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Comparative study of the effectiveness of Fardid and Sayyid Qutb discourses in the development of political Islam

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Abstract

This paper conducts a comparative examination of the intellectual legacies of Ahmad Fardid and Sayyid Qutb, two influential thinkers whose ideas have left a lasting impact on political Islam and the broader socio-political contexts of Iran and Egypt. Despite their distinct cultural and historical settings, both thinkers formulated profound critiques of modernity and Western civilization, calling for a return to Islamic authenticity as a basis for societal and political order. This study employs a comparative analytical framework, utilizing Skinner's hermeneutic methodology, to explore how their ideas influenced political ideologies, radical movements, and the broader socio-political developments of their respective nations.

Ahmad Fardid, a philosopher from Iran, is best known for his concept of "Westoxication" (Gharbzadegi). This notion criticizes the uncritical adoption of Western val-

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ues, advocating instead for the preservation of indigenous Islamic and cultural identities. Fardid's philosophical critique is deeply rooted in existentialist and metaphysical challenges to Western modernity, emphasizing its materialistic and rationalist underpinnings that undermine the spiritual and ethical dimensions of Islamic societies. His ideas resonated particularly within the intellectual and political movements surrounding the Islamic Revolution in Iran. By articulating a critique of the West that fused traditional Islamic thought with contemporary existentialist philosophy, Fardid provided a robust intellectual framework for resisting Westernization and supporting the establishment of an Islamic state governed by Sharia.

In Egypt, Sayyid Qutb emerged as a pivotal figure in the intellectual foundations of modern political Islam. His concept of "Jahiliyya" (ignorance) redefined the pre-Islamic notion to critique secular and Western-influenced governance within Muslim societies. Qutb argued that any system not explicitly governed by Islamic principles represented a state of ignorance, requiring a fundamental transformation led by a vanguard of committed believers. His seminal works, such as *Milestones* and his multi-volume Quranic exegesis *In the Shade of the Quran*, provided a theoretical framework for the ideological trajectory of Islamist movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood and transnational jihadist organizations. Central to Qutb's vision was the principle of divine sovereignty (Hakimiyyah), which rejected all human-made laws and systems as inherently flawed, asserting instead that only laws rooted in divine revelation could establish a just and moral society.

This study reveals an intellectual intersection in their critiques of modernity and their advocacy for Islamic governance. Both thinkers shared a profound rejection of secular liberalism and an unwavering commitment to Islamic principles as the foundation for societal renewal. However, their methods and approaches to these challenges diverged significantly. Fardid's intellectual activism centered on philosophical and cultural critiques, emphasizing the preservation of Islamic values through intellectual discourse and cultural transformation. In contrast, Qutb championed direct action, including armed resistance, as a means to achieve a comprehensive Islamic state.

The scope of their influence also varied. Fardid's ideas primarily shaped Iranian intellectual and political circles, particularly during the Islamic Revolution. His concept of Westoxication became a rallying cry against cultural imperialism, offering a counter-narrative to Western dominance and shaping the post-revolutionary discourse on Iranian identity and governance. Conversely, Qutb's ideology transcended Egypt's borders, inspiring Islamist movements globally.

His advocacy for an Islamic political system, coupled with his critique of Westernized Muslim regimes, catalyzed a resurgence of political Islam across the Muslim world, influencing movements from North Africa to Southeast Asia.

The comparative analysis identifies several commonalities between the two thinkers. Both articulated their critiques of modernity as existential threats to Islamic identity and governance. They emphasized the imperative of returning to authentic Islamic principles as a counterweight to Western influence. Both thinkers also viewed the cultural and political subjugation of their societies as symptomatic of broader structural issues, including colonialism and ideological imperialism. Despite these shared perspectives, their responses to these challenges reflected their unique socio-political environments. Fardid's philosophical approach aligned with Iran's intellectual tradition, which integrates mysticism and philosophy, while Qutb's political activism resonated with the socio-political upheavals of mid-20th-century Egypt.

Their legacies also diverge in scope and implications. Fardid's influence remains largely confined to Iran, where his ideas on cultural revival and Islamic authenticity underpinned the ideological framework of the Islamic Revolution. His critique of Western modernity continues to shape Iranian academic and political discourse. By contrast, Qutb's writings have had a profound impact on the global Islamist movement. His works provided the ideological foundation for various radical groups, offering a blueprint for resistance against secular regimes and for the establishment of Islamic governance.

While their methods and scopes differ, the parallels in their thought are striking. Both thinkers shared a fundamental critique of modernity, viewing it as an existential crisis that necessitates a return to Islamic values. Their ideas also underscore the importance of Islamic principles in resisting Western cultural and political dominance. Both rejected secularism and liberalism as antithetical to Islamic governance, advocating instead for systems rooted in Sharia. Furthermore, their ideas emphasized the role of intellectual and ideological renewal in confronting the challenges posed by modernity.

The differences in their approaches reflect the specific challenges and opportunities of their contexts. Fardid's critique of Westernization was primarily philosophical and cultural, focusing on the spiritual and ethical dimensions of Islamic identity. His influence on the Islamic Revolution highlights the centrality of intellectual discourse in shaping political movements. Conversely, Qutb's direct advocacy for political and social transformation, including the use of force, underscores the activist dimension of his thought. His vision for an Islamic state governed by divine law has had enduring implications for contemporary Isla-

mist movements.

In conclusion, the intellectual trajectories of Ahmad Fardid and Sayyid Qutb represent significant contributions to the discourse on political Islam. Their ideas, though shaped by distinct socio-political contexts, converge in their rejection of modernity and their call for a return to Islamic authenticity. This comparative analysis highlights the enduring relevance of their contributions, offering insights into the dynamic interplay between ideology, culture, and politics in the Muslim world. As political Islam continues to evolve, the legacies of Fardid and Qutb remain central to understanding its intellectual and ideological foundations.

Key words: society and politics; Political Islam; Skinner; Sayyid Qutb; Fardid.