

Abstract

This study tried to critically analyze the idea claiming that unity has existed between religion and politics throughout Arab - Muslim history. It tried to examine the validity of this claim during the periods of the Orthodox and Umayyad caliphates. This process was done on two levels: the theoretical level of the Islamic theory of governance as advocated by the various Islamic religious schools such as the Kharijites, the Shi'ites and the Sunnis, and the second level is that of the historical political experience in governance.

The study found that Muslim experience during the periods of the Orthodox and Umayyad Caliphates was based on the separation between religion and politics. This does not mean that Islam was not involved as jurisprudence in the life of the Muslim society, but it rather means that Islam was not the only or even, the main reference in the political sphere. The establishment of an Islamic rule requires Islamic government based on Islam as a reference in all the details of the social, economic, internal and external politics, i.e. a rule that does not contradict Islam and its rules. We do not find such a thing in the historic experience of the Orthodox and Umayyad Caliphates. We learned from Muslim history that experiment was not entirely based on religious texts; on the contrary in many cases the religious text was put aside and was superseded by politics. On this basis, we claim that there was a separation between religion and politics. The Orthodox and Umayyad Caliphs were more interested in the life requirements and the requirements of establishing the State than strictly practicing the Islamic texts.

The importance of the study lies in that it tackled the issue of the separation of religion from politics in the framework of studying the historical experience which forms the reference framework of the Islamic political thought on which its theories were based regarding the political authority and its nature. This is in an attempt to discover the borders and functions of the Islamic political thought in history, particularly in the political history, by criticizing the conservative "intellectual trends" which produced the legacy with despotic view that is surrounded by a sacred halo being connected with the religious dimension. These trends go back to medieval ages and the ideas that theologians produced, such ideas were based on the selection of narrations, and in some cases forging the historical situation and its facts with regard to the Islamic

political theory. These ideas are re-produced today in connection with the contemporary political Islamic movements.

This study is divided into two sections: the first section is concerned with religion and politics at the level of theory. The theories reviewed here were associated with the historical events connected with them, according to the development stages of the history. It consists of three main chapters: the theoretical framework which is a study on the concept of secularism and the political theory of the Islamic schools such as the Kharijites, the Shi'ite and the Sunni, and the political theory of the Islamic elite. In this chapter the study analyzed patterns from the Arab Islamic history which sought to produce an enlightening discourse inside the society which seeks to separate religion from politics encouraging open thinking in all issues of life as affected by Greek philosophy like: the Mutazilis, the philosophers and the Ikhwan al-Safa.

The second section studied politics as it was practiced by the different caliphs, as it was reflected to us by the historical events through which we indicated how the caliph was selected and appointed, and the criteria which were used in governments, the selection and appointment processes and the political procedures inside the society. It consists of two chapters: the first reviewed the bases of authority transfer in the Orthodox and Umayyad Caliphates, and the second chapter analyzed the orthodox and Umayyad Caliphates: specifically the political practice.

In addition to these two sections the study includes, as expected, a conclusion, which contains the most important conclusions.