

AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL ETHICS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MUHAMMAD ARKOUN

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Abstract

This study is grounded in the profound need to comprehend the role of Mohammed Arkoun, a postmodern/contemporary scholar, in revitalizing the potential of Islamic thought in the 21st century. The article underscores Arkoun's significance as an Islamic philosopher who successfully integrates the "authenticity of Islam" with a broad understanding of contemporary social sciences, giving rise to the concept of Applied Islamology. With a life background immersed in two traditions, Islam (Algeria) and France (the West), Arkoun endeavors to reconcile various aspects of life from both civilizations. The research methodology employs descriptive, historical, comparative, and synthetic analysis approaches. Data collection involves extensive literature research on Arkoun's works, both his writings and relevant contributions from other authors. Based on a philosophical-critical examination of the data, it is concluded that Arkoun plays a significant role in shaping an inclusive study of Islam for the future. The findings offer profound insights into Arkoun's contribution to connecting and harmonizing Islamic thought with contemporary social sciences.

Keywords: Political Ethics; Political thought; Muhammad Arkoun.

INTRODUCTION

Several studies on Islamic siyāsah have been published by various scholars. Nonetheless, contrary to Arkoun's assertion, these papers generally do not concentrate on critical thought regarding political ethics. While most siyāsah Islamic studies are primarily analytical, descriptive, and historical, Arkoun's analysis delves deeper into ethical and political reasoning, focusing on deconstructive and epistemological aspects within the context of siyāsah Islamic studies. This study paves the way for a philosophical critique of political-Islamic philosophy, which is typically dominated by Daulat ilāhiyyah, or political-Islamic discourse, which follows an idealist-fundamentalist-theocratic pattern.

The emergence of religious dictatorship or oligarchy that aims to establish theocratic control is a result of inadequate understanding of Theo-humanistic ethics and contextual-integrative methodology in Islamic studies, together with its associated tools. Additionally, there is disagreement between academics who support critical freedom and power, which is frequently repressive, because there is no precise and contextual articulation and no distinction made between responsibilities in the political and religious spheres. The secularism that Turkey has experienced in the past can teach other Muslim nations valuable lessons. Similarly, the detrimental effects of political marginalisation on religious beliefs in Western nations, as demonstrated in the New Order eras of France and Indonesia.

It is necessary to critically examine the depth of ancient Islamic ethical philosophy and place it in the context of the present. Ibnu Khaldun, Fazlur Rahman, M. Sa'id al-'Asymaw, and Mohammad Arkoun's political-ethical thinking model still appears to be important for acceptance and growth, particularly for the promotion of political-ethical thinking in pluralistic Indonesia. The ideology known as Pancasila possesses humanist characteristics, as its tenets encompass religious values, universality, and the eternal nature of humanity. Additionally, it serves

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as a symbol of the political-ethical ideas that have been developed through the advancement of democracy and the theo-humanistic movement. Because of this, the Pancasila concept needs to be upheld at all times as inclusive rather than exclusive. The same is true of the study of political apologetics seen in numerous works by Sunnis and Shia, as well as the application of positivistic reasoning by a number of Orientalist thinkers that requires critical examination. The many approaches used in political science and Islamic studies must continue to be subject to scholarly and critical evaluation across time.

According to the aforementioned study focus, the author is deeply convinced that academic reasoning—rather than ideological, political, or theocratic reasoning—must be used to reconstruct Islamic thinking. New political and ethical ideas can emerge at this point. Instead of being built on the foundation of the outdated Islamic Studies methodology, a new Islamic-scientific methodology known as the Postmodern Islamic Studies Methodology must serve as the foundation for a new political-Islamic ethics. This methodology enables the differentiation between theocratic political ethics and humanistic political ethics in the formulation of theo-humanistic political ethics.

This article will show that, from a practical political standpoint, Arkoun's vast knowledge of political ethics is primarily still contained inside discursive borders and is not yet applied to the sphere of actual politics. Put differently, the scope of Arkoun's political ethics research is restricted to individual ethics and does not encompass social, procedural, or institutional political ethics. In addition, the author of this study work wishes to urgently call for the formulation of *ushūl as-siyāsah al-mu'īshirah* as a scientific advancement, while incorporating a Theo-humanistic touch through the idea of religious democracy. The Islamic world's modern political studies.

Writing this article has ramifications overall, from a theoretical, practical, and philosophical standpoint. In line with the framing of the problem, the research is primarily focused on the area of Islamic political ethics, or thinking, with a particular emphasis on Muhammad Arkoun's political ethics as perceived from a philosophical and historical perspective.

RESEARCH METHOD

Library research was used as the research strategy for this essay. The article's basis is founded on several factors that highlight Mohammed Arkoun's contribution to the reshaping of Islamic thought as a postmodern/contemporary thinker. Descriptive techniques are employed in the analytical process to provide specifics about Arkoun's ideas and opinions, particularly those concerning postmodernism and applied Islamology. Furthermore, the development of Arkoun's ideas from the Modernist Islamic era to the postmodern age is traced using a historical analysis approach. Comparing Arkoun's opinions with those of other academics—especially those who could hold contrasting opinions regarding Applied Islamology—uses a comparative method. In order to create a complete picture of Arkoun's contribution to Islamic studies, his numerous notions and ideas are integrated using a synthetic analytic approach.

Research at the library was used to gather data, and it included readings from other authors as well as Arkoun's writings. The methods used for gathering data are based on primary and secondary documentation of Arkoun's works, with a focus on relevance to the study goals. A detailed assessment of all the resources was conducted, and some data was used to support the analysis that was done. The process of describing the data results in a textual story that makes sense in light of the supporting theories and data analysis. Based on philosophical-critical investigation on all relevant facts, verification-oriented findings were reached. Non-Arkounian viewpoints were provided as comparative material to support the analysis, and the entire research process was conducted methodically and consistently.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Political Ethics Based on Applied Islamology

Arkoun's ethical and political reasoning are grounded on his idea of Applied Islamology, which attempts to be comparative rather than eliminating methodological disparities across Islamic studies. While upholding interdisciplinary scientific cooperation with an Islamic studies paradigm. Furthermore, Applied Islamology welcomes criticism from the scientific community and does not view itself as the only valid approach. For Arkoun, Islam is not a lifeless or abstract concept; rather, it is greatly impacted by social, historical, and other contexts. Consequently, every intellectual output of Islamic thinking is extremely restricted to a certain epistemological framework, even its political offshoots. Future research on Islam, according to Arkoun, has to employ modern epistememes rather than those from the Middle Ages. Stated differently, Arkoun seeks to highlight that Islamic studies ought to be able to recognise ordinary mental constraints as well as the historical context and reality in addition to the text's content. In the Mediaeval Ages.

In addition to concentrating on the Salafi reform era or the formative period of Islam, future Islamic studies, particularly sub-Islamic political studies, should also expound on the phenomenon of reformative thought in the future. The inconceivable and the unfathomable must coexist in any intellectual tradition, according to Arkoun's perspective in his book Applied Islamology. This implies that research on Islamic politics is always subject to modification or revision in light of the evolving socio-historical environment. Islamic philosophy must be devoid of myths, long-standing taboos, and later-developed ideas. Islamic philosophy is really frequently beset by a number of difficulties, particularly when attempting to reconcile Islam's "originality" with the modern open-mindedness ideals that are reinforced by shifts in material and industrial components of society.

As Samuel P. Huntington said, when it comes to the link between Islam and Western civilization, we have to be able to recognise that two interacting civilizations (Greek, Byzantine, and Arab) do not always imply two opposed parts. This makes a thorough reassessment of the relationship between Islamic history and the contemporary West imperative, particularly with regard to the period between the 12th and 19th centuries. It is imperative for Muslim Islamologists to acknowledge that the West is presently making headway in terms of critically examining its own theoretical frameworks. Conversely, Islamic philosophy does not have to be constrained by pre-critical modern western logic.

Since Mohammed Arkoun's research model employs social science theory and methods from the post-positivism age, it is evident from the several interpretations of Arkoun's views given above that what makes him unique. In addition, Arkoun may have a fantasy of the revival of original and imaginative Islamic humanism (Theo-Humanistic), as it existed during the second and third Hijriyah eras, following a protracted period of decline beginning in the eleventh century.

At least two obstacles need to be overcome for Arkounian's thinking model to be implemented: first, the study's primary focus should be on the Al-Quran and Hadith. Second, there is a historical sedimentation or division of layers of Islamic thinking among Muslims (the holy mission of the Prophet has been reinterpreted into many forms of aqidah, fiqh, tarekat, and so on). Islam is being more and more politicised and biased, which leads to a generalised ideology and mythologizing of Islamic doctrines. The importance of prophetic morality was diminished, and Islamic history was distorted with a focus on universal principles. This presents a clear dilemma: religion must first be particularised before it can be fully appreciated. However, hasty specificization can ultimately take away from prophecy's general message. Additionally, Islamic political ethics and reasoning can be distinguished from theocratic and humanistic political ethics and reasoning by a number of Theo-Humanistic hues based on Arkoun's holistic Islamic study methodology.

Discussion of Religion and Politics in Academics

The author aims to further clarify some of the fundamental distinctions between ethical-academic reasoning and ideological-theological-political discourse patterns or reasoning in this sub-chapter, drawing on the numerous prior explanations stated above. Between textual and contextual reasoning, between ideological-theocentric and philosophical-anthropocentric-academic reasoning, and between political reasoning and sensible politics, there are a number of significant distinctions between the two types of reasoning.

First, Transitioning from textual to contextual reasoning. In the future, studying Islamic thought cannot be done with textual patterns alone, nor can it be done so precisely without taking context into account. This is especially true now that it is critical to examine how texts relate to their historical context, psychological situations, reception texts, and cultural and intellectual contexts. Applying Al-Jabiri's theory, we go from a closed corpus "curtain" (*mushaf*) to an open corpus "screen" (*kalam*), transitioning from *bayani* (philological) to *burhni* (rational-empirical).

The concept of linking to canonical texts—which are regarded as complete and operational—should be retired. While examining the context and historicity of the creation of these ideas, research on Islamic politics must always challenge claims about authenticity and correctness or the applicability of comprehending classical Islamic political literature to the contemporary age (*ratio legis*). It is necessary to replace the meaning reproduction approach (*qira'ah mutakarrirah*) of reading Islamic political writings with meaning production (*qira'ah muntijah*). For instance, the reading methodology of political scholars commonly associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, such as Anwar Jundi and al-Maududi.

Many ulama in Islamic thinking are actually caught in at least two things (mythologization and ideology). The majority of Muslim works have thus remained stagnant and fragmented. The formation of historical criticism and epistemology (theoretical underpinnings, definitions, comprehension, conceptual significance, and rational and discursive arguments in the study of Islamic politics) is necessary. Stated differently, political Islam needs to be reconsidered. A static interpretation of religion is the root cause of the increase in various forms of political strife. To ease the tensions that now exist between conflicts, new interpretations of religious understanding are required. Historical, political, and economic aspects of education must be kept apart from normative instruction. The authority of Islamic scholars and classical theologians over many of the existing textual sacred verses was maintained. Since the 19th century, when written texts became immanent and closed corpuses, written words have been used as a means of legitimation ever since the Umayyad administration, Allah's phrases during the Prophet's time existed as *kalam/bil lafz* rather than as writing, which has perpetuated positivism. "Islam" (small capital I) is more akin to the open corpus (*lafadz*) or "Medina Experience" Islamic models of that time.

Second, Transitioning from Theocentric and Ideological Reasoning to Academic, Philosophical, and Anthropocentric Reasoning. To develop a more comprehensive, inspiring, leading, and inspiring understanding of Islam, the terrifying, constrained, and narrow-minded paradigm of comprehending Islamic politics must be transformed. Put differently, the current state of authoritarian Islamic politics needs to be changed to an authoritarian state. Discourse on politics and religion is really about expressing what God truly desires, not about speaking in God's behalf. Approaching the world of ideas with a free market, not a monopoly.

Islamic political studies' paradigm, which appears to have originated in the Middle Ages and only concentrates on comprehending the *ahl al-kitab* as sacred and normative, might take on new forms, such as the "society of the holy book." *Das sein's* basic evaluation of the Prophet and historical details, as well as an examination of God's word as *das sollen* or normative, are also crucial for this to occur. To put it another way, by using a communal approach to the holy book, the learning model for all religions—including paganism—will replace the one-religion-based one (*ahl al-kitab*). Essentially, the audience must be persuaded of an idea's veracity through persuasive

communication. It can be argued that a new, a posteriori, open, historical-scientific strategy has to take the place of the approach based on religion, belief, fideistic subjectivism, truth claims, and a priori exclusive attitudes in the sphere of Islamic politics. a thorough, dialogical, and tolerant approach, allowing the nation to react to globalisation in a suitable manner.

Third, From rational political thinking to practical political action. It is necessary to change the radical-fundamentalist group's pattern of political thinking on the application of formalistic sharia until it takes on a substantive, accommodating, and relevant shape. This textual model of Islamic political reasoning needs to be replaced with a different one, sensible politics, which entails sharia rationalisation.

Arkoun's primary concern for the advancement of Islamic civilization in the future is the serious attention paid to attempts to reconstruct Islamic understanding by substituting academic reasoning for ideological, political, and theocratic thinking. In Arkoun's opinion, Muslims in general are more comfortable with ideological, political, and theocratic arguments, particularly when discussing contemporary issues. An ideological-political-theocratic approach such as this one frequently diminishes the rational aspects of Islamic political discourse. Fundamentalists sometimes disregard the depth of humanity, Islamic wisdom, and spirituality in general in favour of using Islamic doctrinal language that serves their short-term political goals.

The Political Thoughts of Arkoun

As demonstrated by a number of principles, the author himself claims that Arkoun's political ethics can be categorised into six major sub-themes: Firstly, the Prophet Muhammad's power and authority dimensions show the relationship between authority domains (Mecca). Medina's historical-empiricism combined with transcendental prophecy makes it a powerful period.

Second, the significance of religious, political, and moral ideas that are liberating and transformative—rather than just narrative and interpretive—is emphasised in relation to the idea of growth and social transformation. The ultimate goal of all religious-political liberalisations must be social transformation. Furthermore, the foundation of every social development strategy needs to have constitutional and judicial legitimacy. Humanitarian considerations must be taken into consideration when providing social services within the framework of state bureaucracy. These principles have the effect of separating society and the state bureaucracy from managerial and administrative methods that are purely technical and positivistic in nature, which will ultimately alienate the potential riches of local knowledge and wisdom. local knowledge in addition to minimising social interaction. Systems for industrial development can likewise be approached similarly. For instance, Indonesian factory development must take into account the potential for ecological safety and toxicity in addition to the comfort of civilian regions.

Third, consideration for the relationship between the state and religion. It is necessary to eradicate different religious-political thought patterns that are limited to ideological-political hues. The idea of multiplicity of religious interpretation among Muslims cannot be negated by the relationship pattern between religion and the state. A pluralistic religious-political framework, not a monolithic one, is necessary to understand several discourses on political and theological topics like the caliphate, the application of sharia, and so forth. Aside from that, religious and political autonomy needs to be preserved and constantly guarded against potential state interference (etatism). The relationship between religion and the state is not an exception, and it is highly susceptible to three factors: political collaboration between ulama and umara, the politicisation of religion, and the homogenization of religious understanding.

Fourth, on the idea of plurality and a biblical society. From a philosophical and empirical standpoint, the universal humanist principle ought to come first in the internal and external plurality of religious understanding and existence. This idea can help prevent needless political and

religious parochialism and sectarianism. In an open and democratic social justice system, then, continuous practice of *ijtihad* and criticism is crucial.

Fifth, modernity and democracy. It is inevitable that the equality principle and common experiences of Islamic and Western civilizations be acknowledged if a democratic and contemporary social structure is to endure. Long-lasting tensions between Islam and the West have been brought on by a number of disputes, such as the dominant nations' political, military, and economic hegemony over weaker nations. In addition, the sphere of political and religious literature, which uses a polemical-apologetic tone in its writing, presents comparable issues. The Islamic tradition's *munāzharah* (*munāzharah*, not *mujādah* or *mukābarah*) and egalitarian principles would eventually eradicate the trend towards dominance and unilateral hegemony. This is the Habermas model of intercommunication. Many works of political-religious literature that appear polemical or apologetic should be critically examined through the lens of meaning production rather than meaning replication. Aside from that, acknowledging locality—particularly in Muslim nations—does not imply disregarding globalisation as one of the effects of modernity. A corrective mindset is necessary given the rational, positivistic, hedonistic, and consumerist-capitalist nature of Western modernity. Similar events have occurred in the West, particularly with the emergence of postmodernist discourse.

Sixth, in relation to secularisation, secularism, and secularisation. Here, it's important to emphasise the distinction between modernization and westernisation. Islamist doctrines can be rationalised through modernization, according to Mohammed Arkoun and Thaha Husein. Similarly, the term secularisation necessitates a certain interpretation within the context of politics and theology (Islam and the state). Secularisation is an endeavour to let go of certain antiquated patterns of religious understanding in today's modern context, not an attempt to reject the idea of religious spirituality by permitting meaningfulness in social life, as is happening in the West today. Secularisation and contextualising the primacy of Islam can coexist in this situation.

The robust, egalitarian, democratic foundations of tradition, culture, Islam, reason, and democracy are essential for a nation to stand firm and advance towards modernity. Prioritising equality above growth is a key component of its economic system. The extent to which Islam's adherents—particularly its scholars and philosophers—are able to successfully integrate Islamic textualism with contemporary contextualization will determine how far the religion advances in the future and prevent future divisions. values void in contemporary culture. For this reason, it is the duty of contemporary Muslims to preserve Islamic ideals. The universality, rather than the local, sectarian, and primal characteristics, is what Islam aims to accomplish.

Arkoun's Thoughts' Significance for the Islamic World

According to Arkoun, there are still aspects of Islamic studies that need to be continuously explored. Modern Islamic epistemology can be used in place of classical Islamic epistemology for critical evaluation. Consequently, an intellectual analysis of Islamic history is required. ¹³ As a result, Islamic studies in the future needs to be flexible enough to integrate modern social and cultural studies. Arkoun acknowledged the need for a fresh perspective on secularisation. Secularisation does not imply a political division of power between religion and state; rather, it is an endeavour to actualize Islamic principles throughout space and time, along with the necessity of adapting to the ever-changing demands of the context (epistem) of the moment. As a result, going back to traditional religion is not a viable option. In opposition to Muslims' secular thinking, or *Makkiyyah an sich* (humanistic reasoning), Arkoun offers an alternative middle path in Islamic politics based on the Prophet's deeds (*Makkiyyah* model of spiritual authority and *Madaniyyah* model of political power). in addition to *Madaniyyah* Islam and political fundamentalism (theocratic thinking).

Additionally, Arkoun thinks that in order to foster religious tolerance, the outdated interpretation of the *Ahl al-Kitab* must be replaced, and the new Book Society must be implemented after that. Unlike Derrida, who only accepts historical texts, Arkoun continues to believe in the existence of metatext, with a focus on the mystical *majuzi* (mythical discourse) of the Qur'an, or something akin to the sphere of *kauniyyah*. If Arkoun has stepped into the postmodernist sphere, Derrida remains stuck in the modernist paradigm of interpretation in philological and textual studies.

In addition, Arkoun said that even if Islamic theology has changed, Islamic philosophers still need to critically evaluate it. Diversification is also necessary for monolithic political and religious interpretations and truth claims (those who are incorrect may be unquestioning masses of adherents or even supporters of the truth). We need just look at Syafii's critique of Imam Maliki, his teacher. Heretical sects in the Muslim world or *Rahbaniyyah* tendencies should also be avoided at all costs. Multiple interpretations of religious texts and the increasingly obvious presence of "ideological masks" within and amongst religious communities are implications of Arkoun's vision. Muslims' collective ego will benefit in the long run from this, as they will be able to be more democratic, logical, and critical of one another as well as develop mutual respect.

Significant political discussion about the appropriateness of the testing system. It is now necessary to examine candidates for the executive and judicial branches of government, but even more so, members of parliament (*ahl hall wa al-'aqd*).

The Republic of Indonesia and other Islamic nations' state authorities must be able to stop or at the very least remove foreign political hegemony in their nation in order to prevent the radical-fundamentalist community from gaining more support for its programmes.

To prevent theological language from becoming more prevalent in the realm of practical politics in the future, the political regulatory structure needs to be severely studied and improved. Tenth, work needs to be done to create a political party administrative and bureaucratic structure that is more impartial, logical, responsible, and open. Eleventh, it is imperative that political and religious philosophers get together and reformulate the ideal epistemology and methodology regarding the future relationship between religion and politics (*al-uṣūl al-siyāsah al-mu'ṣhirah*) in order to make many of the things mentioned above a reality. This suggestion is also an effort to get there. The researchers here would like to reiterate that understanding Islamic political philosophy for the next period requires applying objective-rational-transformational political reasoning, not subjective-doctrinal political reasoning, in the context of Muslims in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Mohammed Arkoun's ideas provide a fresh perspective on Islamic studies that captures the political, ethical, and philosophical essence of the religion. In order to integrate "Islamic authenticity" with the latest findings in social science, Arkoun advocates for Applied Islamology. His approach highlights the significance of viewing Islam in historical, sociological, and realist contexts while attempting to go beyond the confines of mediaeval epistemology. Future Islamic studies, according to Arkoun, must focus on the modern environment in addition to the text's content and be able to recognise the mental biases (logocentrism) that characterised the Middle Ages. By highlighting the need to recreate Islamic understanding through scholarly reasoning and cross-cultural communication, Arkoun's Islamic political thought offers a middle ground between secularism and fundamentalism. According to Arkoun, the significance of Islamic thought's renewal, religious tolerance, plurality, and democracy are fundamental elements. He urges Muslims to use modern epistemes and engage in cross-cultural discourse in order to meet the difficulties of the day. Finally, in order to accomplish advancement in line with global Islamic norms, Arkoun challenges Muslims to reinterpret the link between religion and politics in a way that is objective, logical, and transformative.

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