

In the Name of Allah

How May Islam Participate in Globalization?

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Globalization, as an inevitable process of accelerated changes in human life, will influence on all dimensions of human culture especially on religion. On the contrary, because it is a universal process that can not have its frame without all of other dimensions of human life, therefore all of those dimensions have their role in growing up of globalization; hence religion must have its crucial role in constructing the big building of globalization. It is not possible to understand globalization by neglecting the important role of religion. It is because of the essence of globalization that is as a “net”.

In my paper after pointing out some terms in this respect, which is important for our following analysis I am going to distinct between inevitable changes and active presence in changing with awareness. Then I will examine the threats and opportunities for religion in globalization with remarking some reactions to this process. In the next step I will introduce the characteristics of Islam among other religions and study how it may participate in globalization. In this respect it will be useful to examine some solution for presence of Islam in this process as pluralism and radicalism. At the end, the Islamic doctrine of the end of the world and the hopes for all believers will be proposed.

Globalization or Globalism

Globalization is an inevitable process of human life and it is a necessary result of a lot of developments in science, technology, easier communications and etc. It brings a lot of new values and cultures, which must be examined. But Globalism as an ideology that is going to imposed all of its values and thought by e few Western people on the other peoples in the world. They want to change all other people so that they think like them and accept all of their discipline of values with destroying other cultures for benefiting from them. They think in this respect as a war or clash that they must defeat others. All other peoples must have a passive role in this situation without any active participation.

Globalism is, as a covering term, hide Westernism and Americanism. Its attempts are in the direction to change all other parts of the world, as Western peoples want. In this attempts there is another challenge also between Western men. USA, in its imperialistic view, seeks to take the lead of this imperialism. It wants to be alone in this imposing itself on other peoples and make the other Western countries take aside from its domination.

However, we do not concern in this study with this kind of Globalism or Westernism or Americanism. It is a case of clash. It must be examine as a war against humanity. We are going to study globalization, which also differs from Westernization and Americanization. All new developments in human life that brought the global thought may influence religion and be influenced by it. It is our task to examine.

Passive or Active Role in Globalization

It is usually understood that because globalization is an inevitable process in the world today that the situations of new developments in technology, economic and politic have brought it, therefore we are passive in front of it. It is the destination of human beings. We only may study it and sit and regard all that will happen as a viewer not as a player.

I think it is not the case with globalization. Although there are a lot of situations around us that force us to act in the direction of global position, the free will of human being and his ability to go beyond boundaries and to choose the best choices and in some cases to change powerfully all of one direction for a better one, all of these potentialities are hopes for him to play active role in this huge process. We, who try to find our responsibility in a global world, should know the results of globalization and its threats and opportunities to play the best role in this position and perhaps to change some worse consequences of globalization.

I believe that all religions must have their active presence in the world today in spite of the impact of global atmosphere that tries to give them a passive attendance in it. For having this active role, they must know their strength, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. By this knowledge they will intelligently participate in globalization with awareness.

However, by focusing on the external opportunities and threats of globalization, I will study the manner of participation of Islam in Globalization.

Opportunities and Threats

There are a lot of views both negatively and positively among contemporary thinkers about globalization. In a glance on them and adding some more viewpoints I think we may classify them in two branches of opportunities and threats for religions, specially for Islam, in their presence in a global world as follow:

Opportunities:

- ١- the better mutual understanding of religions;
- ٢- development of cultures and their religious dimension;
- ٣- knowing the weaknesses and strength of every religion in front of others;
- ٤- the need of contemporary world for a moral solution for environmental pollution which make religious activity necessary;
- ٥- the emphasis on regional culture instead of interesting the foreigner culture that was in the last as the only better culture;
- ٦- the opportunity of attending in global activities by means of new technologies and possibilities and delivering the religious message to everybody;
- ٧- aptitude of training interested talent;
- ٨- developing of religions by coordinating the better world;
- ٩- the possibility of active attendance in societies by going out of atheistic fashion of late modernity which is possible by postmodern critics;
- ١٠- easier access to data in less developed countries;
- ١١- renewal of religious life;

- ١٢- the formation of pluralistic attitude toward science, identity and culture as the result of the better understanding of other cultures and values.

Threats:

- ١- the cultural imperialism;
- ٢- destruction of older traditions by predominance of Western culture;
- ٣- demolition of eminently human values;
- ٤- the destruction of cultural and mental security;
- ٥- the cultural predominance of the most powerful countries on other cultures for a kind of cultural synchronization;
- ٦- propagation of crimes and destruction of the religious obstacles for decline;
- ٧- destruction of the wide range of abilities and possibilities of all other peoples in the initiative solution of political, environmental and economic problems;
- ٨- sovereignty of relativity and to loose every reliance for contemporary man;
- ٩- the undesired control and changing general thoughts by the sources of power by means of information technology;
- ١٠- imposition of Western values and ideas specially the American ones;
- ١١- imposition of humanism and secularism which brought a lot of tragedies during last century like fascism and racism and nazism.

There are some main views in this respect for analysis of globalization: new liberalism, reformism, traditionalism, global socialism and postmodernism. All

of these views have their own perspective from globalization and treat it in terms of their fundamental beliefs. However, how may be the position of Islamic thought in front of this universal process? First of all we must notify some of central doctrines of Islam, which differ from other religions then examine its position.

Some Specifications of Islam

Islam, like Judaism, has religious jurisprudence, while this is not the case with Christianity that emphasizes on morality. This specification flows the religious laws in all dimension of a Muslim believer. Furthermore, the many social religious laws in Islam make this religion more involved to the social activities of a society. Islam is not only concerned with the personal relation between man and God that only change individually the spirituality of human being. A lot of Islamic doctrines focus on the relation between man and his society. Islam emphasize on the belief that the relation between man and God may not be completed unless the social duties of a believer be fulfilled. The social duties of a Muslim believer contain all dimensions of his life like economy, politic, culture and social development. Therefore, if he want to be a believer he may not ignore his social duties.

Because the social law in Islam is an essential specification for it, every dimension of Globalization must be examined by Islamic laws. Islam has some economical frame with a discipline of values that may not accept every economical frame, which is based on human autonomy apart from God's order. It has also some essential doctrine in politics that based on his own foundations. Certainly, it rejects some political thoughts (like racism,

imperialism, and compulsion in acceptance of a political government, etc.), and accepts some others. Therefore, Islam have more involved to Globalization especially to its economy, politics, security, environmental position, culture. Islam will have some challenges with Globalization because of its different and contrary values it imposed on human being. Therefore, Islam will have more challenge to Globalization than other religions.

An another important difference between Islam and other religions is due to its attention to mundane matters of human being beside to future life. We have a lot of activities during our life that we think they are not religious ones, but in Islam every human activity is seen as a religious one. For example, Islam does not think of sexual relation that must be done due to divine order that is, in some cases it is forbidden and in some other cases it is permitted, but, beside the prohibition in some cases, Islam thinks of sexual activities between wife and her husband as a worship like other kind of worship. It means that the meaning of worship differs in Islam. The activities for mundane matters are just those spiritual activities. We may not separate endeavors for this world from attempts for the life after death. This matter makes secularism very far from an Islamic society than others.

Therefore, because of at least two above-mentioned specifications of Islam, it has more challenges with Globalization. It has more involvement with Globalization (and more with globalism).

However, it does not mean that we expect a rigid reaction of Islam against Globalization. If it were so, Islam would be omitted by huge flood of Globalization. The element of *Ijtehaad* in Islam makes the presence of Islam in the process possible and safe. *Ijtehaad* (exegesis of divine law on matters

of theology and law) seeks to find solution for making divine law compatible with the spatial situations without leaving Islamic foundations. This fluidity not only preserves the religious attitude toward construction of a better world based on spiritual values, but also makes the facts of the world today be regarded and the solution be compatible with the real problems. Every branch of Islam that uses this element more serious will remain more permanent with more efficiency.

Islam and Other Religions in a Global Age

Global situations have brought the diversity of religions into consideration. Before global awareness, every religion regarded itself as the only true religion that may result salvation for human being. But by Global relations one question came into consideration seriously. If our religion is the true one and other religions as false, why we see believers in other religions with strong belief that are like or better than we are expected to be a religious man in that activity and spirituality?

There are three main replies to this question: pluralism, inclusivism and exclusivism. Some philosophers of religion, like John Hick and Smith, maintain pluralism; that is, all the religions are true and every of them is a way to the truth. Truth is not limited to a special religion. These thinkers have tried to give a solution for reality of diversity of religions. There are also very few Muslim thinkers that think like those Christian philosophers.

Although the pluralists give this kind of solution to regard the facts of religious diversity, is pluralism may be compatible with their religious doctrines and also their religious tradition and culture? I do not think so. The fact that there

are few Christian and Muslim thinkers who accept religious pluralism as a true attitude toward interpretation of religions shows that this attitude may remain only as a theory of a certain thinkers in its speculative form. We can point to Alvin Plantinga, as one who demonstrate against pluralism and defend from exclusivism.

According to Islamic doctrines in Quran it is very difficult to accept an epistemological pluralism. But, the salvational pluralism or reward pluralism may accept. According to a verse of Quran (١:٦٢):

Surely Those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabians, whoever believe in Allah and the Last day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them< nor shall they grieve.

Therefore the salvation is due to belief in the fundamental doctrines of Islam which is not other than toward which the human constitution guide.

Epistemological pluralism may not also be accepted by Islamic tradition and culture. The fact that there is no hope for this pluralism to obtain acceptance among great amount of Muslims (I think also among Christians) show that this theory may not be a dominant belief among Muslims.

I think Globalization have brought good situation for Islam in some areas. Muslim thinkers must benefit from this situation and try to play their active role in the followings that are driven from their doctrines:

- ١- producing interreligious dialogue for mutual understanding among religion;
- ٢- developing religious attitudes;
- ٣- providing the mutual respect among religions;
- ٤- creating global hope for ultimate victory of virtue and religious value by its doctrine of Saviour;
- ٥- uniting with other religions against those threats of Globalization;
- ٦- presence in economical, political, cultural process of Globalization toward sovereignty of eminent human values.