

Is Democracy a Universal Phenomenon? Allama Muhammad Iqbal's Contribution to a Contemporary Debate on Democracy

Prof. Dr. Piotr Kłodkowski*

Abstract

The article deals with the selected global phenomena of democracy as redefined at the end of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st century, and focuses on Allama Muhammad Iqbal's vision of a democratic state rooted in Islamic tradition. The author refers to Samuel Huntington's concept of Democracy's Third Wave and to the survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in the Middle East following the Arab Spring, which generally confirms the demands for democracy in the whole region. He also re-reads the work of Francis Fukuyama "The End of History" in the light of political and social transformations that have occurred in various places around the globe during the last 30 years and puts forward a thesis based on the concept of the "long duration" as proposed by the French Annales school of historical writing that there is no one universally approved model of democracy that could be implemented in every country. Nevertheless, the author makes a reference to Karl Popper's minimum requirement of democracy, viz. the legal possibility to control and to remove the leaders from office without the need for a revolution. The idea of various models of democracy has its justification in the works of Allama Muhammad Iqbal, especially in *Islam as an Ethical and Political Ideal* and *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. His philosophical and ideological proposals are analysed not only in the historical context but also in the light of contemporary debates on the phenomenon of democracy. The author of the article concludes that Iqbal's vision of a

* Professor at the Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, Poland

democratic state based on his interpretation of Islam is not bound by a given period of history but needs to be re-interpreted in accordance with the changing reality.

Introduction – The Third Wave of Democracy

Millions of people in many different parts of the world saw the late 1980s and the early 1990s as the beginning of a whole new era even if the optimism and hope for a change for the better in their lives were accompanied by a sense of insecurity and concerns about the final outcomes of the expected political, social and economic transition. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of the end of the Cold War, of which the uncontested victor was the United States. Another confirmation of the Western triumph was the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union – a superpower that had been rotting from the inside for several years – and the revolutions, in most cases peaceful, throughout Central and Eastern Europe (with Romania being a bloody exception), which ultimately resulted in the rejection of communism as a global ideology. Many authoritarian dictatorships on almost all continents lost their strategic patrons and were forced to reformulate their policies and their entire systems of state management. Just a decade earlier almost no one foresaw such a global scenario, and almost no one was able to imagine a world without Soviet presence. The year 1989, which brought the “Fall of Nations”, and a breakthrough to central and Eastern Europe, accelerated the democratisation process tremendously. Samuel Huntington dubbed it “Democracy’s Third Wave”, which had started fifteen years earlier in southern Europe and Latin America, and then spread to Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Huntington, 1991).

It should be emphasized that this historical acceleration was not always successful, at least for many segments of post-dictatorial societies. In general, democratic transformations of former authoritarian states turned out to be quite painful with many social and political upheavals and short-lived but aggressive protest movements. However, all these songs of protest almost never meant a return of communist ideology, they were rather a sign of disappointment with the current state of affairs and a growing division between those who benefited from "democratic change" and those who lost their financial security and

social position (Kłodkowski, 2017). In other words: the theoretical concept of democracy had hardly ever been undermined, but its practical implementation could result in political unrest and frequent outbursts of social anger.

The “Democracy’s Third Wave” had indeed a global reach, crossing the borders of the continents and of several dozens of states. Larry Diamond of Stanford University states that in 1974 there were only 35 effectively democratic countries in which elections were regularly held. This was less than 30 percent of the world’s countries. By 2013, the number approached 120, which represented more than 60 percent of the total (Fukuyama, 2014).

The Arab Spring and the Phenomenon of a “Demand for Democracy”

The system of democracy in all its varieties and ideological colours became the essence of many political philosophies propagated at the turn of the centuries but the period of global democratic optimism did not last very long. The financial crisis 2007-2008 which hit mostly the Western European countries plus the United States is still considered by many economists as the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Its economic, social and political consequences largely contributed to the process of gradual undermining the democratic values and of popularization of various populist movements that have become an important element of the political mainstream. More than two years later the series of protests, riots and demonstrations, both the violent and non-violent ones, which subsequently have been termed as the “Arab Spring” or “Arab Awakening”, spread across the Middle East and North Africa. The common demand for justice, for dignity of citizens who represented different segments of Arab societies, and finally the strong demand for ousting the corrupt and inefficient authoritarian regimes produced very mixed results. Democratic elections (if permitted or organized properly) proved to be only a partial success, foreign military interventions did not bring social stability and peace but rather contributed to further destabilization and a never-ending vicious cycle of ethnic and communal violence. The Arab Spring gradually transformed into the “Arab Fall” or even the “Arab Winter”, with the only exception

of Tunisia which, unlike Egypt, Yemen or Libya, has experienced the regime change in a relatively peaceful way. According to a survey conducted by Pew Research Center (Global Attitudes & Trends) in the tumultuous years of 2011 and 2012 solid majorities in Lebanon (81% in 2011 and 84% in 2012), Egypt (71% and 67% respectively), Tunisia (63% in 2012) and Jordan (72% and 61%) believed democracy is the best form of government. The general publics in these countries did not only support the general notion of democracy but also embraced specific features of a democratic system, such as competitive elections and free speech. In the two surveyed non-Arab countries with predominantly Muslim populations a strong desire for democracy was felt in Turkey (66% and 71% respectively) but in Pakistan only 42% (no change in a successive year) expressed their enthusiasm for democracy.

The report also states that a substantial number in key Muslim countries want a large role for Islam in political life. However, there are significant differences over the degree to which the legal system should be based on Islam. Despite the popularity of democratic rights and institutions, these were not the only priorities in the nations surveyed. In particular, the economy was and probably still is a top concern. And if they had to choose, most Jordanians (61%), Tunisians (59%) and Pakistanis (58%) would rather have a strong economy than a good democracy. Turks (58%) and Lebanese (53%), on the other hand, would prefer democracy and Egyptians were divided (49% and 48% respectively) (*Most Muslims Want*, 2012).

The notion and interpretation of a democratic system may vary in surveyed countries but a growing tendency to support it appears to be a clearly noticeable phenomenon. The support, however, is not unconditional and several factors need to be considered while analysing the progress or retrograding of democracy. Revolutions and transformations of political systems around the world, the unprecedented technological progress and global diffusion of knowledge, but at the same time the constantly growing population and depleted natural resources – all this can have an immense impact on ways in which people perceive themselves and their environment. But will these developments undermine human beliefs about the essence of freedom

and human dignity or invalidate the principle that we are, or at least want to be, equal as citizens regardless of our ethnicity, our way of life and our mother tongue? Can broadly understood justice only be guaranteed under democracy, or perhaps the very system of democracy (especially liberal democracy) is culturally conditioned – as some scholars and politicians suggest – and therefore cannot be transplanted easily to countries that have undergone an evolutionary process different from the Western one?¹ Can the economic inefficiency of a democratic state or its weakness when it comes to ensuring its citizens' safety serve as legitimate reasons for the introduction of an authoritarian regime that would supposedly be more efficient? This is only a limited set of basic questions that define the fluid concepts of democracy and are still relevant when analysing the impact of the democratic model on political solutions around the world.

Various Forms of Democracy and the Concept of “Long Duration”

The system of democracy is based on several strong pillars but these are not always identical in various parts of the world. The sources of democratic values may be linked with religious beliefs but also – as it is quite common in many Western states – with the secular vision originated from the ideals of European Enlightenment. In general: Western democracy is considered to have its beginnings in city states such as Classical Athens and the Roman Republic, and gradually has been transformed over centuries before taking finally a secular shape in Europe or in those countries which have been modelled according to the Western European paradigm. However, this “final shape” does not appear to be the only option for the supporters of democracy who might have their own vision of a just and solid political system, deeply rooted in their cultural, religious or philosophical tradition. The system invented and developed in Europe might be inspiring but NOT necessarily

¹ In Central Europe the best example of “illiberal democracy” is Hungary with Victor Orban as its prime minister. The term has been proposed by Orban himself who has been the winner of the successive parliamentary elections. In his opinion this form of democracy perfectly caters for the needs of Hungarian citizens. An analysis of “illiberal democracy” by Marc F. Plattner, *Illiberal Democracy and the Struggle on the Right*, “Journal of Democracy”, 5-19.

consistent with the local values, beliefs and customs that have been moulded over centuries in Asia, Africa or Latin America. In a word: the past strongly determines the present and the future; neither of them can be easily transformed only by the revolutionary will and deed. This brings to mind the concept of *longue durée*, or “long duration”, which was originated by Marc Bloch and subsequently developed by Fernand Braudel and commonly used by the French Annales school of historical writing. It was not big battles or the exploits of some leaders that ultimately shaped today’s civilisations, but rather long-term historical processes, which involved thousands of social, political or economic phenomena (Braudel, 1995). Therefore it is impossible to properly assess our (or any other) era without analysing some logic that governs its progress or decadence, and without gradually discovering development rules that allow us to predict potential transformation scenarios in the modern world. In other words, we should not concentrate exclusively on the events, even the most dramatic ones, which are happening in the present, in order to extrapolate them to the near future; we should instead try to assess the current state of affairs from a much broader perspective, taking into account the complexity of observable phenomena. Legal culture and entrepreneurial spirit, religion and moral convictions, social capital and the tradition of building a community founded on certain values – all this does not disintegrate immediately even during most violent revolutions or deepest crises. Deeply-rooted democracies or authoritarian regimes do not perish so easily although they may go through phases when they are weaker or hibernate temporarily.

Democracy and Its Ideological Counter-Proposals

The time of an acute economic crisis is likely to become a very conducive soil for critical debates on efficiency of democracy worldwide, especially when other political options are clearly visible on the horizon. A completely different alternative is offered by China, for example – a classic authoritarian state that has achieved tangible economic success and provides an attractive ideological model for a considerable number of followers. It is hard to disagree that market-oriented authoritarian states are able to effectively stimulate economic prosperity. In creating conditions advantageous to business development,

they can be even more effective than democratic governments. Francis Fukuyama in his famous, controversial and sometimes totally misinterpreted book *The End of History*, refers to numerous examples of economic success of authoritarian or half-authoritarian regimes from the 19th and 20th centuries: Wilhelmine Germany, Meiji Japan, the Russia of Witte and Stolypin, Chile under Pinochet, and all the “Asian tigers” in the contemporary era. The race between young democracies and market-oriented authoritarian states may produce outcomes that are very unfavourable for the former. Fukuyama discusses the 1960s in this context. In that period, India, Ceylon, Chile, the Philippines and Costa Rica, i.e. developing democracies, recorded annual growth of only 2.1%, while the then authoritarian regimes of Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, and even Spain and Portugal reached an average rate of 5.2% (Fukuyama, 1998; p.123). However, in the later decades the aforementioned authoritarian regimes entered the democratic path (Thailand with varying success), while the democratic countries retained their political system (with Chile’s dramatic episode involving the military junta). In this way, they demonstrated that economic prosperity is not really enjoyable without equality and – even more so – without freedom. In the second half of the 20th century, that belief united Europeans and some Asians from the eastern and southern part of the continent. At one point, Fukuyama recalls Hegel who stated: “the Eastern nations knew that one was free; the Greek and Roman world only that some are free; while we know that all men absolutely (man as man) are free.” (Fukuyama, 1998; p.60)

Under these circumstances we may pose the fundamental question, which in a way sums up all the more detailed ones: will democracy, given the new challenges and threats that used to be poorly understood, be able to bear the weight of the tasks it has been set, or do we need a completely different political and economic system that would be much more efficient and could react more efficiently to the continuously growing list of problems?

A Global Debate over Democracy – Fukuyama’s Perspective

Francis Fukuyama states clearly that the “end of history” hypothesis was never a deterministic one and does by no means reflect a naïve faith

in the ultimate triumph of democracy around the world. As he himself writes a quarter of a century after the publication of his book: “Democracies survive and succeed only because people are willing to fight for the rule of law, human rights and political accountability. Such societies depend on leadership, organizational ability and sheer good luck” (Fukuyama, 2014). In a word, a political system, and especially democracy, is not an entity in itself, which is completely independent of the values endorsed by the majority of citizens. It is more like a living organism that must constantly be nurtured in order to survive by those whom it is supposed to serve. Simply said, democracy cannot survive without democrats. However, the matter is complex. Even inhabitants of countries that have never openly renounced democratic ideals and where – as common wisdom holds – they are firmly rooted, may have certain doubts concerning democracy. The United States is no exception in this respect. In his Twitter feed Fukuyama draws attention to the research conducted by Nathaniel Persily and Jon Cohen whose results were published in *The Washington Post* one month before the 2016 presidential election. As many as 40% of respondents (out of a sample of three thousand) stated that they “lost faith in U.S. democracy”, 6% stated that they “had never had faith” in it and only the slightest majority (52%) admitted that they still “had faith in U.S. democracy”. Among the sceptics, Republican supporters prevailed, which means, *inter alia*, that they would have had a big problem with recognising the result of the election if their candidate had suffered a defeat. Only 31% of respondents reported unconditional acceptance of such a result, while the rest expressed lesser or greater doubts (Persily & Cohen, 2016). Therefore if we assume that the acceptance of election results by the vast majority of citizens is one of the foundations of faith in the democratic system, the scepticism declared in this respect undermines the sense of holding such elections on a regular basis. Democracy, as both authors conclude (and Fukuyama shares their view), is not just about electing one candidate or the other, but is primarily based on the fundamental assumption that citizens have the right to choose among such candidates at all. We should also add that the gradual erosion of democratic beliefs goes hand in hand with the Americans’ loss of confidence in their fellow citizens. This should not really come as a surprise because a low level of

social capital usually does not favour the development of democracy (Sztompka, 1999). The faith in the power of democratic ideals slowly begins to crumble. However, it is hard to determine if it is just a short-lived episode or rather the beginning of a long-term trend.

Iqbal and the Ideological Context of His Time

Allama Muhammad Iqbal lived in a time when very heated debates about the most optimal or the most despised ideological systems translated into the emergence of real political entities that rapidly changed the history of the world. Old imperial Russia disintegrated and the Soviet Union was born, the Ottoman Empire collapsed and a new Turkey appeared on the political scene, dozens of new states – former parts of the old empires – gained or regained their independence, and millions of people were forced to switch their national and sometimes ethnic loyalties. A new chapter of the world history, a chapter full of ideological clashes, was opened. Iqbal was a very keen observer of the revolutionary period just before and after the Great War (termed much later as World War I), supported the Khilafat Movement, composed plenty of poems that commented in the most literally elegant manner on the current state of affairs and was able to draw inspiring conclusions which could form the “intellectual anchors” of his subsequent philosophical concepts. The post-war epoch was definitely not less politically and ideologically convulsive than the first two decades of the 21st century. Fierce contemporary debates over democracy versus authoritarianism are not fresh phenomena, they are closely linked with the not so distant, dramatic past which still looms large over the present times. Iqbal would probably feel quite comfortable as an active participant in all of those debates; his philosophical and social ideas have not lost their relevance. Times may change but surprisingly a high number of relatively old ideas remain as fresh as ever (Anjum, 2014).²

Iqbal is not fond of authoritarian regimes and rejects any kind of revolutionary logic behind them. No revolution, no coup d’etat, no bloody transfer of power – all of them organized allegedly on behalf of

² Iqbal’s timeless concepts have been widely discussed also outside of Pakistan, e.g. a controversial book in English by Zafar Anjum, *Iqbal. The Life of a Poet, Philosopher and Politician*, Random House India 2014.

people and for their perspective benefits – can in his eyes justify imposing a dictatorial system. His philosophical and even political thinking is deeply rooted in the religion of Islam, its tradition, theology and its various spiritual dimensions. He perceives Islam as a dynamic religion, open to modern interpretations, although with a self-imposed doctrinal control. Iqbal realizes that Muslim civilization is not and should not be cut off from the external world, especially from the West (which in his times stood mostly for Continental Europe and Britain), and is not against some intellectual imports which might prove useful and beneficial for the Muslim community in South Asia and elsewhere. However, he appears to be cautious when it comes to “direct intellectual imports” without any proper philosophical and historical evaluation. The idea of “liberalism” may have different interpretations nowadays (economic liberalism does not necessarily go hand in hand with cultural liberalism) but originally it was associated with a concept of “individual freedom” in its social dimension. Iqbal stresses the necessity of history examination while analysing the potential implications of liberal movements. In his fundamental work “The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam” he declares:

We heartily welcome the liberal movement in modern Islam, but it must also be admitted that the appearance of liberal ideas in Islam constitutes also the most critical moment in the history of Islam. Liberalism has a tendency to act as a force of disintegration, and the race-idea which appears to be working in modern Islam with greater force than ever may ultimately wipe off the broad human outlook which Muslim people have imbibed from their religion. [...] We are to-day passing through a period similar to that of the Protestant revolution in Europe, and the lesson which the rise and outcome of Luther’s movement teaches should not be lost on us. A careful reading of history show us that the Reformation was essentially a political movement, and the net result of it in Europe was a gradual displacement of the universal ethics of Christianity by systems of national ethics. The result of this tendency we have seen with our own eyes in the Great European War [I WW – PK] which, far from bringing any workable synthesis of the two opposing systems of ethics, has made the European situation still more intolerable. It is

the duty of the leaders of the world of Islam to-day to understand the real meaning of what has happened in Europe, and then to move forward with self-control and a clear insight into the ultimate aims of Islam as a social polity. (Iqbal, 1989; p.129)

Iqbal is not willing to reject the idea of “liberalism” totally but he is capable of predicting the potential threats which may come into existence when the idea is transplanted on to the Muslim religious and cultural soil in a too hasty and reckless way. He fully accepts the concept of “individual freedom” but he places it in a wider context of Islamic tradition. Although Iqbal’s philosophical analysis refers to and belongs to a particular period in history its substantive content crosses the time limits and gains a universal significance.

Iqbal’s Vision of Democracy

Iqbal has a very clear view on democracy and states firmly that “the best form of government for such a community would be democracy, the ideal of which is to let a man develop all the possibilities of his nature by allowing him as much freedom as practicable” (Iqbal, 1977; p.103). He observes that no human being has the right to become a supreme leader who might be declared an infallible person, as this may signify– and we come to know that from the recent and no so recent history – the beginning of a dictatorship, often disguised as a caring democratic authority. Such a powerful person is likely to be thought to possess unique skills in the realm of politics (and consequently in social and cultural spheres) and in practical terms his actions and decisions may be perceived and publicly announced as “free from any grave mistakes”. Ultimately he becomes a fully-fledged dictator whose authority cannot be opposed. Iqbal is aware of these possible developments and strongly points out to the fact that even “the Caliph of Islam is NOT an infallible being; like other Muslims, he is subject to the same law; he is elected by the people and is deposed by them if he goes contrary to the law” (Iqbal, 1977; p.103). In fact there is no place in his arguments for a person declaring himself as “superior” which in various contexts can be interpreted as a “superior leader not bound by anything in the law”. Iqbal concludes “democracy, then, is the most important aspect of Islam as a political ideal”, but he does not escape from the historical reality when

says openly “it must, however, be confessed that the Muslims, with their idea of individual freedom, could do nothing for the political improvement of Asia. Their democracy lasted only thirty years, and disappeared with their political expansion” (Iqbal, 1977; p.104).

By referring to the phenomenon of electing the Caliph by the people and deposing him when he goes contrary to the law, Iqbal is not far away from an Austrian-British philosopher, Karl Popper who defined democracy in contrast to dictatorship or tyranny, thus focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for a revolution (Popper, 2013). This is the most fundamental but somehow very limited concept of democracy so no wonder Iqbal and Popper agree with each other in this respect. Both concepts can therefore be analysed from similar perspectives and seem to have a common ideological denominator. This common denominator has already been highlighted by Nathaniel Persily and Jon Cohen who claim that the essence of any democratic system is that people can freely choose at all and those who have lost must approve of the election results. However, it should be emphasized that despite identical views on free election as expressed by Iqbal and Popper the roots of their respective concepts do not necessarily belong to the same cultural soil and may have different further implications.

Allama Muhammad Iqbal understands that if the proposed democratic system could function properly in a Muslim civilization it should have a strong ideological framework to make it acceptable for the followers of Islam. In the chapter “Political Constitution of Our Society” he says [...] “The law of God is absolutely supreme. Authority, except as an interpreter of the law, has no place in the social structure of Islam. Islam has a horror of personal authority. We regard it as inimical to the unfolding of individuality” (Iqbal, 1977; pp.106-107). And he also stresses the point which is essential for comprehending the phenomenon of democracy (but NOT necessarily the “liberal democracy”) and which is not only his own perspective of a political system evaluation but definitely a universal perspective to be seriously considered, especially at the time when global debates on various forms of efficient governance are taking place. Iqbal reminds us that in principle there is no aristocracy

in Islam, no privileged class, no priesthood and no caste-system. In the real historical world multiple privileged classes have appeared and disappeared over centuries and their constant presence even in the most democratic societies seems to be quite natural. However, one cannot skip the most fundamental question here: whether the role of those privileged classes in society is dominant in all the spheres of life or is it reduced to certain areas of economic/social activities. Obviously, if the latter prevails the more democratic the State/society will become. Regardless of the current reality Iqbal points out to the mere fact that the democratic system in which the leader/ruler is elected and NOT hereditary, is inherent to the ideal Islamic political system. It should be emphasized that for him true democracy was an integral part of his belief in *Tawhīd* (oneness of God) upon which he built his philosophical and political thought.

It is not quite clear whether Iqbal rejects the system of monarchy or – and that appears to be a more plausible option – rejects only a monarchy, which in principle, amounts to a system of pure hereditary autocracy with some democratic trappings. A system of constitutional monarchy in which various governing bodies are elected and the role of a monarch is limited but nevertheless quite essential in social and cultural spheres would probably be approved by Iqbal. Definitely his most preferred political system, as we may conclude from Iqbal’s writings, would be a modern democratic republic in which a leader and his/her government are elected by citizens.

On the other hand, the republican system as proposed by Iqbal, is essentially quite far away from the French concept of “*laïcité*” which is becoming dominant in many Western European countries. Iqbal does not agree here with many secular democrats in the West who draw a very visible line between religion and State. Mohammed Maruf in his short essay “Iqbal on Democracy” refers to the Philosopher and Poet’s selected verses which are critical of democratic systems in Britain or the United States. Iqbal’s “*Ḍarb-i Kalīm*” serves the purpose of highlighting his negative attitude toward “irreligious systems” dominant in the West. Maruf explains that “Iqbal condemns democracy which is divorced from religion or belief [faith]” and [according to Iqbal] “the European

democracy is not only irreligious and faithless; it is also wrought by the capitalists for their own sinister designs” (Maruf, n.d.). Although Iqbal’s message dressed in poetic verses appears to be clear, it should be stressed that the language of poetry, full of beauty as it is, allows more than one interpretation which may depend on the historical context and a cultural background of a reader.

In general, Iqbal is fully aware of potential deficiencies and flaws of democracy when he says “[...] Democratic government has attendant difficulties but these are difficulties which human experience elsewhere has shown to be surmountable” (Iqbal’s view of democracy, 2010). One might assume that in fact he did not quite believe in democracy, especially if one remembers his expression that democracy was that form of government in which persons are counted, not weighed. This well-known phrase of his is certainly universal and widely discussed nowadays, particularly in the context of populist tendencies (which Iqbal must have predicted) but the philosophy of “democratic counting” – whether we like it or not – is an indispensable element of every modern democracy (Ansari & Abbas, 2018). Iqbal does not have more comments on this, he simply accepts the reality as it is: even those who do not have formal education or much experience should be allowed to vote. It is an inevitable but sometimes high cost of implementing a democratic system. These deficiencies could however be minimized if the system is fully rooted in proposed Islamic ideals. K.A. Hakim summarizes Iqbal's notion of democracy which is based on these ideals:

Islam imbibes constituents of the best possible democracy and, according to Iqbal, they need to be embedded in specific institutions. It was Islam that gave the lesson of equality of rights and practised it, included the concept of a republic among its basic teachings, taught that government should be run by a Council or *mushāwarat*. An ordinary subject could summon the Amīr al-Mū'minīn to the court as a respondent. Islam declared the freedom of conscience; gave the concept of a welfare state, the duty whereof was not only to run administration, but also to provide for the basic needs of the people; dispelled the colour and race differences. Everybody was at liberty to choose his own avocation and way of

life. Islam played the pioneer in teaching that wealth should not concentrate in a few hands. (Hakim, 1968; pp. 287-288)

It must be stressed, that Iqbal did not elaborate on his ideal political system in a very detailed way. He did not present a ready-made system to be implemented fully once the State of Pakistan came into existence. These are only the guidelines on the future polity and ideological pillars which should support the whole structure of the State. Although Iqbal's vision of this ideal State is undoubtedly clear, all its specific functions, procedures and its bureaucratic structure need to be developed in accordance with the changing reality.

Conclusion

The third wave of democracy, as dubbed by Samuel Huntington, had a huge impact on the debate on the global reach of democracy. The phenomenon of the Arab Spring proved that the democratic system has its numerous supporters in the Middle East and not only in Central and Eastern Europe where the "Third Wave" had taken place more than 20 years earlier. The survey conducted by Pew Research Center confirmed pro-democratic tendencies during the revolutionary period of 2011 and 2012 but also highlighted the ideological differences among various states. Francis Fukuyama, the author of the frequently misinterpreted book "The End of History", suggests that democracy cannot be interpreted as an entity in itself which is completely independent of the values endorsed by the majority of citizens. It is more like a living organism that must constantly be nurtured in order to survive by those whom it is supposed to serve. The global reach of democracy has shown that there is no one universal political model to be implemented everywhere but there are regional variations which are deeply rooted in religious traditions and linked to regional cultures.

The debate on democracy and its role in the global affairs has not been completed, and the reputed thinkers of the past may contribute greatly to its new interpretation. Allama Muhammad Iqbal is definitely one of them. He was able to understand the "Weltschmerz" of his times, the social impatience and a demand for radical changes. Some of his political or social proposals have only a historical significance as they

refer to concrete facts and phenomena which mattered only in the past, but a large number of his political and ideological arguments still retain extreme relevance and may become even more germane nowadays than in the first half of the 20th century. His vision of an ideal democratic Muslim State should be analysed in a much wider context of his philosophy on the reconstruction of religious thinking. He fully approves of the idea of democracy but rejects the concept of “irreligious democracy” associated with the West, especially with France and her philosophy of “laïcité”. Iqbal does not provide us with the detailed democratic project because he understands it should be developed in harmony with new social requirements and political needs.

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