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Amany Alsiefy

Revisions and Alternatives: What are the foundations for a renewed political thought is a recent book by the human rights activist, physician and politician Moncef Marzouki. The book was published in Arabic by Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies in Doha. It consists of 312 pages starting with a preface by Faisal Al-Qasim (a British-Syrian anchor of political and cultural programs based in Qatar) followed by four chapters: "Evaluation", "Update", "Challenges", and "Resources". The book's central question is: To what extent can the citizens' and the state's visions and attitudes rooted in these five major ideologies threaten the human project in the contemporary capitalist technological global village?

I. VIOLENCE, FREEDOM AND MODERN INDIVIDUAL

The book deals with several philosophical and political values and topics. These topics include how to manage violence in modern societies, freedom and responsibility. Through a historical excursion, the book interrogates the religious narrative and modern philosophies that position the human as the centre of the universe while all that is on earth is under his control to serve his needs. These philosophies and narratives are grounded on the assertion that humans are logical beings who have the capacity to make the most significant judgments. However, the book argues that this "rational individual" misused the environment and nature. Our planet has already reached a hazardous stage, with rising temperatures, rising sea levels, droughts, extreme heat, and forest fires rising worldwide.

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Furthermore, author argues that despite all ideologies claimed to be adopted for achieving the good of the individual and community, historical records of past incidents prove that these ideologies have not achieved their noble goals and ideals mainly because of the individual's selfishness. Although all the ideologies (nationalism, liberalism, democracy, progressivism, and religious ideologies) claim to find solutions for poverty, ignorance and injustice, the book shows that rational individuals misused and wielded these ideologies not

only to exploit nature but even to fight, kill and torture even his neighbour to serve his own his greed and selfishness. However, the writers maintain that the "predator man" succeeds in achieving his goals because of the submissiveness of another person who accepts oppression and lives on crumbs without protest. The writer calls this person a "prey man". Furthermore, between the "predator man" and the "prey man," the writer believes that there is a "knight man" or the bearer of noble values and morals and seeks to achieve social justice and fraternity. By referring to past examples and psychological studies, the writer confirms that no boundaries separate these three characteristics of man in general, for each of us carries the distinctive characteristics of man in his three forms. Hence comes the environment that stimulates or curbs these traits and behaviours. The writer affirms the role of the state, law and transparency. Only then can the state curb the "predatory person." and stimulate human prey.

II. RETHINKING IDEOLOGIES BETWEEN VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Marzouki argues that the nationalist ideology that assumes the mobilization of soldiers, individuals, and feelings behind a nation and a homeland to confront the aggression of another human group also carries within it the tyranny of a ruler and a national group against another group or sect of the people of the same country. The nationalists who showed violent nature through their atrocious behaviour against other enemy nationals showed a similar attitude to their neighbours, just as the world witnessed civil war and massacres in many regions. Recent examples include Rwandan Civil War (1990–1994) and Algerian Civil War (1991–2002), and more than twenty ongoing civil wars worldwide.

Revisions and Alternatives stresses that "freedom" is a fundamental value that must be enforced and supported in all societies. In a capitalist society, freedom contributes to the development and prosperity of society by unleashing the energies, gifts and resources of individuals. Nonetheless, it reveals human greed and exploitation, which comes at the expense of large groups of people in society, other species and the environment. We achieved countless medical advances and scientific discoveries that facilitate the lives of large sections of our societies today. However, these developments have created new challenges. The

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benevolent rational individual who helps humanity through these new medicines and tools also manipulates them to achieve personal profits and interests. In our advanced technological world, technology itself can become an enemy causing unemployment in many work sectors, inequality and even manipulation in favour of greedy and/or authoritarian forces.

Marzouki believes that democracy is also considered the best political system, as it empties the breasts of hatred and turns violence into "symbolic violence". This process of "emptying violence" is expressed in disagreement with an elected leader or representative and the right to elect an assumed more appropriate individual. Democracy's fundamental value is "deliberation". Nevertheless, the writer wonders: Who are the real actors in society? Does the democratic ideology really apply the principle of the rule of the people for the people by the people? The writer believes that this ideology is still often undermined and exploited in all societies worldwide by a class of political and economic elites. Those few elites are not necessarily integral people who work to serve society and communities but rather seek to achieve personal goals with the help of corrupt media, misleading research, misleading reports, and even technology. Even though technology is utilized to reveal the manipulation of these corrupt people, it is also exploited to manipulate the minds and feelings of the public, especially when studies reveal that those who elect are not always the rational and far-sighted person who is able to choose appropriate for the interest of the individual and the group in his society.

Then the author discusses the ideology of progressivism, that is, the belief in the development of history as a linear process that takes humanity from worse to less bad and from good to better. The writer challenges this ideology and refers to past and ongoing wars and natural catastrophes, demonstrating that humanity and human conditions can deteriorate and even retreat to horrible conditions. This happens because of climatic changes, natural catastrophes, or even human miscalculations and mismanagement of the capabilities in dealing with the challenges. As for religious ideology, the writer argues that it cannot provide an answer to our challenges. However, the writer does not reject the inspiration of religious values such as honesty, courage and solidarity to encourage and motivate behaviours to build a just society and preserve the environment and its capabilities. Furthermore, the author does not entirely reject the democratic or liberal ideology but considers the need to reconsider dealing with them.

Liberal ideology postulates individual freedoms as universal rights, but Marzouki asserts that it is no longer possible to continue advocating "absolute freedom" exempt from all responsibilities. He says:

"Freedom is the pillar of liberal ideology, in its political and economic aspects... It is not true that freedom is the value of all values. However, past and contemporary experience prove that freedom without moral constraints and legal controls for the human project is like daubing honey with poison, whether in the political or economic field" (p.24). Hence, the author calls for a strong state return to curb the exploitation of individuals represented, especially in the major capitalist companies, to prioritise the public interest over private interests. He maintains that freedom should in no way precede social justice. However, the writer draws the reader's attention to the fact that the state he refers to is a democratic state that must guarantee the unconditional human dignity of individuals and absorb societal violence through "elections" that support a peaceful and egalitarian society. The writer says, "The concept of dignity is devoid of all content if economic dignity is not achieved, as nothing erodes human dignity in the dirt as much as poverty. The feeling resulted from economic humiliation, political humiliation, and humiliation over identity is considered the most intrinsic causes of widespread verbal violence in virtual and actual domestic and public spaces" (p.107). Therefore, there is no solution to get out of the triple humiliation except through a democratic political system. A democratic system is the most transparent system capable of defending values, laws and the public interest, provided it is not just a false glamorous facade for the capitalist economic system.

III. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

The writer affirms that we must assume responsibility in building the "Humanitarian Project", whose main goal is "survival, continuity of life, and improvement of living conditions for all human beings." He proposes a vision and suggestions to serve this goal, including:

- Establishing a political, social, economic and technological vision to confront the environmental changes we face at the local and global levels. Dealing with the issue of climate change is not only a scientific issue left to scientists, researchers or officials, but it is also a social issue. All members of society must participate in taking responsibility for addressing this challenge and contributing to its treatment. The writer believes that dealing with climate risks must be embedded in our daily interactions in our social environment, as well as through monitoring the discourse addressed to the masses on the issue of climate change and its effects on the individual, society and at the global level. The narratives for dealing with climate change are deeply intertwined with our social and political identities, and new policies will only bear fruit if they are consistent with a new discourse that supports belonging to a local but, at the same time,

cosmopolitan identity. As he puts it, writing, "think cosmopolitan, act local"(p.118).

- Stimulating civil society institutions and organizations and granting effective communication between them and the decision-making institutions.
- Developing international policies to control and monitor the manufacture of medicines and vaccines. These policies should ensure the proper use and fair distribution of medicine.
- Monitoring technology, especially in the field of artificial intelligence, which is a significant challenge that can generate new mechanisms to strengthen the forces of tyranny and marginalize or, better said, the "enslavement" of large groups of humanity (the application of the project of 'transhuman' will be an example of this new enslavement).
- Ensuring the state's control of the economic system is at the service of the people and not the other way around.
- Protecting the democratic system with all the legislations and policies that limit the hazards that threaten it from outside and inside it.
- Establishing an international system based on the power of legitimacy, not on the legitimacy of force as understood by the national ideology.

Overall, the writers neither idealize the five ideologies nor entirely reject them. Instead, he shows that their ideals and values find their limits in new challenges and ways of their appropriation. Thus, he maintains that these ideologies are mechanisms and instruments to deal with realities and current conditions that will change with new challenges and different circumstances. Furthermore, he calls for mobilizing energies and morale to take care of nature and prepare for its changes. Finally, the writer invites the cosmopolitan citizen, each in his position, to adhere to good values without exaggeration or deficiency. As for the state's responsibility, the writer believes that international treaties and agreements concerning human rights must be acknowledged and protected beyond the discourse of cultural particularity.

Furthermore, the state still has enormous tasks and challenges ahead. The most significant urgent challenges include supporting social justice, strengthening diplomatic relations, and enacting long-term laws and policies to preserve the environment for the benefit of the local and cosmopolitan citizens. Thus, according to the author, in our globalized village with all its possibilities and challenges, the "rational individual" is the problem and also the only hope to save humanity.

In summary, the book takes the reader on a philosophical journey and a political stance through which the writer presents his political ideas, medical and philosophical knowledge and moral beliefs. The book addresses philosophical values such as freedom,

responsibility, and violence within, discussing the five major ideologies that dominated modern political and philosophical thought. Instead of discussing these values from a philosophical perspective in light of Western or eastern philosophies, the author chose to rely on past incidents and references to psychological studies in direct but profound words that suit his reader perfectly. The book is recommended to politicians, academic activists, and ordinary cosmopolitan citizens who should assume responsibility for saving the universe and the human project.

Marzouki, Moncef. *Revisions and Alternatives: Which Foundations for a Renewed Political Thought*. Doha: Arab Centre for Research & Policy Studies, 2022.

1. Moncef Marzouki (1945)- is a Tunisian politician who served as the fifth president of Tunisia from 2011 to 2014. Through his career he has been a human rights activist, physician and politician.
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