Prophet (saw)*”⁴⁴. This encapsulate the hope of the entire *millat* and their underlying aim and aspiration for a new dawn:

⁴² Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, 1987, 95.

⁴³ Asad, 41.

⁴⁴ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, 14.

"If our present leaders but listen to the people's heartbeat they are bound to realise that what the common man desires is not merely a state in which Muslims would have greater economic facilities than they have now, but a state in which God's Word would reign supreme".⁴⁵

This represents a new dawn in the history of the *millat* featuring the hope and expectation of the ummah for an immanent future with the creation of Islamic state in Pakistan by realizing their dream in that momentous day. In his article "Calling All Muslims" which was published in the periodicals *Arafat*, Lahore, 1948 Asad argued in light of the progress and development of Islamic state and its socio-political requirement and imperative as enshrined in the constitutional framework of Pakistan which he directly involved in setting up and preparing its draft. The article originally made for his Radio Talk broadcast, in September 1947, which expresses the aspiration of its national leader, Quaid-e-Azam, and his vision to uphold the Islamic law based on the values and principles of *tawhid*.

The conceptual ideal enshrined in the draft reflected the basic structure and framework of Islamic constitution envisioned by Muhammad Asad, that uphold the value of freedom, and safeguard human rights and public participation, defending the standard practice of democratic process and the rule of law by forming the key legislative, executive and juristic bodies, as well as emphasizing on the need to applying resolute moral imperative in realising this program:

"We are passing through a time of unprecedented stress and gravity a time that calls for the utmost moral and physical effort on the part of every one of us. Unless we, as a community, are able to bring forth such an effort, our social and political life is bound to suffer grievously and the very achievement of an Islamic State may prove to have been an illusion".⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Asad, *This Law of Ours and Other Essays*, 2015, 47.

⁴⁶ Asad, "Arafat: A Monthly Critique of Muslim Thought," 86.

In Islamic State, the values being developed were directed toward realizing its spiritual and metaphysical teachings and *tawhidic* worldview, which encompassed such holistic approach in political and economic policy, that projected an inclusive and dynamic structure of the nation's ethico-legal system and principle, "*the raison d'être of Pakistan was the desire of the vast majority of these inhabitants to live an Islamic life. The first and most important principle of Pakistan's foreign policy was therefore the fulfilment of Islamic duties*"⁴⁷. The classic norms and practices formed in its earliest historical period, provided insightful example of that accomplished era of the universal *ummah*, imbedded in the *tawhidic* consciousness of early Muslim community, consciously adopting its higher transcendental ideal in practical life.

With regard to the development of Asad's political ideal and conception of Islamic state, it is explicitly clarified in his standard work, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, which emphasized on the intrinsic nature of Islamic government and its historical precedence. It was conceived based on the prevailing political structure and framework of the seventh century Madinah society, developed by the Prophet (saw) and his Companions, that provided the example of an ideal manifestation of political entity and statecraft in Islam:

*"For, let us be clear in our minds on one point at least: there has never existed a truly Islamic state after the time of the Prophet (saw) and of the Medina Caliphate headed by the Prophet's immediate successors, the four Right-Guided Caliphs, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali. That Medina Caliphate was truly Islamic in the sense that it fully reflected the pristine teachings of both the Qur'an and the Prophet's Sunnah, and was as yet unburdened by later-day theological accretions and speculations."*⁴⁸

⁴⁷ M Hamidullah, "Islam's Solution of the Basic Economic Problems - the Position of Labour," *Islamic Culture* 10, no. April (1936): 213.

⁴⁸ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, v-vi.

The fact that only the Madinah Caliphate established in Islam's early period that truly reflected the pristine teaching of the Qur'an and Sunnah is due to its historical realization of *tawhidic* framework that make up the essential fabric of government and foundational ideas and doctrine of statecraft, based on the integral teaching of Islamic scripture and authoritative religious prescription and postulate. This provided the background of Asad's conception of political organization taken from scriptural sources as indispensable reference which constitute the approximate prototype of Islamic government, as "Islamic" in the full sense of the word, and would also take the practical requirement of our time"⁴⁹. In this sense, it contextualize the modern ideas of nation state and its prerequisite of moral imperative, that envision the reality of truth and the force of *tawhid*, through conscious application of shariah. This was realized through the practice of *ijtihad*, that reflected the higher ideals and values of truth, and so "*to strip it down to its original, very basic essentials, without all the accretions of the many centuries that followed which prevented it from being really workable*"⁵⁰.

In this sense, his approach to the shariah is fundamentally based on the clear and explicit word of the Qur'an and Hadith, in that "*whatever forms of state and government came into being in Muslim countries after that first, earliest period were vitiated, in a lesser or higher degree, by ideological deviations from the erstwhile simplicity and clarity of Islamic law, or even by outright, deliberate attempts on the part of the rulers concerned to deform and obscure that law in their own interests*"⁵¹

Such unwarranted addition has resulted in confusion of the true meaning and implication of the shari'ah law, and the essence of the Divine Writ revealed from on high, since "*the real shari'ah is*

⁴⁹ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*.

⁵⁰ Asad and Asad, *Home-Coming of the Heart*, 263.

⁵¹ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, viii.

*extremely concise and, therefore, easily understandable and because it is so small in volume it cannot...provide detailed legislation for every contingency of life*⁵². Thus, in his drafting and formulating of the principal ideas of the future constitution of the Pakistan ideas, Asad based his work on scriptural source and *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) broad and explicit text of the Qur'an and Sunnah and higher objective of Islamic law, forthcoming from the divine writ and its textual evidence as well as his insightful observation of the dynamics of social reality and its various manifestation encompassing entire shape of communal life.

In summary, Asad's characteristic viewpoint of Islamic government can be concluded as follows: (1) there is no specific form of Islamic state (2) the principal duty of Islamic state is to uphold shariah (3) there can be no legal stipulation that run contrary to the text and spirit of the shariah (4) adherence to Islamic constitutional rule is a Muslim religious duty (5) the decision of the *shura* council is legally binding on the executive body, that "*all governmental activities must be an outcome of consultation among the community's accredited representative*"⁵³ (6) the Supreme Court should act as a guardian of the constitution, that is shariah.⁵⁴

Consequently, in reading his political ideology it gives the widest possible resolution to the problem of differences of opinion based on the decision of the majority, as representative voice that empower public reason reflecting its underlying values of morality and rationality in light of social practice in pursuing public good, in that "*the ultimate purpose of an Islamic state is to provide a political framework for Muslim unity and cooperation.*"⁵⁵

⁵² Asad, 14.

⁵³ Asad, 35.

⁵⁴ Idzam, "Prinsip-Prinsip Ketatanegaraan Dalam Islam (Perspektif Muhammad Asad). Makalah Diskusi Dosen Madrasah Malem Reboan (MMR)."

⁵⁵ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, 30.

The political experience of Pakistan, in fact, reflected the socio-political reality of the emerging nation state prevailing in modern history, whose ideas and notion of parliamentary and bureaucratic state, was technically supported by many of the leading authority and scholars of Islam, as highlighted by Charles Kurzman in his work on modernist Islamic movement, pointing out the religious interpretation of its leading jurist and polymath Muhammad Abduh, that “Muhammad ‘Abduh (Egypt, 1849-1905) - the highest-ranking religious official in Egypt – wrote privately in 1904 that he supported a parliamentary democracy”⁵⁶. Such constitutional ideas was further developed and reinforced by Muhammad Asad in his textual interpretation of religious sources, as alluded to by Deny Fresyan (2006) in his analysis of Muhammad Asad’s fundamental doctrine of Islamic state: “*In defining Islamic state, Muhammad Asad conceived that it constitutes a political establishment whose constitution contains the provision of Islamic law in such a way that its constitutional practice implement the norms enshrined in the Qur’an and hadith*”.⁵⁷

Such classic ideas of Islamic state found expression in the existence of Pakistan whose structural foundation was shaped in line with Islamic principle and its religious spirit while accommodating the modern ideal of democratic pillar of civic and nation state.⁵⁸ In this context, Asad’s ideas has enduring relevance and far-reaching consequences in contemporary world with the achievement of Pakistan, brought forth by his unprecedented vocation as its leading ideologue in which, “*his views on the centrality of Islam to everyday life*

⁵⁶ C Kurzman, ed., *Modernist Islam, 1890-1940: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 3.

⁵⁷ D Fresyan, “Konsep Negara Dalam Islam: Studi Pemikiran Muhammad Asad Tentang Berdirinya Negara Islam” (Disertasi Sarjana, IAIN Walisongo Semarang, 2006).

⁵⁸ See: Showkat Ahmad Dar, “Concept of Islamic State and Its Applicability in 21st Century: An Appraisal of Muhammad Asad’s Model,” *Insan ve Toplum* 6, no. 1 (2016): 175–86.

*consequently led him into the area of civil society and its proper governance.”*⁵⁹

In his review of Asad’s *State and Government*, Edward J. Jurji (1963) expressed his deep impression of Asad’s instructive work, stating that “*this book is a discussion of such religious fundamentals as must find an expression in a constitution professing to be authentically Islamic. However, a blueprint is not offered for constitutional craftsmanship in Pakistan or any other Muslim state. Mr. Asad invokes a standard supporting the viability of the religious law of Islam: should sharp differences divide an Islamic community, the believers must ever remember an injunction of the Prophet (saas) which declared that “the differences of opinion among the learned within my community are [a sign of] God’s grace.”*”⁶⁰

In his work *Sahih al-Bukhari The Early Years of Islam*, Asad further commented on the indispensable need for conducive environment that make way for creative application of shariah, as explained in “The Book of Faith”: “*the practical goal of the Islamic shari‘ah is the construction of social conditions in which all individuals will find equal opportunities for their spiritual and material development. This practical, social purpose of the shariah gives the Muslims the moral right to strive for its establishment in the world.*”⁶¹

He also acknowledged of the reality of its basic postulate as requisite to form such concrete and organising force of life: “*the ideologies of religion are, in themselves, abstract conceptions, resembling a codex of laws before its application to life and its conditions. It is this application alone which transforms an ideological postulate into an organising force of life.*”⁶²

The existence of Pakistan has restored the ideological consciousness of the vision and doctrine of *tawhid* in public space. It stands to realize the aspiration of Muslim ummah of an accomplished

⁵⁹ John Mayberry, “Muhammad Asad: Traditionalist or Modernist?,” *Journal of the Contemporary Study of Islam* 4, no. 1 (2024): 33, <https://doi.org/10.37264/jcsi.v4i1.03>.

⁶⁰ E J Jurji, “Reviu Buku ‘The Principles of State and Government in Islam,’” *Journal of Church and State* 5, no. ue. 2 (1963): 269–270.

⁶¹ Asad, *Sahih Al-Bukhari The Early Years of Islam*, 361.

⁶² Asad, 361.

state, that realized the objective of divine authority and its overarching transcendental and spiritual development in human government through state apparatus elected by the masses by mutual consultation. In this sense, Asad's role in the Department of Islamic Reconstruction was instrumental in formulating Islamic policy that was accountable to inspire higher ideal of political and religious life in the best light of scriptural values and experience and its moral and spiritual insight.

In conclusion, the idea of Islamic state forms the basic postulate defining the very structure of Pakistan ideas that was realized with the legitimacy of the sources and mass support of the people to reclaim the ideal foundation of Islamic government. And in this context, Asad' defining idea of Islamic state has found expression with its establishment that address the basic question of the principle of Islamic state and its spiritual foundation and constitutional structure.

2) The Principle of Justice and the Higher Objectives of Islamic Law

*“Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought.”*⁶³ In analyzing the background of Asad's political struggle and aspiration, it is pertinent to see this in the context of his fundamental idea and activism in the pre-independent aggression for a separate homeland. This underlie its theoretical argument as set forth in his work on its origin and underlying historical and epistemological ground, in which he views the state as *“a coordinating agency with the powers of command and prohibition...and a tool by which Islam's ideals can be brought to practical fruition”*⁶⁴. *It provides the bedrock upon which “the constitution must explicitly lay down that no temporal legislation or administrative ruling, be it*

⁶³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice, Essays and Reviews: 1959-2002* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2014), <https://doi.org/10.5840/studentfil1973525>.

⁶⁴ Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, 4, 96.

*mandatory or permissive, shall be valid if it is found to contravene any stipulation of the shari‘ah*⁶⁵.

In this sense, the state must provide socio-economic and political security to all of its citizens⁶⁶. He argued that the state is obliged to provide food, cloth and shelter to its citizens so that no person is forced to live in poverty⁶⁷, as set forth in his commentary of verse 5:38 in *The Message of The Qur’an*: “Now as for the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off the hand of either of them in requital for what they have wrought, as a deterrent ordained by God.”⁶⁸ Asad explained that:

*“In a community or state which neglects or is unable to provide complete social security for all its members, the temptation to enrich oneself by illegal means becomes irresistible – and, consequently, theft cannot and should not be punished as severely as it should be punished in a state in which social security is a reality in the full sense of the word. If the society is unable to fulfill its duties with regard to every one of its members, it has no right to invoke the full sanction of criminal law (hadd) against the individual transgressor, but must confine itself to milder forms of administrative punishment. (It was in correct appreciation of this principle that the great Caliph ‘Umar waived the hadd of hand-cutting.”*⁶⁹

In conclusion, the decisive moment in his struggle to champion this principle was realized with the foundation of Pakistan that tenaciously uphold the principle of justice, equality and fairness to all its citizen.⁷⁰ Muhammad Asad’s rigorous work and struggle to uphold the legitimate aspiration of Pakistani people clearly reflected in his socio-religious commitment toward achieving sovereign nation

⁶⁵ Asad, 35.

⁶⁶ Asad, 83.

⁶⁷ Asad, 89.

⁶⁸ Asad, *The Message of The Qur’an*, 213.

⁶⁹ Asad, 213.

⁷⁰ See: Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009).

state, which was realized with the achievement of a newly founded independent political organization that govern its norms and values which embody the spirit of justice, fairness, moderation, simplicity, and *ibsan*. Because after all, the enforcement of religious moderation is also important by the state as the controlling power, as is the case in several other major Muslim countries like Indonesia for instance.⁷¹ It seeks to realize constitutional guarantee of religious freedom and the implementation of sustainable policy of shariah by the common consensus through the integral power of the executive, legislative and judicial branches, functioning as the supreme bodies of state mechanism.

Conclusion

Based on this brief analysis of Muhammad Asad's political thought, it might be concluded that its basic conception and theoretical framework was originally founded upon the traditional practice and sources derived from the teaching of the Qur'an and sunnah and the practice of the salaf and the rightly-guided Caliphs that served as an explicit and fundamental source from which Asad developed his modern conception of Islamic state. This classical premises emphasized upon the universal principle of the shariah and the tawhidic force as the principal guide of his socio political ideal, envisioning a modern Islamic state that would approximately replicate the political order of the 7th century Hijrah of Prophetic era. In this regard, its basic formation lay in a truly democratic state and civic tradition that recognized the universal convention of modern nation state, projected toward moral and spiritual upliftment and sustainable future of the ummah. Such ideal was forthcoming from the dynamic character and force of a socio-religious fabric of Islamic polity, embedded with

⁷¹ See: A Hidayah, N Rizky Fauziyah, and W Wibowo, "The Role of the State in Fostering Religious Harmony in Indonesia: A Historical Review, Challenges and Policy towards Moderation," *Academic Journal of Islamic Principles and Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (2024).

the higher philosophy underlying the spirit and doctrine of the Qur'an and sunnah (prophetic tradition). Its overriding objective and practical aims was to realize the Qur'anic principle of the justifiably Islamic rule as the basis of constitutional framework he espoused that brought forth the significance form of political organization meant to revive the socio-political order of the 7th century Hijrah guided by the higher principle of revelation and tawhidic consciousness and carrying the deeply-seated religious principal and its perennial spirit and values. Overall, this study was basically limited to the treatment of Asad's political ideals and its religious implication in the case of Pakistan. It is suggested that further study would delve into further horizon of his invaluable political ideal and doctrine and its impact upon the global undertaking of Muslim nations to bridge the gap between them and the wider horizon of the Western world.

Acknowledgment

We would like to acknowledge the kind assistance of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC-IIUM) in facilitating this research, in term of providing support and permission to consult the sources at the SMNA Library.

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