ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CIVIL SOCIETY, INFORMATION SOCIETY AND ISLAMIC SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

The present article compares the civil society, information society, and the Islamic society. The notion of civil society is a conceptual framework in which the development of modern societies in Europe and other industrial countries has been described. The concept of information society has been a central focus of societal development analysis in the mid-20th century. This theory attempts to bring about a general flourishing state of human intellectual creativity. The Islamic society hinges on the concept of society as conceptualized by Islam. The concept of society in Islam is based on divine low, which finds the foundation of world order in the principle and theory of Towhid (Unity and oneness of God). Thus, the concept of society, according to this notion, is neither sectarian, nor racial and tribal, but universal. Life according to Islam is an organic whole and all components-political, economic, religious, and cultural-are parts of the whole. Society is governed by law, that is the Divine low, but this law preceded the society and controls it, and not the other way around.

INTRODUCTION

The notion of civil society as a conceptual framework in which to describe the development of modern societies in Europe and other industrial countries has been a dominant discourse of philosophical and sociological thought since the 19th century.[1] For example, as stated by Hegel, the state comprises an ideal relationship of the elements of society and aggregates the paramount concern of its members, civil society, in contrast, comprises the private world of individual and group interests and activities. The unity between the two will eventually

evolve through several institutions.[2] In this context the state is separate from civil society, that is, a society with government and laws. Although Marx acknowledged the fundamental contradiction between the state and the civil society, he nevertheless, separated forms of the state from an ideal or abstract conception and rooted them in "the material condition of life."[3]

Starting in the mid-20th century, there has been a development of information and communication technologies and a corresponding shift in the division of labor, production, and information sources. During this period, a new concept - - that of the information society as post-industrial society - - has been a central focus of societal development analysis by such writers as Daniel Bell,[4] Yoneji Masuda,[5] and others. The goal of this discourse "is the realization of society that brings about a general flourishing state of human intellectual creativity, instead of affluent material consumption."[6] According to this assertion, the relationship between the state, the society, and the individual will be determined by the production of information value and not material value. Thus, information society, as it is argued, will bring about the transformation of society into a completely new type of human society.

As early as the late 19th century, the concept of civil society was propagated in the Islamic world, particularly in the Middle East by the individuals who promoted the notion of modernization along the lines of Western institutions. The reductive refinement of the concepts of civil society and of the modern nation-state system was confronted with the Islamic notion of "ummah" (religion-political community) and its inseparable nature of politics and ethics and unity of spiritual and temporal powers. It is this confrontation that has entangled Islamic countries in a crisis of legitimacy which has continued to the present time.

The Islamic world with its strong oral and written traditions and religious ideology which embraces all aspects of political, economic, and cultural life comprises a fourth of the world's population. Today, once again, the Islamic world is confronted with another discourse that of the information society. What assurances are there that the dominant information order and its concepts do not disrupt the Muslim society's peculiar social fabric? What would be the meaning of the information society for the traditionally bi-modal Muslim culture? What will be the intellectual and institutional responses to this new stream of projections?

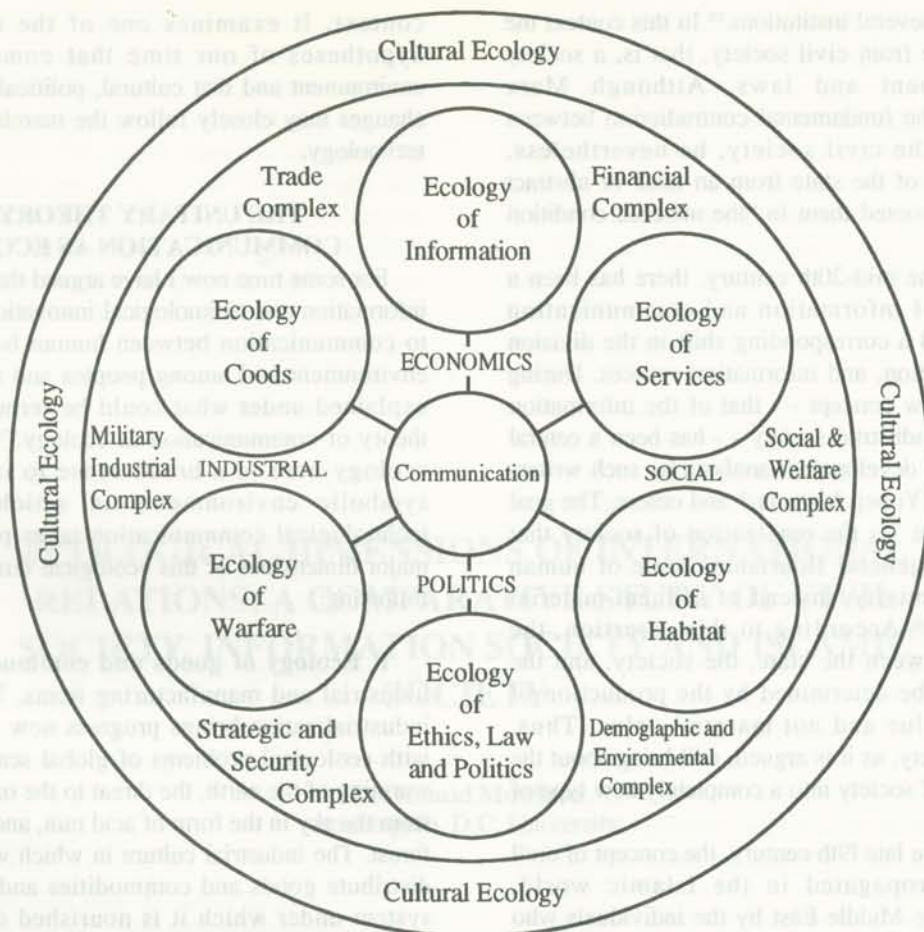This presentation considers the concepts and evolution's of civil society, information society, and Islamic society in an historical and comparative context. It examines one of the most startling hypotheses of our time that communication is environment and that cultural, political, and economic changes may closely follow the march of information technology.

THE UNITARY THEORY OF COMMUNICATION AS ECOLOGY

For some time now I have argued that the process of information and technological innovations, as it relates to communication between human beings and their environment and among peoples and nations, can be explained under what could be termed the unitary theory of communication as ecology.[7] I use the term ecology here in a broad sense to include all the symbolic environments in which human and technological communication takes place. Thus the major dimensions of this ecological terrain include the following:

1. Ecology of goods and commodities, such as industrial and manufacturing items. The thesis that industrialization brings progress now is being tested with ecological problems of global scale, such as the warming of the earth, the threat to the ozone, the attack from the sky in the form of acid rain, and the loss of the forest. The industrial culture in which we produce and distribute goods and commodities and the economic system under which it is nourished determines the quality of this ecological terrain. Ever since the air became an overcrowded "garbage dump" for industrial wastes and the internal combustion engine, it has become easier for us to turn off our sense of communication with the natural environment than to keep it functioning. Our ability to produce a variety of goods and commodities also is mixed with consumerism and environmental repression.

2. Ecology of Services, which includes banking, insurance, and education. The manner and systems by which we arrange the acquisition and delivery of such services as education, health, travel, finance, banking, ad child care determine the direction and quality of our communication. For example, the banking sector is changing shape in many countries as the increased use of plastic cards for retail payments has altered the traditional relationship between the banks and the shops. At the same time traditional barriers between markets and countries are crumbling. The ability to communicate cheaply and conveniently, the change in the locus of "educational experience" within and across institutions, the blurring of boundaries between educational and other institutions such as entertainment and education, education and work, are creating

Cultural Ecology

Trade Complex · Ecology of Information · Financial Complex

Ecology of Coods · ECONOMICS · Ecology of Services

Cultural Ecology · Military Industrial Complex · INDUSTRIAL · Communication · SOCIAL · Social & Welfare Complex · Cultural Ecology

Ecology of Warfare · POLITICS · Ecology of Habitat

Strategic and Security Complex · Ecology of Ethics, Law and Politics · Demoglaphic and Environmental Complex

Cultural Ecology

Unitary Model of Communication as cultural Ecology The order in which the six ecological dimensions are shown is not fixed and static but rather dynamic and interchangeable.

profound changes in our cultural ecology. In many instances, education is moving from self-discovery to a service-oriented institution towards taking on aspects of a "goods-oriented" industry.

3.Ecology of warfare, meaning all the military and security hardware, software, and the infrastructure therein. With the advent of nuclear weapons and the development of sophisticated chemical and biological "deterrent" since World War Two, the ecology of warfare has been in the forefront of international communication. The Cold War as well as the so called "post Cold War world" have produced ecological dimensions of their own in terms of psychological propaganda, low intensity war, public mobilization, national security, disarmament, peace movements, and a score of other military related phenomena. The environmental destruction resulting from such wars as*Vietnam* and the *Persian Gulf,* combined with the symbolic environment created to justify the actions of international actors, all constitute a special ecological

terrain in which communication and culture are interwoven.

4. Ecology of information, encompassing such processes as cultural industries and mass media. Linked together, communication and information technology, including mass media and advertising, not only lead to new distribution in time and space of the individual and society but also create a symbolic environment which determines the mood and the climate of actions.; Communication and information media have the potential of both polluting the symbolic environment we breath as well as crystallizing and clarifying issues. The degree of noise created by modern media and the amount of space taken by information related technologies from television to computers, from video cassettes to music, profoundly has affected the arrangements of space and time in our daily lives. In examining the terrain of information and media ecology the questions remain: How can we learn to use the media when "negative conditioning" in terms of the

excessive focus on violence and commercialism limits our confidence and approach to life? How to make information systems accessible and useful to everyone without creating information "haves" and "have nots"? Who owns information and communication space? What distinguishes private from public spheres in information ecology? Is the individual enriched or impoverished, master or servant?

5. Ecology of habitat, comprising such areas as demography, housing, physical environment, and pollution. Population growth, urbanization, architecture, city planning, urban renewal, and the flow of persons across national and cultural boundaries in the form of immigrants or refugees, constitute a sphere of ecology that determines our "territory" and underline one of the most profound ways we come to interact and communicate with each other. In short, social and personal use of space creates a kind of ecology which determines some of the most important cores of culture and communication.

6. Ecology of politics, ethics, law, and morality, referring to specific normative discourse such as religion, mores, laws, and social contracts. Our individual and collective perceptions regarding the relationships between politics and ethics, between law and morality, between religion and the state creates one of the most important ecological terrains of our time. This specific ecological terrain determines the climate and mood of national, international, and community actions; it not only determines our understanding of such phraseology and ideologies as "democracy," "progress," "justice," "egalitarianism," "freedom," and "good society" but also helps to legitimize the directions of governmental and public policies as well as creates dissent, protest, division, and even revolution. What is politics? Should it be separated from ethics? What is religion? Should religion or church be separated from politics? What is sovereignty? To whom does it belong? Does the government have responsibility to narrow the gap between rich and poor? Or should inequality be defended as a source of productivity, economic growth, and individual striving from excellence? What are the attributes of good society or a good community? Is the real nature of a human being the totality of his or her social relations? In short, the ecological terrain which constitutes our collective understanding and faith in the nature of religion, community, laws, politics, and the state alters our social vision. This in turn interacts with other ecological dimensions cited above and ultimately accounts for the process of change at national and global levels.

These six ecological terrains are not spatial but relational and integrative. That is, not only do we interact with these environments on separate and one-to-one bases but also the integrative interactions of these six terrains among themselves and with human beings characterize the unique aspect of our civilization. Our cultural, economic, and political environments cannot be understood completely unless we turn our attention to this unitary phenomenon in terms of communication and culture. Thus, our notion of self, society, and universe is very much shaped by this ecological view and the way we perceive language, literacy, arts, sciences, and, in short, reality.

Our world view under such an integrated ecological perspective is shaped by at least three distinct actors and participants: A. the state; B. groups and institutions, and C. individuals. For example, the linkage between ecology of goods and commodities with that of ecology of services has created an environment of international economic and financial complexity. In the same way, the network of ecology of goods and commodities, when intersected with the ecology of warfare, produces the so called military industrial complex. International propaganda and political discourse are as much the result of the linkages between ecology of warfare and the ecology of information as the mass media and cultural industry complex are in major part the result of ecology of information and those of ethics and morality. Take, for example, the perception and the relationship of such phrases as "democracy," individual rights," with that of the automotive industry in a number of highly industrialized countries. Here the automobile is not only the means of transportation and mobility, and even prestige and wealth, but also, in a very quintessential way, is perceived as the individual's freedom of action as well as rights. In the same manner, ecology terrains are created when military is linked to security, private space to public space, data to knowledge, dependency to interdependency, and progress to decay. The manipulation of these ecological terrains in international relations and the way they have been presented has resulted in certain reductionism. The dualism as well as simplification and mystification in contemporary international politics, at least since World War Two, can be well illustrated by the relations and the discourse of the great powers in such reductive terms as capitalism versus socialism, liberalism versus authoritarianism, dependency versus interdependence, and internationalism versus nationalism.

THE ECOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

It now seems more imperative than ever to discuss the global tension not only in terms of explicitly

economic, geopolitical, and military structures, but also equally in the context of cultural communication and information struggles. To suggest that culture and communication are crucial for analysis of international relations is not to view these areas as exclusive territories of the idealist approach to world politics which so often characterized the Wilsonian era of international politics. Communication and cultural dominance has become the cornerstone of those powers whose actions and reactions are primarily based on the "realist" school of international relations. The post Cold War era, I believe, will bring the cultural dimensions of world politics to its most prominent position underpinning what I term the unitary theory of cultural ecology.

For one, the crude reductionism of the conservative schools of real-politic, as well as that of radical political economy which dominated the scholarly and policy fields for over four decades, has proven incomplete in answering the many questions which have embraced the developments in many parts around the world-both in the West and in the East. Furthermore, the epistemological tradition of research, in which the realm of ideas was separated from that of matter, was not only historically specific to the tradition of Western philosophy and science but also created a dualism and a division which impeded the formulation of concepts and theories of a practical nature. Most important of all, the erosion of state legitimacy and the political development which has followed the events of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union make the "inevitable" conduct of human affairs by the Western powers more problematic. These are combined with the economic crisis in the West and the challenges emanating from the non-Western culture, particularly in the Islamic world. Indeed, we may look forward to a period in which the superficial pluralism- in which "the socialist solidarity" and "the capitalist values" were nourished- may be replaced by simple human courage and decent values on a universal level.

As the West moved toward the coming of the so called information society, the conceptions of justice, derived from civil society by the intellectual elite of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, had run into trouble. On the international level, the conventional argument was popularized that if one wants peace, one should prepare for war. The systems of autonomous nation states had little sense of community but strived for power and divergent interests under pluralism. For much of the humankind, in national and international levels, culture increasingly became something that arrived in cans. Indeed, a contradiction was developed between nationalism of the small powers and integration of the big powers. Thus, hegemony in the name of universalism was asserted by the big powers as small nations struggled against domination. Both realism and historical materialism directed attention to conflict. On the national and societal level, the line between civil rights and state rights became blurred.

If the inadequacy of these simplification and mystification is now apparent, what then are the vital and supreme items best describing the scene of international relations as well as the sources of global ecology. Eight major factors come to mind: A. the changing pattern of human values; B. the growing gap between "haves" and "have nots;" C. demographic landscape and the growth of population; D. vital and nonrenewable resources, such as oil; E. technology of communication; F. financial resources, control of market, and the access to labor; G. control of political systems, and H. the contending public and private virtues.

Nowhere were these global factors better illustrated than in the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War between Iraq and the multinational forces led by the United States. Three major factors were responsible for the events leading to the Persian Gulf War and the presence of more than half a million soldiers on each side in the conflict: A. control of the production of oil in the Middle East which eventually determines the price of this non-renewable resource in the world market so vital to the economy of the industrialized West; B. control of the flow of capital accumulated in the oil-rich Arab nations with far-reaching military, financial, labor, and market consequences, and C. control of the politico-cultural ecology of the region including the political systems and he question of an emerging "new world order."

The geography of the Persian Gulf has not changed much over the last century, but the ecological dimensions of the area in the struggle for cultural, military, security, economic, and ideological dominance were altered during the closing decades of the twentieth century by a number of important events. These included the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the resurgence of politico-cultural movements in the region; the erosion of monarchical, military, and secular regimes and the inability of Arab nationalism to respond to the problems confronting the area. Added to this is the increasing dependency of many countries of the region on the superpowers and the technological shift in human ability to build, destroy, transport, and communicate. Geopolitics of information ecology wrapped in modern communication technology had now become a crucial and decisive element in the international relations of the area making this region one of the most sophisticated centers of modern military networks in the world.

Thus, the fragmented nature of political systems in the Middle East, the desire to accelerate the process of "modernization," combined with transitions in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, all have contributed to the quest for alternative visions of community and leadership in the Middle East.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND INFORMATION SOCIETY: A QUEST FOR COMMUNITY

For centuries Western political and social philosophies have been preoccupied with two problems: community and leadership; community lost and community found; leaders appeared and leaders disappeared. If community or the quest for community was the essence of Western social philosophy, anti-community and social conflict were the other side of the same coin. In this light, then, the concept of civil society was another attempt in search of community where the rights of the state and the rights of individuals were supposed to be defined.

The concept of anti-community does not exist in the dictionary of Islam; nor is there evidence to support such a stream of thought among the Muslims and their history. Although political conflicts existed, social conflict within the meaning of ummah was very minimal, and it was due primarily to racialism tribadism, and nationalism. This is one of the fundamental differences between the history of Western civilization and Islamic history. From the time of St. Benedict through the writings of Sir Thomas More down to the works of such political and social thinkers as Proudhon, Marx, Engels, de Tocueville, and others, the notion of community stressed the relationship between man and the physical world, groups and the phenomenon of nature.[8] It explored the technological, political, bureaucratic, and even ecological aspects of the community. Its discourse centered around pluralism, but it always fell short in integrating the diverse phenomenon of human activities in a single whole. Military, politics, economics, bureaucracy, rationality, all were departmentalized. Emphasis on one determined the social conflict inherent in the other. Communities were identified and coined when a single phenomenon, such as religion or politics, was emphasized.

For example, the quest for religious community was, in part, the disenchantment of the political community which we see in the works of such thinkers as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, and Kierkegaard.[9] If power lies at the core of politics, modern scientific discovery gives prominent plea to economics and commodity production; in the West, the marriage of the two, called political economy, plants the seeds of revolution that is, the quest for the revolutionary community. The concept of civil society was one of the last chapters written in the collection of communities which was to mark the epoch of industrialization and complement the Hegelian political philosophy.

The notion of "information society" was the prelude to the "post-industrial society." The discourse on information and post-industrial societies is a post-World War Two phenomenon and is particularly acute in the United States and Japan. The early discourse on post-industrial society as information society was articulated in the United States, by such writers as Daniel Bell and Fritz Machlup.[10] The empirical measurement and the early quantitative research, however, was carried out in Japan under the term "joho shakai," meaning the information society.[11]

There is not time or space in this essay to dwell, in any comprehensive way, on the portrayal and the meaning of information society; however, a few references to the early writers are in order. Daniel Bell, in advancing the thesis of the post-industrial society, emphasized that this chance primarily is a change in the social structure, and its consequences will vary in societies with different political and cultural configurations. As a social form, the post-industrial society will be a major feature of the 21st century, in the social structures of the United States, Japan, the Soviet Union, and Western Europe. Unlike Marx, Bell does not believe in deterministic trajectory. He sees the post-industrial society as one important dimension of a society whose changes pose management problems for the political system that arbitrates the society, just as change in culture and lifestyle brings about confrontations with tradition. Similarly, the rise of new social groups, and the visibility of disadvantaged groups, raises issues of power and distribution of privilege in a society. The concept of post-industrial society deals primarily with changes in the social structure, the way in which the economy is being transformed, and the occupational systems altered. Bell does not claim that changes in social structure determine corresponding changes in the polity and culture, but rather that changes in social structure pose questions for the rest of the society. For analytical purposes, he divides societies into pre-industrial, industrial, and post-industrial, and looks at them in contrast along many different dimensions.[12]

A post-industrial society as an information society, according to Bell, is based on services; therefore, it is a game between persons. What counts is information. The central person is the professional who is educated and trained to provide the kinds of skills which the post-industrial society requires. Bell's classifications

are reminiscent of another American sociologist, Daniel Lerner. In his discussion, Lerner divided contemporary societies into traditional, transitional, and modern-with the traditional being a service and oral society and the modern, characterized by the print and electronic mode of communication engaged in commodity production.[13] If one accepts Bell's notion of post-industrial society as a service society one might conclude that the so called developing countries, labeled by Lerner as traditional, are indeed "post-industrial."

The post-industrial society also is supposed to be a knowledge society. The sources of innovation are increasingly derived from research and development. Additionally, a large proportion of National Gross Product is spent in the knowledge field; however, Bell does not elaborate what constitutes knowledge unless we assume that the incredible quantity of data generated in post-industrial society automatically are transformed into information and that it in turn produces knowledge which is universally shared. Bell claims that the roots of post-industrial society lie in the inexorable influences of science, and the overriding fact about science is its autonomy as a self-directed community. Bell emphasizes that Rousseau's moral society, as pictured in the Social Contract, is necessarily small society - one in which individuals know one another well and can live in a system of mutual love and trust.[14] A corollary of this proposition - socialism in the form of communism is impossible in large societies - is that love is effective in holding people together when it is directed toward specific individuals; where love is generalized to the humanity as a whole, it looses it potency. This ignores the fact that members of a society might be integrated on the basis of a more supreme world view than that of man-made history.

in Bell's thinking, there is a return to classical political philosophy with its emphasis on civic virtue and political obligation as opposed to the liberal ideal of maximum individual freedom in pursuit of wealth and personal happiness. Although Bell accurately is aware of the origin of modern societies' disenchantment with bourgeois civilization, he does not offer any remedies or suggestions for the disease he has diagnosed.

ISLAMIC SOCIETIES AND THE EVOLUTION OF COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

In the realm of information and communication, the Islamic culture and civilization over the last 14 centuries have been instrumental in the development of three major pillars of human communication: A. a high level of oral communication and culture in which information was produced and transmitted on a person-to-person basis; B. an unprecedented degree of written and reproduced books and manuscripts which marked an intellectual era in human history and in all branches of knowledge resulting in scientific, literary, artistic, and linguistic interaction; C. the first attempt in history to bring oral and written cultures into a unified framework of craftsmanship and thus lay the ground for the scientific revolution that was to follow in Europe in such fields as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, chemistry, and a score of methodological and scientific works in history, demography, and sociology.

For example, the art of oral culture and communication in Islamic societies finds its best expression in the holy book, ran, the sunna (tradition), the Hadith (a record of action and sayings of the Prophet and his Ahl-ul-bait, the family of the prophet). The memorization of the Quran is a common information and communication act which has a long history in all Islamic societies and continues to be practiced widely in all Muslim countries an inextricable link between oral and inscriptive modes of communication. While the Quran is the main source from which Islamic practices and precepts are explained and deduced, the sunna of the Prophet was taken from his deeds and judgements, drawn up and fixed in writing. Sunna is the standard of conduct along side of the Quran. The word Hadith means primarily sayings, a communication or narrative transmitted from the Prophet and his companions, Ahl-ul-bait, and the Imam. A Hadith can only be credible when its "isnad" or documentation offers an unbroken series of reliable authorities in oral and written communication. Investigation and study of this whole body of communication is called ilm-al-Hadith, or the science of transmission of the sayings of the Prophet and his companions. Thus, the Quran, the sunna, and the hadith provided the main source of Islamic polity and the state in the form of ummah or community. During the later years of Islamic history when the arts of book making and reproduction of manuscripts were widely developed, the oral mode did not loose its significance. It remained an inseparable part of culture and communication in arts, literature, and poetry.

The invention of the Gutenberg press in the middle of the 15th century saw the birth of the "print culture" and a tremendous quantitative jump in the output of human information leading eventually to the so called "electronic communication," and the "information explosion" centuries later. This was not exactly the case in the Islamic societies. The bi-modal development of oral as well as inscriptive communication in Islamic lands was a sustained growth and was characterized by its qualitative and not quantitative jumps.

As the Islamic world fell short in adopting the new

means of technologies, due to political, economic, and social factors internally and externally, it was also left behind for hundreds of years in creating an infrastructure that would sustain the early acceleration in information and knowledge in the industrial era. Thus, a quantitative as well as a qualitative gap was developed between the West and those of the Islamic countries.

The crisis in the West, on the other hand, was found not so much in the quantity of information but in the distribution of instruments of information processing as well as their availability in forms of knowledge for individual users in society. The process of industrialization, coupled with the rise of economic classes and the establishment of the nation state system, elevated the print culture to a new frontier in which not only the oral mode of communication was outcast but also a new division between information producers and knowledge producers was drawn. Now the economic system treated information as any other commodity that could be processed, packaged, and sold in forms of cultural industries and as an invisible import/export item in international finance, trade, and the transfer of technology.

With the development of electronic technology, and especially computers and other information auxiliaries, the West entered a new era in which the production and distribution of data, and not necessarily information and knowledge, became the central foci of society. Elsewhere, I have described how the terms data, information, and knowledge have been used interchangeably in the West. As I have argued, the major characteristic of the so called "post industrial" or "information revolution" has been its ability, to produce and distribute data and not necessarily information and knowledge in large quantities in modern societies.

It is as unrealistic to describe the characteristics of a given society or system as a pure end product of the unilinear development of a single historical period of human civilization or technological innovation as it is to ignore that tradition entirely. Rather, one might conceive of the communication system of a given society as a hybrid born of multifarious scientific and technological as well as social traditions, at various times betraying the influence of one or the other, or a combination of the traditions.This point is especially crucial if we consider other layers of human infrastructure in the form of culture, religion, government, and bureaucracy, without which societal communication cannot take place.

Both capitalism and state controlled socialism - the former with its powerful economic and military-communication complex and the latter with its exclusive state-bureaucracy apparatus - have created scores of information knowledge producers with the population remaining largely as consumers of "packaged"information and as laborers of the information processing industry.This has transformed the nature of the state and has created a new class of datacratic intelligentsia and information population with its own elite pyramid. It is precisely this new datacratic and information class that has transformed the traditional nature of civil society to datacratic society in the West. The new class is neither Kenneth Galbraith's powerful but benign "technocrats,"[15] nor Noam Chomsky's weak but maligned servants of power."[16] It also is not what Alvin Gouldner termed a "flawed universal class"[17] as a cultural bourgeoisie of our time. Instead, these are the datacrats, the sources of power and weakness, development and decay, war and peace. In modern politics, these datacrats are both the rulers and the outcasts.

In the West, the print and electronic cultures helped to concentrate power in the hands of a few and to contribute to the centralization of the state apparatus. The oral mode of communication in Islamic societies helped to decentralize and diffuse the power of the state and to establish a counter balance of authority in the hands of those who were grounded in oral tradition. The individuals maintained their ability to communicate within their own community and beyond, despite the influence of state propaganda and modern institutions. The resurgence of Islam and the political and revolutionary movements within the Islamic countries led by traditional authorities, such as the Ullama, are but one example of the potential use of oral culture and its confrontation with modernism inherited in mediated electronic cultures.[18]

The nature of civil society was not only grounded in print and electronic culture but also was synonymous with such modern concepts as secularism, nation state, nationalism, and modern European parliamentary democracy. The replication of civil society based on the European model in Islamic society was not an easy task. It had to confront the centuries old tradition of political and linguistic tradition so peculiar to Islam. The incompatibility was not only evident in the modes of communication and their prevalence in society but also was apparent and more pronounced in the concepts of community, the state, and politics and ethics. Not only was there no demarcation between the polity and ethical concepts in Islam, no differences existed between the temporal and the spiritual. The Islamic legal system had its own civil and state dimensions, which were at once interwoven and interrelated. The concept of the nation state was alien to Islam as were the notions of modern nationalism and state sovereignty.

Under the ummah, Islam has a new concept of community. One of the most important aspects of ummah is that Islam does not differentiate between the individuals as members of its community. Race, ethnicity, tribalism, nationalism, have no place to distinguish one member of the community from the rest. Nationalities, cultural differences, geographical factors are recognized but domination based on nationality is rejected. It is the individual and its relations to the community that is valued; however, this relationship alone is not the sole purpose in itself, both the individual and society must make their relationship clear to God: Are the individuals in society against God or under God? Ummah, as a social organization, emphasizes communality and collectivity based on Islamic tenets and not inter-individualism.The social contract which becomes the basis of ummah is not based on free will of undefined choice but subject to higher norms: the will of Allah. Communal cohesion is based on divine rights and not on natural rights. The term theocracy, often cited in the West, thus, cannot apply to the Islamic community since the notion of church as an institution is foreign to Islam, which as a religion combines both spiritual and temporal powers. It is an ideology possessing no centralized body yet its monotheism implies a single global order advocating the universality of moral principles. The ummah is beyond the nation state in that the notion of community in Islam cannot be compared to the stage series of societal development found in Western community histories - principally that of an independent and an incorporated "political community" or "military community.[19]

Modernization movements in Islamic societies over the last 100 years failed in part because they were unable to elaborate a coherent doctrine based on the unity of spiritual and temporal powers, the interconnection of what is known as civil society and the state. Islamic "reformism," despite its idealistic unity, failed to take into account the multidimensional aspects of the society which was the ummah. Instead, its political culture, its mode of mobilization, and its administrative framework became ingrained in the concept of the modern nation state system and its bureaucracy. Attempts were made to shift the models but not the dominant paradigm which stood in contrast to the meaning of the ummah.[20]

INFORMATION SOCIETY AND ISLAMIC SOCIETY

The concept of society in Islam is based on Divine Law, which finds the foundation of world order in the principal and theory of Towhid (unity and oneness of God). Thus, the concept of society, accordingly is neither sectarian-nor racial and tribal but universal. Life according to Islam is an organic whole and all components - political, economic, religious and cultural -are parts of the whole. Society is governed by law, that is the Divine Law, but this law precedes the society and controls it, and not the other way around. The methodological principles of Towhid can be summarized briefly as: A. rejection of all that does not correspond with reality; B. denial of ultimate contradictions, and C. openness to new and/or contrary evidence. The responsibility or obligation, known as "Taklif" laid down upon man exclusively, knows no bounds. In short, Towhid commits man to an ethic of action. The task of Islam is thus global, and the nature of the task is moral and religious, and not political or economic advantages. It was based precisely on this theory and action that the early Muslims began to establish a new order that differed from that of the Egyptians, Greeks, Persians, Romans, and even the Indians.

Muslim societies in general have a rather skeptical picture of the West's information and media expansion, to say the least. The history of colonialism shows that the West not only extended its hold on Muslim heritage and resources economically and politically but also culturally and through the expansion of their communication media and control of information.[21]

This colonial motivation was couched in at least four distinct but interrelated stages, each reinforcing the other. In the first instance, during the late 17th century and continuing on until the mid-1920s, Christian missionaries, by establishing some of the first printing, publishing, and educational institutions in the Islamic land, laid the ground work not only for the dissemination of religious ideas and values but also for the recruitment of corps of educated elites who had to play the vital role in the process of political development in the later decades. This was followed in the second stage by the establishment of some of the early telecommunications. These included telephonic and telegraphic systems in such countries as Iran, Iraq, India, and Egypt, established by the British, French, and Germans, through which the colonial lines of the European empires were linked from the center to the peripheries. This strategic use of information helped to maintain the European grip on power and gave an economic and political advantage to their native friends during the crises and anti-imperialist movements which swept Islamic lands in Asia and the idle East in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The rise of Orientalism for changes in classical Arabic and Persian orthography and bibliographical control of Islamic literature and arts was the third stage

in the control and manipulation of information and images for strategic and political purposes. Indeed, the volume of literature on Islamic studies in Western languages since the beginning of the print culture, until the end of the 19th century, has been estimated to be 10,000 titles. This lopsided approach to information control on Islamic history and civilization was multiplied by the expansion of rapid growth in the print industry and by the centers of the so called Oriental and Islamic studies from Cambridge to Berlin and then on to New World and the United States.

The fourth and current stage of information dissemination and control found its way through the modern mass media, which were expanded globally by the West since World War Two, and became the major source of news and information on the Islamic lands. In the era of cumulative indexing, the utilization of bibliographical information for certain strategic and political purposes was too obvious, as the West used the existing "knowledge" to cope with the problems faced in the Islamic lands. The writings of the Orientalists in the West colored the images of Islam in the modern world and shaped the agenda of scientific inquiry and discourse in this area. Also many thousands of manuscripts by Muslim authors were moved, through the process of acquisition and colonial control, to European and American libraries.

With the coming of the so called "information explosion" and "information society," one of the most crucial questions that faces Islamic societies is the ultimate control of information processing and technology. In the face of the contemporary electronic age, there has been a gradual disappearance of the oral or traditional culture which has been a major resistance force in the face of cultural domination. The concept of civil society as a secular society was introduced into the complex life of Islamic lands at the time when the forces of resistance were at a minimum. With the new awareness and the degree of mobilization and cultural resurgence that we have witnessed during the last decades in Islamic communities around the world, the introduction of the "information revolution" and the entry into the "information society" seems to land on rocky soil.

The crucial question for the Islamic societies is whether the emerging global information communication community is a moral and ethical community or just another stage in the unfolding pictures of the transformation in which the West is the center and the Islamic world the periphery. Throughout Islamic history, especially in the early centuries, information was not a commodity but a moral and ethical imperative. Is information society a kind of "network community" in which a new rationalism is

likely to impose a policy of radical instrumentation under which social problems will be treated as technical problems and citizens will be replaced by experts? Will the new technologies of information encourage the centralization of decision-making and the fragmentation of society leading to the replacement of forms of community life with an exasperated individualism? Will the progressive replacement of mechanical and energy-based models by more cybernetics oriented models, inspired by information communication paradigms, serve to transform rational self-perception and to give individuals a new image of themselves? Is information society in a position to produce qualitative changes in traditional forms of communication and eventually to transform social structures, and will such new structures require new ethics? Thus, it seems that linguistic and political vocabularies and concepts, now at the center of global politics, both celebrate the arrival of a new communication age and hold the key to ultimate information control.

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