

## ISLAMIC REVIVALISM AND ITS INTERNAL CRITICS IN THE INDO-PAK SUBCONTINENT

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Recent scholarship on the practices of critique has unsettled the Eurocentric assumption that critique is something specific to and the hallmark of secular/Western societies. By implication, Muslim societies and their various religio-social trajectories by virtue of their location in traditional-religious environments are unable to develop critique. Based on Talāl Asad's, Saba Mahmood's and others' deviant approaches that question the validity of the stated thesis, this research focuses on an empirical example of dissident voices within and around Mawdūdī's ideology of political Islam (and Islamic state). The internal contestants challenged the internal logic, ideological premises of Mawdūdī's thought. The paper focuses on numerous examples in the sub-continental Muslim intellectual tradition, wherein the dominant narrative of political Islam in the modern Muslim world was challenged by a number of scholars who were once close believers' in Mawdūdī's ideology of Islamic revival. Methodologically, the paper analyses a number of key texts by Mawdūdī and his internal critics within the framework of Talāl Asad and Saba Mahmood.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Islamic Revivalism, Mawdūdī, Ghamīdī, Critique, Waḥiduddīn, Political Islam.

### **Introduction**

Despite phenomenal growth in academic scholarship on multifarious

dimensions of political Islam, the formidable intellectual responses by dissident scholarship in the sub-continental Islamic tradition have largely escaped researchers' attention. The location of S.A.A. Mawdūdi (1903-1979) as the main ideologue and proponent of a systematic theory and worldview of contemporary political Islam can hardly be overemphasized. Hardly, a serious study on political Islam can overlook Mawdūdi's formidable contributions to theorization and institutionalization of political Islam. Whereas Mawdūdi and his major works on Islamic state and the ideology of political Islam are well known to the Western academia, the critique and counter-narrative of a body of scholarship that seceded from Mawdūdi is yet to be fully explored. This paper aims to bring to light the internal critique developed in the second half of 20th century in India and Pakistan, and that questions Mawdūdi's ideological premises and its extension in the modern world.

This research deals with the trajectory and genealogy of a body of critical scholarship that can be termed as "internal" to mainstream political Islam, and specifically Mawdudi, the main proponent, theorist and ideologue of political Islam in South Asia. The linchpin that connects these "internal" critics is the person<sup>2</sup> and ideology of Mawdūdi. In one way or the other, at one point of time or the other, the critics of Mawdūdi dealt in this study were deeply influenced and motivated for social change by his ideas. Though we are aware of the risks and intricacies associated with drawing such lines as "internal" and "external", but we think that location of intellectuals as internal and external might lead to binaries and superficiality as well. Yet, while conceptualizing these critics as "internal," we borrow from David L. Harvey:

"Critical theory at its most abstract and general level ... begins as a formal 'negativity.' As a dissenting motif, it selects some tradition, ideological premise, or institutionalized orthodoxy for analysis. As immanent critique, it then 'enters its object,' so to speak, 'boring from within.' Provisionally accepting the methodological presuppositions, substantive premises, and truth-claims of orthodoxy as its own, immanent critique tests the postulates of orthodoxy by the latter's own standards of proof and accuracy. Upon 'entering' the theory, orthodoxy's premises and assertions are registered and certain strategic contradictions located. These contradictions are

then developed according to their own logic, and at some point in this process of internal expansion, the one-sided proclamations of orthodoxy collapse as material instances and their contradictions are allowed to develop ‘naturally’.”<sup>3</sup>

While identifying the main problem with all kinds of religious discourses, Edward Said is of the view that these discourses are based on a “non-deconstructable ground of authority.” Therefore, a religious discourse “serves as an agent of closure, shutting off human investigation, criticism, and effort in deference to the authority of the more-than-human, the supernatural, the otherworldly.”<sup>4</sup>

The criterion set in this paper for a scholar to be counted as *internal* is as follows: the scholar has spent considerable time and energies in digesting Mawdūdī’s ideology of political Islam and has practically contributed to the establishment of an Islamic state as understood and formulated by him. The immanent critics then have developed dissent over Mawdūdī’s ideological premise, object of analysis and key postulates. An internal discussion and debate have taken place to contest the meaning, structure, fundamental tenets and overall interpretation of content and strategy. The dissident has expressed his views in written text or spoken about in a way that is known to us.

The main objective of conducting this research is to solidify and further strengthen the theoretical contribution by Talāl Asad and Saba Maḥmūd (2009),<sup>5</sup> and specifically Irfān Ahmad (2011).<sup>6</sup> The main gist of their academic effort is to invalidate the bold assertion in the Western academic tradition that critique is secular and to examine that the tradition of critique is as much internal to Islam, as to any other religious or cultural tradition. Using Asad’s and Irfān’s theoretical formulation, this research focuses on a very specific empirical example of religious scholarship in South Asia, that of political Islam. Following Irfān, this research also proposes that critique has a central place within contemporary Islam. It does so by focusing on the case of Mawdūdī’s ideology, basic premise and fundamental tenets and then how the immanent critics not only challenged his basic premises but also tried to correct it. The presence and examination of such an internal contestation within political Islam questions the validity of a linear, continued, homogenous and non-changing Islamic tradition. By bringing even another critical

body of scholarship that further questions the critique of Mawdūdī's dissidents, the research shows the continuity of such an internal struggle for truth seeking and truth making, a tradition not confined to the western scholarship only.

After this brief introduction, the section that follows will present fragments of dissent from a line of intellectual enquiry that question various aspects of Mawdūdī's revivalist thought as well as suggesting alternatives. The line of scholars selected for content analysis includes Wahīduddīn Khān, Amīn Iṣlāhī and Javed Ghamīdī.

### **Mawdūdī's Critique of Traditionalism**

Before looking into the critique of individual scholars on Mawdūdī's revivalism, it seems relevant here to mention that Mawdūdī himself emerged as the most critical scholar of traditionalism. In the given colonial context in the pre-partition India, Mawdūdī not only attacked Western civilization and its informers in the region but also criticized the prevailing system of religious instruction and its offshoots, the '*ulamā*', for their lack of creativity and dynamism. His treatment of the sources of Islamic law was also different from the traditionalist approach, although he never left the traditional framework.<sup>7</sup> He recognized four sources of Islamic law: Qur'ān, *Sunnah*, the practice of the guided Caliphs and decisions/opinions of the jurist-consults.<sup>8</sup> To Mawdūdī, this order characterizes the Islamic *Ummah*. The '*ulamā*', argues Mawdūdī, reversed this order and thus rendered Islam immutable and immobile.<sup>9</sup> The process of reform entails reactivation of this stated order again, which gives primacy to the Qur'ān and *Sunnah* over other sources.<sup>10</sup>

According to Kirmānī and Muḥsin, the Qur'ān for Mawdūdī was the "book of God", "book of modern knowledge", "book of truth (*ḥaq*)" and the "book of action (*'amal*)".<sup>11</sup> The conceptualization of the Qur'ān as a book of modern knowledge meant for Mawdūdī: 1) as a catalyst in raising man's rational understanding; 2) for articulation of its point, it employs the rational sources of knowledge, and 3) all rationally verifiable Qur'ānic claims have come true over time.<sup>12</sup> Mawdūdī's classification of the sources of knowledge is mainly twofold-revealed and rational. The former includes revelation and theosophical experience; the latter consists of: 1) lives of the prophets (عليهم السلام); 2) direct observations; 3) sense perception, reasoning and inferences; 4) the Divine signs in the

universe, and 5) the historical evidence.<sup>13</sup> According to Mawdūdī, the Prophet (ﷺ) not only reveals the message but also implements it.<sup>14</sup> A number of scholars have argued that the Islamists' interpretation "is not a retreat into traditional interpretations but an innovative and original reworking of the canonical texts."<sup>15</sup> To address this issue, one should distinguish between Mawdūdī's hermeneutical approach and his epistemology. In the former, as art and science of interpretation, Mawdūdī stood more for independent reasoning and *ijtihād* than *taqlīd*; in the latter, he fell back on traditionalism.

Mawdūdī's challenge to the traditional religious authority took many forms. In his writings, he aggressively criticized the static approach and role of '*ulamā*' and *pīrs* in society. However, he struck a fierce blow to the traditional authority through his lucid style and "simple language avoiding scholastic terminology and style."<sup>16</sup> Modern educated public could now understand religious text and theological debates, once the prerogative of traditional '*ulamā*'. Thus, the intellectual monopoly and hegemony of one class was severely threatened. According to Nasr, 'Mawdūdī's significance does not lie in his scholarly contributions per se, but in creating an intellectual medium – in the form of a large number of texts – wherein modern socio-political themes could be discussed and addressed in an Islamic context'.<sup>17</sup>

### **Mawdūdī's Ideology of Islamic Revivalism**

For Mawdūdī, Islam exceeds the bounds of mere faith and seeks to change social, political and economic order, invoking "change" of social order as an aim necessitated a hold on power positions and infrastructure of the state. This new conceptualization entailed: 1) introducing new meanings for key Islamic notions that distinguishes them from traditional understanding; 2) instituting new relationships between concepts underpinning his political programme, and 3) injecting new energy into the organization of these concepts to equip them for mobilization of the masses. To understand his state-centric vision and political reading of Islam, the four conceptual bases of Mawdūdī's ideology/worldview *Ilah*, *Rabb*, *'Ibādah* and *Dīn* are discussed.<sup>18</sup> An understanding of these concepts, says Mawdūdī, is important because the central theme of the Qur'ān is constructed around them. Over time,

the true meaning of these terms narrowed and obscured much of the intent of the Qur'ān.<sup>19</sup> The true essence of *ilah*, argues Mawdūdī, is that the attribute of *ilah* (*ilahiyāt*) and authority are inextricably interconnected (*ibid.*, 34). God enjoys an indivisible and all encompassing authority over the universe. If someone registers his claim to power and authority in the political meaning of the term, then it is like a claim to godhood in the metaphysical sense (*ibid.*, 36-37). The second key term is *rabb*, which according to Mawdūdī means, to bring up. Citing a number of Qur'ānic verses and examples of a number of prophets (ﷺ), Mawdūdī builds his case for sovereignty as the essence of the term. This comprehensive and all-encompassing notion was divided by earlier nations and the Arab pagans into a variety of connotations that fall into two categories: 1) inclusion of other beings as angels and jinn into the definition of a transcendental authority; and, 2) exclusion of Allah from political authority or including Him but nominally (*ibid.*, 97). *Tbādah* means humility and readiness to complete surrender in favour of a supreme authority. The word carries meanings of submission, servitude, worship and obedience. *Dīn* carries four themes in the Qur'ān according to Mawdūdī: dominance on the part of the ultimate authority; servitude and obedience on the part of the one who is submitting; law, rules and regulations; and, reward and retribution meted out on the Day of Judgment (*ibid.*, 44). the Qur'ān fixed its meaning and used it for a comprehensive “system” constituting: 1) the sovereignty and supreme authority; 2) obedience and submission to such an authority; 3) the system of thought and practice designed under the influence of this supreme authority, and 4) the reward and punishment meted out by the authority because of the loyalty or rebellion against this system. When Qur'ān uses “the din” (*al-dīn*), then it encompasses all of the four ingredients (*ibid.*, 125). This implies that various forms of submissions and servitudes must bow down before the one supreme authority.

Mawdūdī proffers a new meaning to these terms. He argues that the comprehensive nature of *dīn* is unparalleled in meaning by any other term but the contemporary notion of “state”. To summarize, by *dīn* he refers to a comprehensive system of life in which an individual surrenders his will to an ultimate authority, obeys His rules and regulations, expects reward for his own obedience of the system and fears punishment for transgression and disobedience.<sup>20</sup> Islam is thus “the true *dīn*” and

a comprehensive way of life, and the central aim of the Prophetic career was to triumph/establish it over all other orders/systems.<sup>21</sup>

Mawdūdi inaugurated a new understanding of Islam. The cause of seeking new understanding of Islam was his dissatisfaction with the prevalent “lifeless Islam” (*bai rooḥ Islam*) around him. Islam for him was primarily a “movement”, Muḥammad (ﷺ) was a “leader” and the Muslims formed a “party” to achieve certain goals and principles. But with persistent deterioration and loss of this identity, Islam has become synonymous with an ethnic and social category.<sup>22</sup> However, his vision of Islam was not inherited from earlier generations, but was an outcome of deep immersion, critical thinking and profound contemplation:

“The Islam I found in my surroundings had least attraction. After developing research and criticism skills, the first thing I did was to unyoke myself from the inherited Islam ... I converted to Islam anew ... I invite non-Muslims and Muslims to this [newly found] Islam. My effort in this direction is aimed at seeking expansion of the so-called Muslim society. It is an invitation to eradicate injustice and transgression spread all around, to eliminate man’s godhood on earth; and to construct a new world on the lines of the Qur’ān wherein, dignity, freedom, equality and justice is secured for all as human beings”.<sup>23</sup>

Mawdūdi based his revivalist strategy on a political reading of the prophetic career. According to Mawdūdi, God sent all apostles (ﷺ) with an obvious mission – to establish Divine order on earth. The leaders of this Islamic movement were the messengers (ﷺ) and Islam was thus a party. For an Islamic revolution in the contemporary world, one should follow their strategy. He thinks that it is unfortunate that we cannot obtain a complete history of these messengers (ﷺ) for lack of data on much of their entire struggle. The prophetic career of Muḥammad (ﷺ) offers a detailed account of all the stages through which the Islamic movement passed – from initial stages to the establishment of an Islamic order in the city state of Madinah.<sup>24</sup> It seems that Mawdūdi fails to substantiate his point by providing empirical examples from other prophets (ﷺ).

According to Mawdūdi, Muḥammad (ﷺ) found and encountered Roman and Iranian imperialism in the first stage of his career in the

neighbouring region of Iraq Syria and Iran\*. The (Arabian tribal) society was laden with exploitation, injustices and moral corruption. The first stage consisted of the inauguration of this movement when the prophetic leadership overlooked these partial issues in favour of a “total” and “comprehensive” change. His message touched on the very foundational issue of the system [the refutation of all system (*Lā*) and the affirmation of Divine rule on earth (*Illa Allah*)]. In this period, the leader, Muḥammad (ﷺ), demonstrated Islamic ideals through his moral excellence and personal character. Slowly and gradually, kind-hearted individuals gravitated towards him and joined the nascent movement, and thus inaugurated the second stage of the Islamic movement. This phase was full of suffering/agonies in terms of pain, hardship, imprisonment, hunger and exile. It proved to be the “training camp of bearing with agonies.”<sup>25</sup> Muḥammad (ﷺ) elevated the holy community from their tribal and racial identities to an Islamic identity. The movement proliferated in Makkah until the next stage – migration to Madinah arrived. After 13 years of struggle at Makkah, a holy community of 250-300 individuals was available to establish and run an Islamic state. In the fourth stage, the Islamic state was formed. The concretization of abstracted Islamic ideals was made possible in the fifth stage at Madinah when an Islamic system evolved. An Islamic political, economic, educational and judicial system appeared as a complete system of life.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in eight years, the boundaries of this nascent Islamic state extended beyond Madinah to all the Arab territories. Historically, the contribution made by war in the prophetic struggle is overestimated. In reality, the expansion was the outcome of a bloodless revolution, which claimed 1000-1200 lives only, a relatively small death toll in bringing about such a comprehensive revolution.<sup>27</sup>

Mawdūdi’s conceptualization of the aforementioned terms and the systemic approach accentuated criticism from traditional Islamic scholars as well as from his close friends and interlocutors.<sup>28</sup> The more technical and methodical critique came from Waḥiduddīn Khān, in late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>29</sup> According to Khān, “In my view, the interpretation of religion in Mawdūdi’s books has deviated from the true religion. Although, the ingredients of Mawdūdi’s composite explanation of religion are the

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\*It may be noted that the arid desert served as a barrier to the Persian and Romans (Byzantine) empires which allowed the nascent Islamic movement to successfully confront Arabian tribal opposition – *Ed.*

same, but the new relationship invoked in them has deformed religion and it [Islam] seems an alien thing now'.<sup>30</sup>

For Mawdūdī, the above is the natural way of bringing about a revolution following cause and effect relationship. It was not a supernatural phenomenon. This method, if properly replicated today, can produce the same results. In his lecture at Muslim University Aligarh,<sup>31</sup> Mawdūdī rationalized the process of bringing about an Islamic government. Irrespective of the nature of the government, it is the outcome of the interplay (dialectics) of historical and psychological forces. The mutual coordination of a number of initial prerequisites, societal forces and natural premises contribute to the formation of a specific government. To Mawdūdī this process closely resembles the chemical or physical process. The logical result or outcome depends on the premises. Mawdūdī considers the desired government an ideological entity, one different from other forms of governments. The world had not experienced Mawdūdī's envisioned state, which was realized by Islam [in the city state of Madinah]. The nationalist/secular state forms "the other" of Mawdūdī's ideological state, which is rooted in the idea of God's kingdom. The kingdom of God thus formed would be unique for being governed by a corpus of pious individuals down from the clerical positions to the top brass. The emergence of such an ideal ideological state entails a specific process consisting of "Islam as a movement and Muslims as a party."<sup>32</sup> Only those workers and leaders would qualify for running the movement who are ready to be transformed into specifically tailored individuals. They will propagate this message and a new system of education and training will evolve producing an alternative Islamic intellectual leadership consisting of "Muslim Scientists", "Muslim Philosophers", "Muslim Historians", "Muslim Economists", "Muslim Jurists", and "Muslim political Scientists". This new leadership then challenges the prevailing system based on *Jāhiliyyah*. The ideal moral conduct of this genre would naturally attract pious elements from all around. In this transformed society, the "other" system would find it harder and harder to sustain itself. Logically, the system with best preparation, for Mawdūdī, will emerge triumphant. It seems that Mawdūdī's envisioned Islamization project had a double-focus: 1) Islamization as a political project, and 2) Islamization of knowledge as an intellectual project. The latter for Tibi is a "civilizational project." In Tibi's critical reflection, "[t]he Islamist strategy combines the

‘Islamisation of knowledge’ with the *Shar‘iatisation* of law in its fundamentalist project of a de-Westernisation of the Islamic world and the world at large.<sup>33</sup> For Mawdūdi, the very nature of the Islamic *Sharī‘ah* needs power, “by which he meant, capturing the machinery of the modern state.”<sup>34</sup>

Mawdudi juxtaposes his process of Islamic revolution with that of the French Revolution (1789) inspired by Rousseau, Voltaire and Montesquieu, the Russian revolution (1917) motivated by the ideas of Karl Marx, leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, and the German Social Nationalism inspired by Hegel, Hitler and others. Likewise, Islamic revolution can become a logical outcome of the pursuance of workers, who exemplify Qur’ānic ideals.<sup>35</sup>

“The world is like a train powered by an engine which is fuelled by knowledge, ideas and research. Its drivers are intellectuals and researchers. The train and the passengers boarding it are bound to move in the direction in which the drivers want them to. If a passenger is not willing to continue his journey into that direction, he can only turn around inside the train but is unable to change the direction of the journey. The only one way to change the direction of the journey is to control/occupy the engine’s driving seat, and drive it towards the desired course. The people occupying the engine/driving seat currently have gone astray from the path of God and bereft of Islamic ideology. Consequently, the train is intentionally leading the passengers into the direction of materialism and atheism. It is the time to change the course of the train. Some people from among the God-worshippers should stand up and strive to seize the engine from the atheists. Unless the driving seat is not captured, we are bound to move in the direction taken by the God-unaware drivers”.<sup>36</sup>

The above text reveals the following points: 1) knowledge, ideas, thoughts and intellectuals, as the realm of ideas are inextricably linked to political power/structure. In a Gramscian sense, there is an “organic link” between the two;<sup>37</sup> 2) individuals’ agency/change potential is infinitely constrained by the structure; 3) a new realm of ideas through knowledge and research is required to emerge as a counter-hegemony to the existing

hegemonies; 4) ultimate change will be the outcome of grabbing both positions (the state structure and the realm of ideas), and 5) Islam will lead state and society in an entirely different direction than Western materialism.

In the above discussion, Mawdūdī's overwhelming emphasis on the state and structural constraints on individual's capacity to bring about change does not imply that he denied free will and change potential of an individual. On the contrary, Mawdūdī belongs to that category of reformers in the sub-continent who, to quote Robinson, "heightened ideas of human instrumentality" and emphasised that "knowing means doing."<sup>38</sup> In the same quote above, Mawdūdī clarified his position.

One of Mawdūdī's important re-conceptualisations of old religious terms is his re-activation of *Jāhiliyyah* – literally "ignorance". In traditional usage, "the *Jāhiliyyah* referred to the age of ignorance before the revelation of the Qur'ān to Muḥammad (ﷺ)."<sup>39</sup> Mawdūdī employed the term to "refer to forces, which corrupted historic Muslim societies, seeing *Jāhiliyyah* as a type of counter-revolution which came to dominate Muslim societies".<sup>40</sup>

The turbulent history of the Jama'at's has witnessed expulsions/resignations of a multitude of activists including intellectual-scholars. Mawlānā Naumānī's resignation in 1941 was followed by more than 50 scholars-writers-'*ulamā*' from the Jama'at in the 1950s. Likewise, Mawlana 'Abdul Raḥīm left the Jama'at in Bangladesh and developed his own intellectual trajectory. In the 1990s, a number of activists and '*ulamā*' opposed the reforms inaugurated by Qāzī Ḥusain Aḥmad – the then *amīr* of the Jama'at – and formed their own "Islamic movement" (*Teḥrīk-i Islāmī*). Dr Isrār Aḥmad seceded from the Jama'at in late 1950s and Jāved Aḥmad Ghamīdī in the 1970s. Ghamīdī is closely linked to Iṣlāḥī, as he remained under the tutelage of Iṣlāḥī. A number of writers/scholars/activists belong to a category that expected a Marxist revolution (of creating a society where people enjoy equal status) in Mawdūdī's envisioned Islamic state. This scholarship was misled by modern terms (such as revolution) liberally employed by Mawdūdī to communicate his message. An empirical example of this category is Kaukab Ṣiddīq, "a onetime Jama'at stalwart and translator of Mawdūdī into English." According to Nasr, Mawdūdī did not approve

“Şiddīq’s openly Marxian rendition of his views.” This resulted into Şiddīq’s secession from the Jama‘at<sup>41</sup>

Another scholar of the Farāhī School, Waḥīduddīn Khān, developed a critique of Mawdūdī’s Islamist ideology in his classic “Error in Interpretation” (*T‘abīr kī Ghalatī*) in the early 1960s. He left the Jama‘at in 1962. Khān, who was an activist in Indian Jama‘at and a member of its central executive, attacked the very basis of Mawdūdī’s revivalist thought. The statement “political reading of religion” (*Dīn kī Siyāsī Tashreeḥ*) was first used by Khān in his methodical critique of Mawdūdī (Khān 1995).

Whereas the Jama‘at, its ideology and organisation and its political struggle has received considerable academic attention, the seceding voices and their respective intellectual-social trajectories are often neglected. In what follows, I trace the historical roots of one intellectual trajectory – Ghamīdī and his post-Islamist thought. Beginning with two prominent scholars whose influence on Ghamīdī is substantial and defining.

### Internal Dissidents and their Critique

In 1961, a compilation of correspondence between Mawdūdī and Waḥīduddīn Khān was published. The book named *Ta‘bīr ki Ghalatī* (The Erroneous Interpretation). For almost two decades the book remained largely unnoticed in the academic scholarship. The book received central focus in Pakistan when it was brought to limelight by another religious intellectual who based his critique of political Islam mainly on the lines provided in this book. We will be discussing the gist of the critique in the following lines.

Mawlānā Waḥīddudīn Khān once a leader of the Jama‘at-i-Islami-i-Hīnd for 16 years posed some serious criticism on Mawdūdī’s whole episteme. In a treatise, *Ta‘bīr kī Ghalatī*, he comprehensively dealt with his case against Mawdūdī. His explanation of four terms, *Ilāh*, *Tbādat*, *Rāb* and *Dīn* which in the view of Waḥīddudīn Khān are the basis of Mawdūdī’s episteme are alien in the light of Muslim historical scholarship. There is possibility of error in understanding some tenets of religion by the scholars but there is no chance of misunderstanding of the insight of *dīn* by them which Mawdūdī claimed in his book.<sup>42</sup> According to Khān, though Mawdūdī’s ideological framework encapsulates all essential parts

of religion, still the problem arises due to the misplaced centrality given to an aspect (i.e., the obligation to impose religion through the state). To support his claim, Khān refers to several empirical examples from Mawdūdī's works, such as, the obligatory prayers which is an independent act is translated in Mawdūdī's framework as the training process for the Muslims for the struggle of establishing God's rule on earth. Thus Mawdūdī's reconceptualization of basic religious terms (such as prayer) and invoking new meaning into it, according to Khān, is an attempt to deviate from the mainstream thinking.<sup>43</sup>

Khān also criticized Mawdūdī for conceptualizing Islam as a "system of life." For Khān, the nature of religion is comprehensive though but it does not implicate that the essence of religion is a system of life. Rather this is a relationship between God and His creature.<sup>44</sup>

Mawlānā Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (1904-1997) once an ardent supporter and second to Mawdūdī only in the Jama'at (JI), also dissociated himself on the basis of his dissent over the issue of the authority of the *amīr*. Primarily an exegete, Iṣlāḥī joined the JI after its establishment in 1941. He remained with Mawdūdī and was also appointed as *nā'ib amīr* (vice president). His importance in the JI can be gauged from his contribution towards religious and spiritual training of the JI activists. Iṣlāḥī seceded from the JI in 1958 which was considered as a formidable loss to JI. Before his exit from the JI, in 1956, during the Maachi Goth episode,<sup>45</sup> a heated debate took place over JI's participation or otherwise, in active politics resulting in the resignation of some members and leaders which is considered as the end of ideology in JI by Vali Raza Nasr.<sup>46</sup> Mawdūdī responded to internal dissents by making bold assertion that the pros and cons of the Islamic movement is better understood by the leader than "others".<sup>47</sup> Iṣlāḥī then made it a point of discussion and writing in a series of essays appeared in different magazines.<sup>48</sup> He evaluated the interpretation of texts, anecdotes and tradition of the holy Prophet (ﷺ) cited by Mawdūdī for justification of his case. Iṣlāḥī asserted that if the gate of changing nature of the *Sharī'ah* and excuses for setting aside a tenet of Islam is once opened by an Islamic party due to expediency of the time then there would be no reason to blame the modernists for the same reason.<sup>49</sup> Iṣlāḥī vehemently opposed Mawdūdī and evidently asserted that none is authorized to amend the Divine *Sharī'ah*.<sup>50</sup>

Another point of contestation was Mawdūdī's use of the word "leader" for the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). For Iṣlāḥī, deployment of political vocabulary such as "leader", "party", "movement," and "practical wisdom (*Ḥikmat-i 'Amalī*)" will transform religion into a child's play of politics.<sup>51</sup>

The more recent intellectual development in the above mentioned line of thinking is the one pioneered and inaugurated by a 'modernist' scholar Jāved Aḥmad Ghamīdī. Ghamīdī was once an activist in the JI in the 1970s, and a staunch supporter of Mawdūdī's ideology of Islamic state. He rose to prominence in the last decade during Musharraf era when the newly liberated private television channels aired his interviews and talk shows on various themes relating Islam to modern issues. One of the key dissents Ghamīdī expounded was his staunch criticism over the use of revivalist vocabulary by the Islamists seeking support from Islamic sources and Islamic history. There are at least two senses in which Ghamīdī's reinterpretation of the prophetic career can be understood. In the very first sense, he might have explored/found a "stable" reference point/referent from where he really thinks Mawdūdī has deviated in his interpretation. What is that? In the second sense, Ghamīdī like Mawdūdī's political Islam has his own intellectual and social scheme the focus of which is a reinterpretation of the prophetic career.

Ghamīdī strongly asserts that the Islamists' formulation of strategy by imitating the Divinely guided life of the Prophet (ﷺ) was a grave mistake and clear deviation from the Divine rules. This scheme, according to them, is Divinely monitored and regulated, allowing no deviation. For Ghamīdī, the concept of Messengerhood (*Risālat*) is a special status of the Messenger (ﷺ) that bestows on him a transcendental mission that ends in conclusive argument and administration of punishment to his opponents and reward for his supporters. This framework is called by Ghamīdī as *Itmām-i Ḥujjat* (final argument). For Ghamīdī, the central theme of the Qur'ān is a biographical account and the narrative of the prophetic admonition. The Messenger (ﷺ) is sent with an additional responsibility to administer His scheme of reward and punishment, which is assumed to be held on the Day of Judgment. In this capacity, the status of Messenger (ﷺ) is an elevated position with extraordinary responsibility. Out of many prophets, only about 313 were assigned this Divine task to establish Divine scheme of

reward and punishment on earth. This administration thus becomes an “historical testimony to the truth of the Final Day of Judgment.”<sup>52</sup> The established Divine practice in this connection is that the Messenger (ﷺ) and his fellows will necessarily triumph over his nation in the Messenger’s lifetime. He propagates the Divine message until it becomes conclusive evidence with no excuse left with the addressees. In order to fulfil this heavy task, the Messenger’s career is strictly and thoroughly guided and monitored by Divine authority, and he has no liberty to take key decisions at his own discretion. All the stages of his career (preaching, migration, waging war etc) are Divinely ordained and he is only to administer this whole scheme. It implies that the Messenger (ﷺ) and his fellowmen are Divine instruments in this project. This Divine scheme is not to be imitated in the contemporary world as is mistakenly done by the revivalists. The Islamists have failed to appreciate this Divine Scheme.<sup>53</sup>

If compared to Mawdūdi’s understanding of the prophetic mission, which was to establish Divine kingdom on earth and which accordingly split the prophetic career along organisational stages, Ghamīdī categorises them into thematic/conceptual stages. The common notion that encompasses these conceptual constructs is *da‘wah* and *naṣīḥah*. The above re-reading falls in sharp contrast to Mawdūdi’s political reading of the prophetic mission. Using Ghamīdī’s re-reading as framework; a scholar invalidates Mawdūdi’s Islamist interpretation of the prophetic career in the following words:

“Muḥammad at Mecca was reminded time and again that his responsibilities do not exceed admonition ... in this whole period, Muḥammad was not ordained to enforce religion nor enforcement of religion was declared the central aim of the Messengerhood .... As a result of “preaching” and only preaching, without any “revolutionary struggle”, the Islamic state of Medina came into existence ... for this “revolution”, Muḥammad never erected an “organisational structure”; he never established a system of pledging; and never handed over his followers a “strategy” for the enforcement of religion ... The revolution that emerged fourteen hundred years ago cannot be an “exemplary strategy” for future revolutions”.<sup>54</sup>

So by implication of Ghamīdī's thought, the prophetic efforts shall not be imitable for the Islamists' political struggle, which is devoid of appreciation for physical laws as Mawdūdi's assertion was.

“The life of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) and his fellows is not to be used as an example in this case [struggle for Islamic revival] because he was obliged to fulfil the prophetic mission as a first order. For this purpose he never established a political organisation. And understandably so, as the Messenger is never meant to struggle for a political change, rather, he concentrates on purification of hearts and souls of individuals. His mission is not to become an actor in the “power struggle” but to preach and imbibe the moral principles in politics and economy. In the same vein, if one expects the Prophet to be a successful “banker” and “politician,” then he is mistaken. He is an inviter ... He doesn't come up with an “economic program.” He doesn't bring any revolutionary program ... the “Caliphs” were not essentially ulama but “political leaders” who were also well-acquainted with religion ... if the ulama and religious groups would redirect their energies towards raising collective consciousness through preaching, education and exhortation then none of the current “structures” can stand up to them: neither these status-quo intuitions; nor the US hegemony in the current form.<sup>55</sup>

Leafing through his intellectual biography, Ghamidi explains,

“my own [intellectual] condition reflected a pantheon of ideas where I sculpted ideas and I worshiped them and then I smashed them down ... in 1990, ultimately the ground was ready for laying the foundations of a new building/construct .... I was turning on 40, and had acquired clarity of thought to a greater extent ... I am working on my authorial project for the last 17 years now”.<sup>56</sup>

In short, Ghamīdī's graduation to his current intellectual standing is rooted in constant ruptures and transformations. His dissatisfaction with the existing revivalist approaches and the breakdown of the traditional framework was instrumental in shaping his intellectual development.

## Conclusion

Talal Asad and others have opened an important theoretical debate on Islam and the secularity of critique. This paper has narrowly focused on an empirical example of only some of the dissident scholars whose dissent and critique with mainstream Islamic scholarship can be analyzed in the light of the immanent critique. As discussed, once close associates and followers of Mawdūdī's revivalist vision, have not only attacked the very foundations of his ideology but have also attempted to come up with an alternative understanding as well. The discussion that how this reinterpretation can lead to some key implications for Islamic revivalism in Pakistan and elsewhere is beyond the scope of this paper. However what is more evident is the prevalence of a body of scholarship that can be categorized as internal to revivalism, and has been critically engaged with the main ideologues. It is important to note that the criticism raised by Khān, Iṣlāhī and Ghamīdī have also received critical reflections from *internal* as well as *external* circles. For example, in his research, Asīf Iftikhār (2005: 78-79) divided these critiques into three main categories: 1) those who charge Ghamīdī with deviation from consensus position; 2) criticism on "Ghamīdī's interpretations vis-à-vis his arguments", and 3) criticisms from within (that is, critiques posed by Ghamīdī's current interlocutors and ex-students). For instance, Ghamīdī's reformulation of sources (the distinction between *Ḥadīth* and *Sunnah*, refutation of recognising *Qiyās* and *Ijmā'* as independent sources) has resented traditional '*ulamā'* everywhere. Rafīq considers Ghamīdī an extension of the late 19th century Modernist trend pioneered by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and continued by Ghulam Aḥmad Pervez and others. According to Rafīq, Ghamīdī is an innovator as well as a denier of *Ḥadīth* because these two are concomitant attributes.<sup>57</sup> In his criticism, Rafīq seems to define diverse intellectual trends in the sub-continent under one homogeneous category – Modernism. According to Rafīq, this heresy (modernity) has numerous shades: Qādiāniyyat, Perviziyyat, Maghrebiyyat, *Tajaddud*, Moderation and Enlightened Moderation. For him, the following key features constitute modernity (and thus Ghamīdī's thought),

“promotion of scepticism and wrong interpretation of the established

religious injunctions; denial of the multiple Qur'ānic readings; refutation of *Hadīth* and *Sunnah*; conspiracy of changing the true meanings of the religious terms; refutation of *Ijmā'*; obedience to the government despite having intellectual pride; disrespect for the ulama; the unholy attempt to present Western civilisation in Islamic terms; denial of veiling for Muslim woman; denial of Shar'ia penalty for drinkers, and approval of sculptures, music and playing musical instruments".<sup>58</sup>

Likewise, an ex-fellow of Ghamīdī has addressed hermeneutics of post-Islamism in critical terms. Through empirical examples, Ansāri has identified the inconsistencies that might erupt due to application of these hermeneutics. For Ansāri, the emphasis on monovocality of the text and application of *nazm* theory will lead to another exclusivist interpretation of Islam. For him, post-Islamists seek to dilute the force of resistance within Islam. He labelled this discourse as "survivalist Islam."<sup>59</sup>

Critique is thus not limited to secular-western academic tradition. The practices of critique are as much internal to Islamic scholarship as may be to any other academic tradition. There is ample room for future research to study and examine empirical examples and case studies in the light of Talāl Asad's conceptual framework. A good number of cases could be examined from within the Deobandi Islam for example.

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