

Rival Conceptions of Sovereignty in Modern South Asian Political Thought: An Analysis Through the Writings of Maulana Syed Abul Ala Maududi and Maulana Hifzurrahman Seoharvi

Authors : Mohammad Saif

Abstract : In the post-Westphalian world order, the concept of sovereignty has been a fundamental area of inquiry in Political Science, International Relations, and International Law. Modern Islamic political thought has also dedicated a fair share of debate on the subject. The debate fundamentally revolves around the 'ontological differentiation' between western and Islamic political thought. While the centrality of the individual in western political thought regards the individual as the center of universe, Islamic Political thought provides that space to God. The modern liberal democratic principles suggest sovereignty as one of the major attributes of modern nation state; Islamists regard sovereignty as an attribute of God. However, the position regarding God's sovereignty in Islamic political thought is not coherent in conception. Some scholars regard such a position as 'the political interpretation of Islam'. This paper is an attempt to first analyze the fundamental discord between two rival political ideologies (western and Islamic), and then forward a debate on the subject of sovereignty in South Asian Islamic Political thought, particularly between Syed Abul Ala Maududi (ideological father of modern islamist movements) and Hifzurrahman Seoharvi (lesser known in Academia but highly influential in shaping Deobandi position of principles related to political nature of Islamic theology). Maududi regards sovereignty as an attribute of God and the rulers as subservient to Gods will, Seoharvi suggests that God's sovereignty does not entail that the caliph or amir cannot be a ruler or hakim, nor can his command or hukum be an order. Certain references have also been made to contemporary scholars like Sayidd Qutub, Rashid al Ghanouchi, who in one way or the other have contributed to the debate on 'sovereignty in Islamic thought'.

Keywords : nation state, sovereignty, sovereignty of God (Hakimmiyah), deoband

Conference Title : ICPIIM 2022 : International Conference on Political Islam and Islamic Movements

Conference Location : Toronto, Canada

Conference Dates : July 19-20, 2022