

The New Birth of Revolutionist Ideology of Sayyid Qutb

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Islamic Theology of Counter Terrorism
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The latest wave of political Islamic terrorism that wrapped the world with the blood of innocents starts from 20th century to onwards actually is an ideology of Qutbism. The leading member of 20th century's political Islamic ideologue was Sayyid Qutb of Egypt, who joined the Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan ul Muslimoon) in the 60s after completing his training in the USA.

If we study the ideology of Sayyid Qutb in deeper, we find that Qutb was more a revolutionist than a Jihadist. He struggled all his second phase of life against the sinful (according his thought) and corrupt Muslim regimes such as the Egyptian government. He did not advocate terrorism, according to his speeches and writings but waged non-violent Jihad against the cruel and corrupt Muslims states. Today's Jihadist ideology is far different than the ideology that Qutb introduced in the 20th century. He was an Islamic theorist and introduced the revolutionary theory in his movement that later turn the revolutionist ideology into the Jihadist ideology.

According to a PhD scholar, El-Sayed el- Aswad:

“Despite the existence of common and shared components between Qutb's views and the ideology of present Islamists, and despite the impact of Qutb's thought on the latter's ideology, there are fundamental differences between them. This implies that despite the radical trend of Qutb's writings and teachings portraying Islam as a force opposing Western secular imperialism, Qutb did not support the wide-ranging and indiscriminate violence advocated locally by the Egyptian jihadist groups of the 1970s and 1980s, and globally by the extreme Islamists of global jihad like Bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri operating through al-Qaeda. For Qutb, jihad must be directed toward sinful and corrupt Muslim regimes.”

In the early stage of his practical life, he was a government servant and worked with various government departments. He was pro state at that time but was very much aware of the core principles of Ikhwan ul Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood). His philosophy suddenly changed when he returned from the USA and decided to join the Brotherhood in relations to introduce an awakening model for the young supporters. He introduced a West-inspired model of revolution into the Ikhwan movement which practised the concept of Sufism at the time.

Sayyid Qutb was an intellectual person, he was already known by his writings well before joining the Ikhwan movement. He authored a book named “Social Justice in Islam” in the 1940s. During these years Qutb visited the USA for his further training where he expressed his hateful and negative thoughts towards the American materialistic culture, as opposed to the spiritual and moral culture of Islam. He changed his mind from Islamic scholar to the social revolutionist after he returned. His USA visit lasted nearly two years that brought radical thoughts to his mind.

In 1953, the year after the revolution of the Egyptian Free Officer in 1952, he joined the Ikhwan ul Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood). In the beginning, he and his members of the Ikhwan movement supported Egyptian ruler Gamal Abdel Naser but their relations with Gamal Naser deteriorated when he did not accept the Islamic Political Orientation. After a year of Qutb's joining the Ikhwan, Gamal Naser was survived from the bloodied attempt of his assassination in 1954, blamed on Ikhwan which forced them to go underground.

The difference from the ideological conflict to a social revolution between the Ikhwan and Egyptian government started. The period from 1954 to 1960 was a time that changed the political arena of Egypt from political and social reform to a dangerous and bloodiest revolution.

The continuous conflict between the Egyptian regime and Ikhwan ul Muslimoon ended when the Ikhwan leadership was persecuted and imprisoned, including Al- Hedaybi, then Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood and Sayyid Qutb.

In prison, Sayyid Qutb wrote a masterpiece Milestones, discussing the notion of God's sovereignty (hakimiyya) as well the notion of Jihad, which was developed by the Indian intellectual Abu Hassan Nadwi and Pakistani Muslim scholar who was influenced by the ideology of Qutb, Abu Al-A'la Maududi. When Qutb was released from the prison in 1964, he changed his thought into the Islamist type revolution that can overthrow the Egyptian government and form an Islamic regime.

He joined the secret organisation seeking to revive the Islamist movement and to establish an Islamist system to replace the secular government. This was the step when the actual war of conflict between Gamal Naser and Ikhwan movement began and in retaliation, Egyptian authorities arrested Qutb along with two other Ikhwan leaders and he was executed by hanging in 1966.

The revolutionary movement did not end here but the ideological struggle that turned into the violent Islamist movement has rapidly risen because the ideology of Qutb gave life to the resistance movement of Qutbism that spread all over Egypt and across borders. Mohammad, the brother of Sayyid Qutb left Egypt for Saudi Arabia and joined a Saudi university as a lecturer. He was the main ideologue of Qutbism and induced political Islamic violent ideology into the veins of Saudi generations. It was the peak time in 1980s when his ideology got a new breath through the Afghan Jihad. Mohammad Qutb had many prominent students who later joined the Afghan war and Usama bin Laden and Dr Ayman Al Zawahiri were among them. They later created a global terrorist network titled Al-Qaeda.

The claim of international media that Usama Bin Laden and Dr Ayman al Zawahiri were Salafists which is completely a wrong and bias claim. These both Jihadists figures were influenced by Ikhwanic ideology, not Salafists or Wahabis. There are some Salafist political parties in Egypt that gained a great victory in 2011 revolution, such as Al -Asalah (The Authenticity), Al Fadilah (The Virtue) and Al-Nur (The Light) that have dominated Egyptian political arena after the 2011 revolution. There are huge political, religious and ideological differences between the Salafist movements and Ikhwan ul Muslimoon and always remain opponents of each other.

John Calvert, the author of "Sayyid Qutb and the Origins of Radical Islamism" says in his book:

"If Qutb were alive, he would have been terrified by the extremist trends of the post-Qutb Islamists".

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