

Some Social Order Concepts in the Context of Sayyid Quṭb's Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān: A Critical Approach

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Abstract: Reducing inequalities, promoting justice and creating strong institutions are among important agenda items in today's world. In this context, Quṭb, by focusing on the social order and concept of justice in Islam, has provided a noteworthy analysis of these issues. This article particularly focuses on fundamental social order concepts such as revival (ihyā), renewal (tajdid), reform, (iṣlāh), justice, caliphate, democracy, and secularism, as discussed in his tafsir, Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān, in the light of global issues like the promotion of peace, the establishment of justice, and the creation of strong institutions for peaceful societies. It argues that Quṭb revitalized Islamic thought, making it relevant to contemporary discussions. His views on the Western lifestyle and authoritarian regimes have received criticism from some Islamic circles; however, this study aims to examine his views from a broader perspective. Additionally, through content analysis, it addresses the concepts that Quṭb focused on, with the aim of providing intellectual contributions to modern Islamic thought and social reform efforts. Preliminary findings suggest that while some of Quṭb's criticisms towards contemporary concepts may be valid, certain evaluations are open to criticism and lack an analytical basis.

Keywords: Tafsir, Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān, Tajdid, Justice, Western Thought.

Seyyid Kutub'un Fī Zilāl'l-Qur'ān'ında Bazı "Toplum Düzeni" Kavramları: Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım

Öz: Eşitsizliklerin azaltılması, adaletin teşvik edilmesi ve güçlü kurumların yaratılması günümüz dünyasının önemli gündem maddelerindedir. Bu çerçevede Kutub, İslam'ın sosyal düzeni ve adalet anlayışına odaklanarak, bu konulara dair dikkate değer bir analiz sunmuştur. Bu makale ise onun Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān adlı tefsirinde ele alınan diriliş (ihyā), yenilenme (tecdid), ıslah, adalet, hilafet, demokrasi ve sekülerlik gibi temel sosyal düzen kavramlarına, barışın teşviki, adaletin sağlanması ve barışçıl toplumlar için güçlü kurumların oluşturulması gibi küresel meseleler ışığında odaklanmaktadır. Makale ayrıca Kutub'un İslam düşüncesini yeniden canlandırdığını ve onu çağdaş tartışmalarla alakalı hale getirdiğini savunmaktadır. Onun Batılı yaşam tarzı ve otoriter rejimlere ilişkin görüşleri, bazı İslami çevrelerden eleştiriler almıştır; ancak bu araştırma, onun görüşlerini daha geniş bir perspektiften ele almayı hedeflemektedir. Ayrıca, içerik analizi yöntemiyle, Kutub'un odaklandığı kavramları ele alarak modern İslam düşüncesine ve sosyal reform çabalarına düşünsel katkıları sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. İlk bulgular, Kutub'un çağdaş kavramlara yönelik eleştirilerinin bir kısmının geçerli ancak bazı değerlendirmelerinin ise eleştiriye açık ve analitik bir temelden yoksun olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tefsir, Fī Zilāl'l-Qur'ān, Tecdid, Adalet, Batı Düşüncesi.

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Introduction

Reducing disparities, fostering peace, ensuring justice and robust institutions, and alleviating poverty and inequality remain key priorities on the global agenda.¹ In this context, examining the “social order” concepts found in Sayyid Qutb’s *Fī zilāl al-Qur’ān* from various perspectives would be beneficial. This article will specifically explore the social order concepts of *ihyā* (revival), *tajdid* (renewal), *işlāh* (reform), justice, caliphate, democracy, and secularism as addressed in Sayyid Qutb’s work. This examination would contribute significantly to understanding the position of Islamic thought today, the relationship between these concepts and comprehending the role of Islam in social and political life. In this context, Qutb’s *Fī zilāl al-Qur’ān* offers a significant area of study for understanding how social order is addressed within Islamic thought, particularly in evaluating its resonance in the contemporary world. Qutb is presented as the one who has a political ideology different from Islam’s teaching,² and accused of being a source of inspiration for pro-violent people or organizations. Nevertheless, he is profoundly knowledgeable about Islam and is an influential scholar in Islam despite the controversies surrounding him.³ So he can be considered, with the words of Tariq Ramadan, both among scholars of texts (*‘ulamā’ al-nuṣūṣ*) and contexts (*‘ulamā’ al-wāqī’a*).⁴ This article will focus on Qutb’s approaches in his commentary *Fī zilāl al-Qur’ān* (In the Shade of the Qur’ān), which was written between 1951–1965,⁵ towards some social order concepts which can be seen related to social reform efforts. While examining Qutb’s approaches, who has many works in the fields of literature, literary criticism, education, politics, journalism and publishing, as well as religious thought,⁶ his work *Fī zilāl al-Qur’ān* was centered, and Qutb’s work on the concepts handled with the method of intertextuality was put forward. His views in the different parts of his commentary were brought together, and from time to time a comparative analysis was made by giving the views of other commentators on the verses he interpreted. In addition, the works written about Qutb were also referenced.

To give a very short biography, Qutb, who was born into an Egyptian, religious family, completed his primary education in his village (Musha).⁷ He graduated from the

¹ UN United Nations, “The 17 Goals” (Accessed March 11, 2024).

² Sahal Muktafi et al., “Rereading Sayyid Qutb’s Islamism and Political Concept of al-Hakimiyah,” *Afkar Journal* 24/1 (2022), 272.

³ Jeremy Hosein, *A Cross Examination of Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab* (Edmonton: University of Alberta, Religious Studies, Master Thesis, 2012), 124; Qutb was one of the most original Muslim thinkers of the 20th century see also S. Saud Laith, *Reading A Radical Thinker: A Study On Sayyid Qutb* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, The Faculty of The Division of The Humanities, Doctorate Thesis, 2017), 167.

⁴ Jasmine Omercic, “Tariq Ramadan’s Idea of Reform,” *Al-Shajarah Journal* 26/2 (2021), 241.

⁵ Hosein, *A Cross Examination of Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab*, 82.

⁶ Hilal Görgün, “Seyyid Kutub,” *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslâm Ansiklopedisi* (Accessed March 7, 2022).

⁷ Görgün, “Seyyid Kutub”; It has been argued that Qutb defined himself as irreligious in the period (1925-1939), which almost corresponds to his years of teaching school and university student and university teaching see also Tahsin Yıldırım, *Fas İslâmî Hareketleri “Tevhid ve İslâh Hareketi” Örneği* (İzmir: İzmir Kâtip Çelebi University, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Doctoral Thesis, 2020), 89.

teacher's school in 1926 and the university in 1933. He worked as a lecturer at the Dār al-'Ulūm Faculty of Cairo University. He was in the United States between 1948-1950 for further studies in educational administration and at that time criticized the American way of life, society, and racism there. When Qutb returned to Egypt, he became a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded by Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906-1949). Qutb had the opportunity to convey his thoughts in the newspaper and journals of the organization. He was associated with the 1954 assassination of Egypt's second president, Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir (1918-1970),⁸ and spent ten years imprisonment after trial. After his release, he was put back in prison on 9 August 1965, for his views expressed in his book *Milestones*,⁹ and for his involvement with a group of Muslim Brotherhood members to reactivate the organization. After a lengthy trial, he was sentenced to death and executed on 29 August 1966;¹⁰ His body was buried in an unknown location. His execution was met with criticism all over the Islamic world.

In conclusion, Qutb's life and work present a complex and multifaceted figure within Islamic thought. While his execution remains a controversial topic, his commentary, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, offers a unique perspective on social order concepts. Examining his approaches to these concepts in relation to social reform efforts will contribute to a deeper understanding of his place in Islamic thought and its contemporary relevance.¹¹ The following section, "Islamic Visibility in the Contemporary Era: Iḥyā', Tajdid, and Iṣlāh," will explore these broader themes within the context of Islamic revival, renewal, and reform movements. These three concepts are chosen because they are fundamental to understanding Qutb's approach to addressing contemporary challenges faced by the Muslim community. According to Qutb's approach, these concepts provide a framework for spiritual, moral, and societal renewal, which is essential for true reform.

1. Islamic Visibility in the Contemporary Era: Iḥyā', Tajdid, and Iṣlāh

Iḥyā' means to revive and resurrect. Tajdid means renewing and iṣlāh means correcting. According to Qutb, the Gospel had revived the spirit of the Torah and has been a breath in reviving (iḥyā') and renewing (tajdid) the spirit of religion.¹² According

⁸ Danny Orbach, "Tyrannicide in Radical Islam: The Case of Sayyid Qutb and Abd al-Salam Faraj," *Middle Eastern Studies* 48/6 (2012), 969; Jamāl 'Abd al-Nāṣir is also from Asyut like Sayyid Qutb see also Yıldırım, *Fas İslâmî Hareketleri "Tevhid ve Iṣlâh Hareketi" Örneği*, 87.

⁹ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, ed. A.B. al-Mehri (The UK: Maktabah Booksellers and Publishers, 2006); It is stated that Abdul Karim al-Muti, the founding leader of the al-Shababe Movement founded in Morocco in 1969, made Sayyid Qutb's book "Signs on the Road", which inspired many Islamic movements in those years, the ideological reference of his organization see also Yıldırım, *Fas İslâmî Hareketleri "Tevhid ve Iṣlâh Hareketi" Örneği*, 411.

¹⁰ Sezai Karakoç (1933-2021) during the execution of Qutb, participated in many programs as a speaker, called Qutb a "martyr" and stated that he had an ideal that would bring about the awakening of Islam and that his death furthered the ideal see also Aysin Güneş, *Seyyid Kutub'un Fikirlerinin Türkiye'ye Yansımaları (1970-1980 Arası İslamcı Dergiler Bağlamında)* (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Master's Thesis, 2020), 82.

¹¹ In the subsequent sections, particularly in the "Discussion" section, a more detailed analysis and comparison of Qutb's views are presented, addressing the complexities and nuances of his interpretations. This discussion aims to provide a balanced perspective by critically engaging with both Qutb's positions and alternative viewpoints.

¹² Sayyid Qutb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1412/1992), 1/399.

to Quṭb, just as the Gospel revived the spirit of the Torah and breathed new life into the religious tradition, the Qur'an similarly revives and renews the spirit of divine guidance. This connection between the holy scriptures underscores the continuity and fulfillment of religious duties in Quṭb's vision. This process culminated with the revelation of the Qur'an, reaching its peak and perfection. In this case, according to him, revival and tajdid mean fulfilling religious duties in line with what is intended from those duties. Quṭb, in his commentary, defines the fulfillment of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and zakat as renewing the covenant with Allah (*tajdid lil-'ahd ma'a Allāh*).¹³ Quṭb, who does not give importance to concepts such as "renewal/development of Islamic jurisprudence" (considering some of their contemporary usages); because he thinks that such statements cover up escape from the real duty of jihad.¹⁴ However, this binary approach, which pits jihad against the renewal of Islamic jurisprudence, lacks nuance and fails to recognize the compatibility of various aspects of religious practice, thus limiting a more holistic understanding of Islamic renewal. Quṭb's criticisms of these concepts align with his views that some people's understanding of tajdid aims to distance Muslims from Islam.

In this context, Quṭb criticizes how the concept of tajdid is misused by some people. He is of the opinion that the main purpose of some people's understanding of tajdid is to turn Muslims away from Islam:

"A time has come when Muslims have become weak in protecting their faith, order, country, chastity, property and morality, even their minds and understanding. The victorious enemy changed everything that was known. They made it look good to strip Muslims of all their human traits. All their evils are 'progress, development, secularism, science, freedom, liberation, breaking the chains, revolution and renewal (tajdid)' etc. They introduced it with eye-catching slogans and titles. Muslims became Muslims only in name."¹⁵

According to Quṭb, it is not always good intentions to use concepts that are considered positive in people's eyes. The intention of some circles, who use those concepts that seem to benefit society, may be to turn Muslims away from Islam.

Quṭb defended the Wahhābi movement as a "renaissance of religious reform".¹⁶ This advocacy does not mean adopting everything that the movement has done in an intellectual and practical sense with a wholesale approach: "And if people have been corrupted in one generation, reforming them is not by being strict in judgments, but by improving their decency and hearts and reviving a sense of piety in their souls."¹⁷ That is, he does not say that the only way to keep people away from wrongdoing is to resort to violence, on the contrary, he presents the feeling of piety in people as a way of improvement. Taqwa is the bridle of hearts. These reins reconcile people with the

¹³ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/932.

¹⁴ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1736.

¹⁵ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/2128.

¹⁶ Nadia Duvall, *Islamist Occidentalism: Sayyid Qutb and the Western Other* (Germany: Gerlach Press, 2019), 87.

¹⁷ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 1/169.

Qur'ān. It leads to obedience to Allah and His Messenger: ¹⁸ *"Fear Allah, settle your affairs, and obey Allah and His Messenger."* (al-Anfāl 8/1). What God wants from people is taqwa, goodness (ṣalāḥ) and religious practice. ¹⁹ This approach reflects Quṭb's general perspective on the concepts of iḥyā', tajdid, and iṣlāḥ.

According to Quṭb, reformation does not take place completely with the formal application of the rules of Islam. The society's taxation or the receipt of money from the rich to the poor in the name of the state, the people, or any land authority is not enough to improve the condition of the society.²⁰ In other words, it is necessary to purify the hearts of Muslims as much as purifying their property from haram (prohibited) by focusing on taking away the portion of the property of the rich from them for the purpose of improvement. In his view, reform efforts in the social field will not yield fruitful results unless a correctional activity is carried out in the field of faith. The human nature contract is a belief contract, and nothing about morality, discipline or social reform will be revealed in it unless the requirements of this contract are fulfilled first.²¹ However, the fact that people exhibit right behaviors can be seen as a positive situation that leads them to believe correctly. In this respect, it can be said that Quṭb has a pessimistic attitude towards social reform efforts that do not meet his criteria for faith-based correction.

The maxim "to command good and forbid evil"²² is one of the distinctive characteristics of believers: *"Those who repent to Allah, worship Him, praise Him, wander the earth, bow down, prostrate, enjoin good, forbid evil, those who observe the limits they set! Give good tidings to the believers!"* (at-Tawba 9/112). In the context of this verse, Quṭb states that enjoining good and forbidding evil, beyond self-correction, also reforms people and life.²³ Islamic movements should be based on individual and social improvement projects.²⁴ In other words, the fulfillment of this obligation by sensitive Muslims will provide both individual and social purification.

The Qur'ānic verse, which is interpreted to suggest that Moses was criticised during his time with the words "The way you do is not corrected!",²⁵ is as follows: *"So, you don't want to be one of the reformers, but you want to be a fierce bully in this place!"* (al-Qasas 28/19). Quṭb explains that the Coptic accused Moses of trying to act as a tyrant rather than as a reformer, questioning his intentions and actions during the incident. According to the Coptic, Moses was in conflict with his behavior, tried to be a tyrant, not a reformer, and tended to kill people instead of reconciling people.²⁶ Already he who reconciles between two people does not do it by killing one of them.²⁷

¹⁸ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1474.

¹⁹ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/1989.

²⁰ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/921.

²¹ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/973.

²² This maxim (al-amr bi-al-ma'rūf wa-al-nahy 'an al-munkar) is one of the basic principles of Mu'tazila.

²³ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1720.

²⁴ Yeşil, *Seyyid Kutub'un Siyasi Düşüncesinin Teolojik Temelleri*, 88.

²⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Nukat wa al-'Uyūn* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, ts.), 4/244.

²⁶ Quṭb, *Fī Ḍilāl al-Qur'ān*, 5/2684.

²⁷ Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, *Ta'wilāt al-Qur'an* (Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 1426/2005), 8/158.

Quṭb's comments on this Qur'ānic verse is aimed at explaining how the Coptic perceived Moses and what kind of criticism he directed at him. Quṭb conveys the Coptic's criticism here but does not directly criticize the Coptic himself. Rather, he presents how this event unfolded and offers the Coptic's perspective.

According to a Qur'ānic verse, which is stated to have been revealed, about Abū Jah̄l b. Hisham,²⁸ a person may perceive himself as a reformer even though he is after evil: "Is he, then, to whom the evil of his conduct is made alluring, so that he looks upon it as good, (equal to one who is rightly guided)?" (Fāṭir 35/8). According to Quṭb, this verse mentions that the person in question cannot see the dangers on the road because of a curtain that makes his heart and eyes blind. He is at peace because he sees the bad things he does and is satisfied. Since he is sure that he has not made a mistake, he does not go to the way of correcting a mistake. He does not try to prevent the perpetrator; because he is sure that he has not committed iniquity! Since he thinks that every step he takes is an effort to improve, there is no limit to restrict him. He is the door of evil, the window of evil.²⁹

To sum up, the analysis reveals that concepts such as *iḥyā'*, *tajdid*, and *işlāh* are discussed by Quṭb. According to him, these concepts signify the fulfillment of religious duties and the renewal of the covenant with Allah. Quṭb alleges that some groups use the concept of *tajdid* to distance themselves from Islam. Additionally, he emphasizes that societal reform should begin not only with the formal application of Islamic rules but also with the purification of hearts. According to Quṭb's perspective, reform efforts necessitate corrective activities in the realm of faith. Furthermore, the duty of enjoining good and forbidding evil plays a significant role, and Islamic movements should fulfill this duty to achieve individual and societal purification. In conclusion, Quṭb's perspective suggests that individual internal transformation triggers societal change, and Islamic movements should support this transformation.

2. Foundation of the Property: Justice

Justice (عدل) is one of the core values of Islam, playing a central role in regulating both social and individual relationships. The root `a-d-l (عدل) from which this concept is derived; means value, ransom, equivalent,³⁰ and right judgment.³¹ In Islamic thought, justice is not regarded merely as a legal concept; it also represents moral, social, and divine balance. In the Islamic understanding, justice is seen as an absolute concept that cannot be fully realized in worldly life and is believed to ultimately manifest in the Hereafter. In this context, Quṭb addresses the concept of justice with both its worldly and otherworldly dimensions. According to him, Islam came to establish justice throughout the entire earth and to ensure equity among all people. Justice in all its forms: social justice, legal justice, and international justice.³²

²⁸ Abū al-Ḥasan Muqātil ibn Sulaymān, *Tefsīru Muqātil ibn Sulaymān* (Dāru İhyai Turas, 1423), 3/552.

²⁹ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 5/2927.

³⁰ Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Harawī, *al-Gharībayn fī al-Qur'ān wa-al-ḥādīth*, critical ed. Aḥmad Farīd al-Mazīdī (Saudi Arabia: Maktabat Nizār Muşṭafā al-Bāz, 1419/1999), 4/1237.

³¹ Abū al-Ḥusayn Ibn Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1399/1979), 4/246.

³² Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Salām al-'ālamī wa al-Islām* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 26.

At this point, to understand the foundations of Quṭb's concept of justice, it is crucial to examine his views on the principle of *shūrā* (consultation council) in Islam and its role in ensuring social justice. According to Görgün, although a detailed understanding of the state is not emphasized in Sayyid Quṭb's works, "the principle of *shūrā* (advisory council) in the Qur'ān" is frequently emphasized. According to Quṭb, Islam did not make a full determination on this issue and left the practice of *shūrā* to the necessity of time and conditions. The main thing in this regard is to establish the relations between the rulers and the ruled-on principles such as peace, justice and equality.³³ In this case, the council is necessary in the administration for the realization of justice; however, formally establishing the council does not guarantee that justice will be provided. The council must function in a way that serves justice.

Quṭb thinks that Islam has a basic theory of the universe, of life, and of man. Also, the idea of "social justice" has its roots in that basic theory and enters into its general scheme. Islam does not only aim to transform the individual, but also social justice concerns Islam.³⁴ In this context, justice should not be thought of as limited to the world; because absolute justice will not be realized in this place of trial (worldly life), but in the Hereafter. According to Quṭb, the prophets (al-Nisā' 4/164), some of whom Allah told and some of whom he did not, gave the good news of blessings, happiness and contentment prepared for "obedient believers" to Allah's servants, in accordance with Allah's justice and mercy. Allah frightened the rebellious disbelievers with the hell and wrath he prepared.³⁵ Therefore, the belief that complete justice will be realized in the Hereafter makes the life of this world meaningful. Again, Quṭb said, in the context of the verse "*Then he will be paid in full.*" (al-Najm 53/41), he states that absolute justice is far from being prone to desires, being together with fault and ignorance that will reduce the reality of matters.³⁶ Therefore, the justice of Allah and the justice that the servants try to provide can never be equated. The latter will be incomplete no matter what is done. Again, in the sense of a Qur'ānic verse speaking of the hearts of oppressors who doubt and worry about the judgment of Allah and His Messenger,³⁷ "*Are their hearts afflicted with the disease (of hypocrisy)? Or are they in doubt? Or do they fear that Allah and His Messenger will be unjust to them? In fact, they themselves are unjust.*" (al-Nūr 24/50), Quṭb states that absolute justice cannot be achieved by a legislature other than divine legislation or by a judgment other than Allah's. Those who are dissatisfied with the decree of Allah and His Messenger are oppressors who do not want justice to be established and right to prevail.³⁸ In other words, an understanding of justice independent of religion will remain obsolete.

The prophet should not be on the side of the traitors and not defend any of them, even if this traitor is a Muslim, as puts Sha'rāwī. Thus, the justice of Islam ensures that God's rule does not support a Muslim who engages in falsehood, nor does it allow

³³ Görgün, "Seyyid Kutub."

³⁴ Sayyid Quṭb, *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John B. Hardie (USA: Islamic Publications International, 2000), 51.

³⁵ Quṭb, *Fī zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/805.

³⁶ Quṭb, *Fī zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 6/3415.

³⁷ 'Abd al-Rahmān ibn Nāṣir ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Sa'dī, *Taysīr al-Karīm al-Rahmān fī Tafsīr Kalām al-Mannān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1420/2000), 1/571.

³⁸ Quṭb, *Fī zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/2527.

injustice towards a Jew. The strength of truth in Islam should be evident to all. This should direct them to turn to this religion (Islam), the religion of justice and fairness:³⁹ *"O prophet! We have sent this Book to you with the truth so that you may judge between people in accordance with the right way which Allah has shown you. So do not plead for the dishonest people."* (al-Nisā' 4/105). In the context of this verse, Quṭb makes a contemporary interpretation and states that the ignorant societies of the past and present call corruption justice.⁴⁰ The concepts of justice and oppression of societies that are far from the decisiveness of the revelation will inevitably mix with each other, because they do not have a strong criterion in their hands.

The Qur'ān sets a scale of justice that holds each individual accountable for their actions.⁴¹ The Muslim community bases its entire life on the method and law of Allah and organizes its affairs, connections and relationships according to the foundations of this approach and the provisions of this *shari'a*. Then, as it guarantees every group, it also guarantees justice, stability, and peace to every individual. Likewise, in such a virtuous, just, balanced, and mutually supportive society; aggression against oneself and life, public order, or individual property generally becomes a heinous and reprehensible crime, devoid of just or mitigating motives.⁴² Such a virtuous society will naturally benefit more from the blessings of justice.

Quṭb says that breaking or changing the rules determined by Allah will result in mischief on earth or deviation from the only right approach, lack of justice in human life, people serving each other and taking each other as lords other than Allah.⁴³ According to him social justice should stem from a comprehensive belief conception.⁴⁴ Quṭb emphasizes that true social justice can only be achieved when it is rooted in a holistic and comprehensive belief in Allah's guidance.

In a verse that is interpreted as inviting the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) to be just while giving judgment and conveying the religion,⁴⁵ it is stated: *Because of this, therefore, O Muḥammad, you should call them to the same way, and hold fast to it yourself as you have been commanded, and do not follow their whims. Say to them, 'I have believed in whatever Book Allah has sent down, and I have been commanded to do justice between you. Allah is our lord as well as your lord. For us are our deeds and for you your deeds. There is no dispute between us. Allah shall gather us all together one day and to Him we shall all return.'* (al-Shūrā 42/15). Quṭb states that this one verse reveals this last message's (Islam) nature in a concise, comprehensive, sound and

³⁹ Muḥammad Mutawallī Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī* (Miṣr: Maṭābi' Akhbār al-Yawm, 1997), 8/4772.

⁴⁰ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/753.

⁴¹ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/756. Ignorance (Jāhiliyyah) is considered a key concept in Quṭb's religious thought see also Muhammad Badri Habibi, *A Comparative Study Between Sayyid Qutb's and Fazlur Rahman's Political Thought: The Relationship Between Islam and State* (Istanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi, Master Thesis, 2017), 17.

⁴² Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/873.

⁴³ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/903.

⁴⁴ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/1006.

⁴⁵ Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jamī' li-ahkam al-Qur'ān*, critical ed. Aḥmad al-Baraddūnī - Ibrāhīm Aṭṭafayyish (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al- Miṣriyyah, 1384/1964), 16/13.

precise way, and that Islam is a message that continues on its way without being affected by people's desires. Islam has come to dominate the earth and to provide justice.⁴⁶ Therefore, Islam is not just a religion that gets stuck between the house and the mosque. Ensuring justice in social life is also within the scope of Islam.

In conclusion, while justice in Islam transcends legalistic interpretations, emphasizing equitable relationships, divine guidance, and its ultimate realization in the Hereafter, it is crucial to interpret this concept in a way that motivates Muslims to actively strive for justice in the present world. Scholars⁴⁷ like Quṭb highlight the inseparability of social justice from belief, underscoring Islam's transformative role in guiding adherents towards righteousness and societal betterment. However, the idea of "justice being fully realized only in the Hereafter" should not diminish the urgency of pursuing justice now. Moreover, while Quṭb stresses the importance of *shūrā* (consultation), he does not offer a clear roadmap for its practical implementation. For *shūrā* to serve as an effective mechanism for ensuring justice in Islamic societies, concrete steps and methods are essential. In accordance with the Qur'ān's command, "*Consult them in matters.*" (Al-i Imran 3/159), the principle of "consultation" should be thoughtfully applied in contemporary Islamic societies, taking into account the diverse contexts and challenges faced by the global Muslim community.

3. An Alternative Form of Government: The Caliphate

In this section, the concept of the caliphate will be explored as a fundamental pillar of Islamic governance. The reason for addressing the concept of "caliphate" after the concept of "justice" in this section is that both concepts are considered the cornerstones of the Islamic social order. Justice ensures balance in interpersonal relations, while the caliphate addresses governance and leadership in Islam. This sequence is based on the idea that an Islamic society should be built on the foundation of justice, which should be supported by the institution of the caliphate. Quṭb's interpretation of the caliphate is rooted in the belief that it represents the legitimate leadership of the Islamic Umma, governed by divine principles. This analysis will delve into Quṭb's perspective on the caliphate's role in maintaining justice and order within Islamic society, as well as the challenges and ambiguities surrounding its implementation in the modern world. This section will attempt to provide a theoretical contribution to contemporary governance discussions from the perspective of Quṭb. To better understand the theoretical foundations of the caliphate in Quṭb's thought, it is essential to first explore the linguistic and historical roots of the term.

The verb "*خَلَفَ* (khalafa)," which is directly related to the term "caliphate," is used in the sense of a group of people who remain after others:⁴⁸ "*But after them, there followed a posterity.*" (Maryam 19/59). "*خِلاَفَ* (khalāf)" also means "after": "*They would not have stayed (therein) after you, except for a little while.*" (Isrā 17/76).

⁴⁶ Quṭb, *Fī zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 5/3150.

⁴⁷ Faith and justice are inseparable see. Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Zahrah Al-Tafāsīr* (Qāhīrah: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, no date), 3/57.

⁴⁸ Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, *Tāj Al-'arūs* (Beyrut: Dār al-Hidāyah, no date), 23/241.

“خليفة (khalīfah)” means someone who succeeds another.⁴⁹ The term “caliphate” refers to the institution of leadership in Islamic states after the Prophet Muhammad.

In his commentary, Quṭb uses the phrase “the caliphate of man on earth” four times, “the caliphate of man (خلافة الإنسان في الأرض)” six times,⁵⁰ “the caliph of God (خليفة الله)” twice⁵¹ and the phrase “caliphate on earth (خلافة الأرض)” thirteen times. Quṭb, who once used the expression Abbasid Caliphate,⁵² never used the expression Umawī Caliphate. Only while talking about the third caliph ‘Uthmān (d. 35/656), he uses the expression al-Umawī.⁵³

Allah –by His mercy– grants authority and superiority. Therefore, according to Quṭb, who states that it is a means of improvement, a source of security and a means of doing good,⁵⁴ the Islamic community (umma) should always be at the center of the administration. In order to do this, it must be able to advance scientifically and reconstruct the earth.⁵⁵ Those who will be caliphs must believe in Allah alone, worship Him alone, and derive their vision, systems, and laws from Him alone.⁵⁶ The caliphate is legitimate by following the right path that Allah has revealed to His messengers in His books.⁵⁷ There is no doubt that a person freed by the servitude of Allah is more capable of a mature and high quality caliphate on earth.⁵⁸ According to this interpretation, freedom is achieved through servitude to God. Such free people are worthy of government. A criticism can be made that Quṭb lays out general principles and guidelines regarding how Islamic governance should be, the conditions of the caliphate, and how this position should be managed, but does not provide a concrete roadmap or detailed proposals for implementing these principles. However, it should be noted that Quṭb’s suggestions were made during a time when he and his milieu were not in power. Therefore, expecting him to offer concrete alternatives may not be a justified expectation.

According to Quṭb, global Zionism and the global Crusaders have remained allies in their war against Islam, despite all their grudges; but as Allah, All-Knowing and All-Aware, says: “*They are each other’s friends.*” (al-Mā’idah 5/51). They continued on their way by corrupting Islam until they disintegrated the last caliphate state, the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁹ As it is seen, Quṭb gives examples from history as anti-Islamic caliphate groups, including Zionist Jews and invading Christians. This alliance today is still active.

⁴⁹ al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad al-Farāhīdī, *Kitāb Al-‘Ayn*, critical ed. Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī - Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā’ī (Baghdād: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, no date), 4/266.

⁵⁰ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1/66, 3/1258, 5/1971, 6/3904.

⁵¹ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1/57, 242.

⁵² Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 4/2294.

⁵³ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1/29.

⁵⁴ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 5/2922.

⁵⁵ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1/447.

⁵⁶ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 1/164.

⁵⁷ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 2/836.

⁵⁸ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 3/1339.

⁵⁹ Quṭb, *Fī ḥilāl al-Qur’ān*, 2/966.

As regarding Qutb, who accepts that the only basis on which Islam's legislation is based is Allah's command and permission and sees Allah as the first and last source of authority, also finds everything that is not based on this principle as essentially false,⁶⁰ Habibi states that Qutb thinks that Islamic teaching can be fully and effectively implemented with the Islamic state. For this reason, it is the duty of every Muslim to establish an Islamic state through jihad, which ranks second after faith. The Islamic state in which Muslims live is an ideal alternative for today's Muslims to compete with and defeat Western civilization.⁶¹ In other words, according to Qutb, who harshly criticizes those who see jihad only as a struggle of Muslims to defend themselves,⁶² jihad is a form of worship that plays a role in the establishment of Islamic rule.

Sayyid Qutb's views on the caliphate reflect a strong belief in its central role in the social and political order of Islam. He defines the caliphate as a legitimate form of governance based on the commands of Allah, administered by individuals who worship Him alone. However, his positioning of the caliphate in opposition to Western civilization is related to the conditions of his time. Not all elements of the West are inherently false. Contrary to his generally categorical approach, an eclectic attitude could have a more facilitative effect on Muslims. Furthermore, Qutb's failure to provide a concrete scheme for the implementation of the caliphate in the modern world creates ambiguities regarding how this concept should be understood by today's Muslims. Nevertheless, his emphasis on *shūrā* and its flexibility⁶³ suggests that he did not position the caliphate entirely in opposition to democracy in terms of its application.

4. Criticism of Western Thought in the Context of Democracy and Secularism

After defining the concepts of democracy and secularism in this section, Qutb's perspective on these concepts will be discussed. His approach to these concepts not only includes a Qur'an commentator's views on contemporary political and social systems but also reveals how an Islamic perspective can be shaped in the face of the impacts of the modern era on Muslims. Qutb's critiques of democracy and secularism should be regarded as a significant resource for understanding the tension between Islam's traditional values and the governance and societal models offered by modernity. His approaches offer a valuable contribution to our era by providing insights into the challenges Muslims face in the modern world and developing solutions from an Islamic perspective. Qutb's views, particularly his analysis of how Muslim societies can preserve their identity against the liberal-democratic and secular values of the West, present an important perspective on how to maintain this identity.

Democracy is a political method, that is to say, a certain type of institutional arrangement for arriving at political –legislative and administrative– decisions and hence incapable of being an end in itself.⁶⁴ Some say that democracy really means liberty, even liberalism or individualism: laws must defend the (democratic) individual

⁶⁰ Qutb, *Fī zīlāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1320.

⁶¹ Habibi, 'A Comparative Study Between Sayyid Qutb's and Fazlur Rahman's Political Thought', 97.

⁶² Görgün, "Seyyid Kutub."

⁶³ Görgün, "Seyyid Kutub."

⁶⁴ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy* (London: Routledge, 2003), 242.

against the (democratic) state.⁶⁵ Badger's English-Arabic Lexicon, published in 1881, gives two words for "secular" in the sense of "lay, not clerical": `almāniyy and `āmmiyy. But the latter (`āmmiyy) carries the senses of "common," "vulgar," "popular," and "ordinary." Badger also renders "secular," in the sense of "worldly," as dunyāwiyy (and dunyawīyy). It has no entry for "secularism," but under "secularity" it gives hubbu al-`ālam (literally, "love of the world") as well as dunyawīyyah (the abstract noun from the word for "worldly"), and `ālamīyyah, on the same pattern, derived from the word `ālam, meaning "world" or "logical universe." From the point of view of secularism, religion has the option either of confining itself to private belief and worship or of engaging in public talk that makes no demands on life.⁶⁶

Quṭb includes the expression "individualist orders" in three places in his commentary. In two of these, he clarifies that he means democracy by giving information in parentheses.⁶⁷ According to Quṭb, who is said to be anti-democracy and anti-freedom in the last years of his life,⁶⁸ the only barrier against European colonialism is the Islamic order.⁶⁹ Although Quṭb admits that human systems are united with Islam at some points and diverged at other points, emphasizes that Islam is an independent and perfect system. According to him, Islam has nothing to do with other orders. The points of separation and convergence between Islam and other orders are nonsystematic.⁷⁰ He sees describing Islam as socialist or democratic as a humiliating attempt. Those who do this think that they are serving Islam. In his view, Islam is Islam; socialism is socialism, democracy is democracy.⁷¹ Like the Greco-Roman and other ignorance (non-Islamic) orders,⁷² democracy is a system that oversteps the bounds of all the rules of God's religion.⁷³ People think that their humanity, freedom, dignity and interests are in individualist (democratic) orders.⁷⁴ In reality, Quṭb says, the "free world" does not fight Muslims with cannons and tanks except in limited periods, but it fights them with tongues and pens, and it fights them through the associations and groups it establishes.⁷⁵

The Qur'ān, which was revealed to Muḥammad (s), is only true. It is not right to deviate from it or to try to make corrections to it. Like dictatorship and democracy, theocracy

⁶⁵ Bernard Crick, *Democracy A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 9.

⁶⁶ Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular Christianity, Islam, Modernity* (California: Stanford University Press, 2003), 207, 199.

⁶⁷ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1754; 4/1942, 1943.

⁶⁸ Duvall, *Islamist Occidentalism: Sayyid Qutb and the Western Other*, 134. The entire discourse from al-Afghānī to Quṭb cannot be correctly understood outside of the context of colonialism see also Laith, *Reading A Radical Thinker: A Study On Sayyid Qutb*, 125.

⁶⁹ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1630.

⁷⁰ Sayyid Quṭb, *al-'Adālah al-ijtimā'iyah fī al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1415/1995), 76.

⁷¹ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 2/1083.

⁷² Jāhiliyyat al-ighrīq wa-al-Rūmān wa-ghayrihim.

⁷³ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1256.

⁷⁴ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1754; 4/1942.

⁷⁵ Sayyid Quṭb, *Dirāsāt Islāmīyah* (Beirut: Dār al-Shurūq, 1427/2006), 161.

is not compatible with Islam.⁷⁶ Democracy is like other ignorant regimes in corruption, disintegration, misery and anxiety.⁷⁷ Quṭb's interpretations of democracy are far from being analytical. Because there are hundreds of definitions of democracy, and it is not necessary to position all of these definitions against Islam. Democracy, which allows the power to change hands without bloodshed, cannot be an order that Muslims will exclude, at least in the first stage. Unlike Quṭb's attitude, there are also contemporary commentators who say that the Messenger Muḥammad consulted his companions and followed the opinion of the group by warning his umma, guiding them, encouraging the *shūrā* system, and this is true democracy.⁷⁸

Quṭb argues that modern material civilization emerged within the last three hundred years in an environment of distancing from religion.⁷⁹ Especially during its revolution against the Church, which had squandered all human values by the power of its brutal tyranny, Europe rebelled against God. Then the people there thought that under individual (democratic) regimes they would achieve their humanity, freedom and dignity, as well as their interests, and placed all their hopes on the freedoms and guarantees provided by man-made constitutions. Parliamentary status, press freedoms, judicial and legislative guarantees, and the rule of an elected majority.⁸⁰ While Quṭb's critique raises important questions about the relationship between religion and governance, it can be criticized for its oversimplification, lack of nuance, and ideological bias.

After his description above, Quṭb asks: "Then what happened? But what happened in practice?" According to him, what happened is this: All the guarantees and institutions that capitalism promised did not go beyond slogans or dreams. The vast majority of the people have become submissive to the ruthless minority of capital."⁸¹ Soon after, this minority took control of the parliamentary majority, the worthless constitution, and the freedom of the press. It voided the guarantees. Whereas, apart from Almighty Allah, people thought that democracy was the guarantee of their humanity, dignity and freedom! Then some of the people started to flee from the individualist orders (democracy) of the capital and the elite (*al-ṭabaqaḥ*) to the socialist orders (socialism).⁸² Quṭb's criticism of the determinism of capital over the people in democracies is justified. However, this problem does not occur only in democracies. In regimes where the capital is in the hands of the state (socialism), state capitalism performs almost the same negative function. In addition, socialism, which was thought to be an alternative in progress, collapsed first.

Secularization, which is defined as the decrease in the prestige of the supernatural field, namely religion, religious structures, folk beliefs and all other supernatural teachings at the individual and social level and their power to shape daily life in a

⁷⁶ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/2075. It seems that Quṭb states that theocracy cannot compete with Islam, based on the absence of a clergy class in Islam.

⁷⁷ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/2076.

⁷⁸ Muḥammad Muḥammad 'Abd al-Laṭīf Ibn al-Khaṭīb, *Awḍaḥ al-tafāsīr* (Cairo: al-Maṭba'ah al-Miṣrīyah wa-Maktabatuhā, 1383/1964), 219.

⁷⁹ Sayyid Quṭb, *al-Islām wa mushkilāt al-ḥaḍārah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 1412/1992), 109.

⁸⁰ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1754.

⁸¹ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/1942.

⁸² Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/1943.

certain period of time in a certain society,⁸³ and which is the dominant factor in our age together with materialism,⁸⁴ with its Egyptian version, has attracted the reaction of Quṭb, starting from the mid-1950s and continuing until the end of his life and caused him to harshly criticize the Free Officers⁸⁵ (al-Ḍubbāt al-Ahrār) he initially supported.⁸⁶ Considering his general approach, Quṭb's support of the Free Officers must be because he sees them as an opportunity for the establishment of a more Islamic Egypt.

Quṭb also criticizes the presentation of Islam under the names of socialism and democracy among Muslims. According to him, these are two social and political currents that have become fashionable in our age. Religion, which is an enduring cause, cannot be presented in such ephemeral envelopes.⁸⁷ Similarly, Sha'rāwī (1911–1998) says that secularism, leftism, and so on, all of this was perpetrated by the hypocrites in Islam and they covered it with an Islamic cover, to corrupt the land and fight against God's way.⁸⁸ In other words, Quṭb contends that Islam cannot be supplemented with elements from other ideologies. It is self sufficient. In the establishment of an order that will make people happy, Islam does not need socialism or democracy. Nevertheless, Quṭb's criticisms are exaggerated. In other words, a system compatible with Islam does not necessarily have to be opposed to other religions and ideologies in every aspect.

Quṭb states that the secular regimes established in Türkiye reject religion and isolate it from everyday life.⁸⁹ He also argues that societies belonging to other religions aim at killing Muslims everywhere. In this context, he brings up the Crusades and the "inquisition courts" in Andalusia. While the attacks against Muslims were sometimes carried out directly with their instruments in Asia and Africa, sometimes they were carried out with indirect support under the name of supporting the "independence" struggles. The aim is to replace Islam with secular beliefs and doctrines. According to them, rejecting metaphysics (the unseen) is a scientific attitude. They claim that morality develops and encourages the morality of animals! Similarly, orientalist organize conferences "to improve Islamic fiqh"!⁹⁰ In other words, Quṭb asserts that non-Muslims attack Muslims with different instruments, and one of them is the establishment of secular beliefs and doctrines in Islamic societies. Quṭb's reference to historical events such as the Crusades and the inquisition courts in Andalusia might be criticized for cherry-picking examples from history to fit his narrative. It overlooks the complexities and nuances of historical events and their socio-political contexts.

⁸³ Volkan Ertit, *Sekülerleşme Teorisi: Sekülerleşen Türkiye'nin Analizi*. (Ankara: Liberte Yayınları, 2019), 47.

⁸⁴ Muḥammad al-Mukhtār Shinqīṭī, *Aḍwā' al-bayān fī ṭiqāḥ al-Qur'ān bi-al-Qur'ān* (Lebanon: Dār al-Fikr lil-Ṭibā'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzī', 1415/1995), 8/3.

⁸⁵ A military group with nationalist goals that took control of the government by staging a coup during the 1952 Egyptian Revolution and produced three Egyptian presidents from among its ranks.

⁸⁶ Görgün, "Seyyid Kutub."

⁸⁷ Yeşil, *Seyyid Kutub'un Siyasi Düşüncesinin Teolojik Temelleri*, 86.

⁸⁸ Sha'rāwī, *Tafsīr al-Sha'rāwī*, 1/155.

⁸⁹ Quṭb, *Fī ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1221.

⁹⁰ Quṭb, *Fī ṣilāl al-Qur'ān*, 3/1379.

Quṭb, who draws attention to the deterioration of umma, believes that a time has come when the umma is still suffering. It is incapable of protecting itself, in other words; its faith, order, country, honor, money, and morals. Muslims could not protect their minds and understandings. The enemy who defeated them changed everything good about them and replaced them with all kinds of evil. They brought all kinds of bad faith, imagination, value, morality and tradition. They adorned their order and laws with debauchery, malice, vulgarity, and abstraction from all human characteristics. They encouraged Muslims to live a life like that of animals, which even animals can detest. They performed all the evils under glittering hoods such as "progress," "development," "secularism (al-'almāniyah)," "scientism," "ascension (al-iṭlāq)," "liberation," "breaking the chains," "revolutionism," and "renewal" etc. Muslims have now become "so-called" Muslims. They no longer have a greater or lesser share in religion.⁹¹ These statements of Quṭb give the impression that he sees the contemporary umma as apostate. This exaggerated criticism of Muslim umma is not acceptable. Additionally, in his eyes, the enemy embellishes superstitious concepts to drive Muslims away from Islam, and Muslims are trapped. One of these concepts is secularity.

According to Quṭb, in some periods of this human history, more or less people have imprisoned themselves in the prison of their limited senses and the moment witnessed. They have kept themselves closed to windows of knowledge and light and to connecting with the great truth through faith and consciousness. After keeping these windows closed to themselves with their own hands, they tried to keep them closed to other people as well. Sometimes in the name of ignorance and some in the name of secularism.⁹² In other words, Quṭb criticizes the understanding of secularism, which excludes belief in God and limits its epistemology to the knowledge that can only be obtained by the senses.

Ultimately, Quṭb's critique of democracy and secularism provides an assessment of their compatibility with Islamic principles. He asserts that democracy, seen as a guarantee of freedom and dignity, ultimately falls short in delivering its promises, as capital usurps power, leading to disillusionment and a turn towards socialism. Similarly, Quṭb condemns secularization, viewing it as a rejection of divine guidance and a means of undermining Islamic values. He warns against the erosion of faith and morality in the face of secular ideologies, advocating for a return to Islamic principles to counteract societal decay. Quṭb's analysis highlights the tension between Western thought and Islamic tradition, underscoring the need for Muslims to uphold their faith amidst contemporary challenges.

5. Discussion

In this section, the focus is on providing a background to the broader academic and intellectual discussions surrounding Sayyid Quṭb's interpretations and views, particularly in relation to democracy, secularism, and social order. Rather than introducing or detailing every argument within the main text, this section aims to explore the various debates and critiques that have emerged in the global scholarly community concerning Quṭb's work. The goal is to offer an overview of the different

⁹¹ Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 4/2128.

⁹² Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, 6/3684.

perspectives on Quṭb's contributions to Islamic thought, without the expectation that every discussion presented here will be fully integrated into the main analysis of Quṭb's specific views on these concepts.

Quṭb and Muhammad Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1792) are compared, and it is stated that the latter was notably more scholarly and more careful about his approach towards attempting to reform society than Quṭb was.⁹³ The relationship between the religious interpretation of these two Islamic scholars is attempted to be asserted and compared based on the critical analysis of relevant scholarship. It is claimed that the teachings of Islam have been exploited by religious extremists like Quṭb and Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb to further their own political agendas, rather than applying a profoundly insightful interpretation of the sacred texts. According to this approach an increased awareness and renewed dialogue between the spiritual aspects of Islam versus the political or legal aspects of Islam should be advocated. Additionally, an accusatory language is used in Quṭb criticisms and he is defined as foundational jihadist author.⁹⁴

Quṭb's views have been examined from a political science perspective, but there has not been enough emphasis on his approaches to revival, tajdid, reform, and justice.⁹⁵ Our article aims to fill that gap. Quṭb's views have been compared with those of Pakistani scholar and thinker Abū al-A'lā al-Mawdūdī (1903-1979) and the leader of the Iranian Islamic Revolution Khomeini (1900-1989) in the context of the "Western question" in the ideology of revivalism.⁹⁶ Some studies⁹⁷ evaluates Quṭb's views by making use of his translations, not his works. In our research, the focus was on the original language (Arabic) of Quṭb's *Fi zilāl al-Qur'ān* and his views were mostly carried out as a detailed study on this work. Quṭb's concepts about the political field have been analyzed.⁹⁸ Differently, in this article, Quṭb's views on social concepts such as revival, tajdid and reform were discussed.

Quṭb's views on democracy was studied as well.⁹⁹ In our study, his approach to secularism will also be discussed. Additionally, Quṭb's views on contemporary concepts such as Marxism, Socialism, Capitalism and Nationalism were analysed.¹⁰⁰

⁹³ Hosein, *A Cross Examination of Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab*, 126.

⁹⁴ Richard Alexander Nielsen, *The Lonely Jihadist: Weak Networks and the Radicalization of Muslim Clerics* (Massachusetts: Harvard University, Political Science, Doctoral Thesis: Harvard University, 2013), 35; According to Hosein, Quṭb was forced to endure cruel torture at the hands of Egyptian security forces. These experiences further radicalized Quṭb see also Hosein, *A Cross Examination of Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Ibn Abd Al-Wahhab*, 126.

⁹⁵ Habibi, *A Comparative Study Between Sayyid Qutb's and Fazlur Rahman's Political Thought*.

⁹⁶ Esra Aras, 'The Question of the West in the Ideology of Revivalism: Perspectives from Mawlana Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi, Sayyid Qutb and Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini' (Ankara: Middle East Technical University, International Relations, Master Thesis, 2008).

⁹⁷ See: Hatice Kınık, *Teolojik Selefizmden Sosyolojik Selefizme Dönüşüm Muhammed b. Abdilvehhab ve Seyyid Kutub Örneği* (Konya: Selçuk Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Master Thesis, 2005).

⁹⁸ Kövser Tağiyev, *Ebu'l-A'la El-Mevdudî ve Seyyid Kutub'a Göre Siyasal İçerikli Ayetlerin Tefsiri* (İstanbul: Marmara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Master Thesis, 2010).

⁹⁹ Şeyda Büşra Atalan, *İslamcılıkta Kırılma Noktaları: Hasan El-Benna ve Seyyid Kutub* (Çorum: Hitit Üniversitesi, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi Master Thesis, 2018).

¹⁰⁰ Yeşil, *Seyyid Kutub'un Siyasal Düşüncesinin Teolojik Temelleri*.

Although his approach to the domination is discussed in detail, the subjects of justice and caliphate are not discussed as much as we focused on. On the other hand, Qutb is seen as a "radical Islamist" with reference to William Shepard.¹⁰¹ Attributing Qutb's radicalism to Shepard leaves the basis of the claim weak.¹⁰² If it is true, this radicalism (!) should be traced in Qutb's works in Arabic if possible. Also, it is asserted that the radical Islam argues that Islam is an ideology that is also effective in social, political and economic fields. This claim is also problematic in that it means that some Muslims equate religion with ideology.¹⁰³

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sayyid Qutb is one of the most influential figures among Muslims around the world with his thoughts, works and especially his work called *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*. Islamism and political Islam movements were influenced from him and showed themselves in many fields and yielded products. His works were not limited to only Islamic movements, his commentary found a place in the libraries of large masses and mosques. Therefore, Qutb's works are an opportunity to understand at least some of the Islamic activities.

Although Qutb is portrayed as a source of inspiration for extremist circles, he is among the important intellectuals of that age. Contrary to popular opinion, he makes interesting comments on social reform efforts. In his work called *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, it was evaluated how he understood social concepts in a way related to politics such as revival, tajdid, reform, justice and caliphate. Perhaps, as Laith puts, Qutb's greatest contribution to Islamic thought is his abandoning of classical tafsir to render the Qur'ān a living text, which speaks to modern conditions.¹⁰⁴

According to Qutb, some concepts that people attribute positive meanings to have positive connotations but are used in a way that serves bad intentions. Their intention may be to promote the type of Muslim who is far from Islam. To him, the priority in correction should be in matters of faith. Otherwise, the expected result from reformation efforts will not be achieved. However, it can be stated that good practices will trigger positive perspectives, so Qutb's pessimistic approach is not acceptable.

The justice of Allah and the justice of the servants are not the same. Human justice will never achieve absolute justice. In societies where divine notifications are not at the center, justice and cruelty will almost be intertwined, because they have no measure to distinguish the two. Qutb states that in a society where obedience to Allah is abandoned, people will begin to worship each other. But if there is a comprehensive belief, it will lead to social justice. Islam does not only aim to transform the individual, but also social justice concerns Islam. This finding contributes to the discussions on the importance of social justice in Islamic thought and the role of divine guidance in achieving this justice.

A legitimate caliphate is achieved by following the revelation. The caliphate is more suitable for those who obey Allah. The caliphate is legitimate by following the right path that Allah has revealed to His messengers in His books. Qutb, who uses the

¹⁰¹ Güneş, *Seyyid Kutub'un Fikirlerinin Türkiye'ye Yansımaları*, 17.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹⁰⁴ Laith, *Reading A Radical Thinker: A Study On Sayyid Qutb*, 168.

expression Abbasid Caliphate, never uses the expression Umawī Caliphate. Only when talking about the third caliph 'Uthmān he uses the expression al-Umawī. His contemporary Zuḥaylī (1932–2015), unlike him, uses the expression Umawī Caliphate.¹⁰⁵ Quṭb identifies Tatars, nationalists, Zionist Jews, and invading Christians as anti-caliphate groups. This finding makes a significant addition to the discussions in the literature on the impact of historical differences in Islamic governance and the caliphate on modern period Islamic thought.

Quṭb includes the expression “individualist orders” in three places in his commentary and refers to democracy. In his view, democracy, like other regimes, is against Islam. Quṭb’s interpretations of democracy are not analytical, no matter what kind of order Muslims establish, the order they establish does not have to be the exact opposite of being democratic. Quṭb, who criticizes the understanding of secularism, which excludes belief in Allah and limits its epistemology to the knowledge that can only be obtained by the senses, is against the establishment of secular beliefs and doctrines in Islamic societies. The circles that he considers hostile portray concepts that Islam does not approve in order to drive Muslims away from Islam, and Muslims are deceived by them. Secularity is one of those concepts. Quṭb’s critiques open up a significant area of discussion in the literature on how the concepts of democracy and secularism should be understood in modern Islamic thought. These findings provide valuable insights to studies that aim to understand Islam’s stance against modern ideologies and highlight the need for further in-depth research into how these concepts impact Islamic societies.

Overall, while Quṭb’s commentary sheds light on the tensions between Western thought and Islamic tradition. It can be criticized for its oversimplification, historical cherry-picking, exaggerated criticisms, idealization of Muslim governance, and lack of engagement with alternative perspectives. Constructive criticism encourages a more nuanced and balanced approach that acknowledges the complexities of contemporary challenges and seeks inclusive solutions.

The concepts discussed in this article can be analyzed comparatively with other contemporary exegetes’ comments on them. In addition, the opposites of those concepts (corruption, cruelty, ṭāghūt, etc.) in Quṭb’s commentary can be examined. Again, apart from the word caliphate mentioned in this article, the expression “Islamic order (النظام الإسلامي)”, which appears 49 times in Quṭb’s commentary, can also be a subject of research.

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¹⁰⁵ Wahbah ibn Muşţafá al-Zuḥaylī, *al-Tafsīr al-munīr fī al-‘aqidah wa-al-sharī‘ah wa-al-manhaj* (Dimashq: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āşir, 1418/1997), 18/283.

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