

## РОЗДІЛ 3. ПОЛІТИЧНА КУЛЬТУРА ТА ІДЕОЛОГІЯ

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### Sayyid Qutb as the main ideologist of modern Islamic fundamentalism

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*The article is devoted to the life and work of the Egyptian thinker, politician, scientist and public figure Sayyid Ibrahim Qutb. Sayyid Qutb is one of the most influential architects of modern Islamic political thought. Qutb scientific works inspired many Muslims to engage in violent struggle against many authorities in Muslim countries, as well as against states outside the Islamic world. Other supporters of Sayyid Qutb ideas found in his works a call for a nonviolent struggle against the autocratic regimes of Muslim states and an attempt to reform state systems to establish social justice. Qutb provided subsequent generations of Islamists with the moral strength to fight for their vision of the world and their ideals. In his works, he depicted the history of Islam and Muslims as an experience of suffering and powerlessness under the yoke of Western civilization. Through this philosophical construct, Sayyid Qutb proposed that Muslims compensate for historical damage through the struggle against the Western world. In his articles and books written between 1948 and 1966, Qutb accuses the Western world of immoral lifestyles, abandonment of religion, and manipulation of Muslim countries. He calls for the creation of an Islamic society, on the basis of which he planned to build an Islamic state. Sayyid Qutb critical thinking, as well as high education, allowed him to create a fairly mobile and flexible ideology that went beyond the context of Egypt in the mid-twentieth century and influenced the discourse of Islamic fundamentalists from Syria to Pakistan. Also, the ideological influence of Sayyid Qutb not only comes down to his scientific works but also has roots in his life, the struggle against the Egyptian authorities and his execution, which made him in the eyes of Muslims and especially Islamic fundamentalists a martyr and a fighter for the Islamic idea. His death became a symbol of the fight against corruption and dictatorship of Arab political regimes, as well as a symbol of resistance to the colonial and exploitative policies of the Western world. The ideology of Islamic fundamentalism of Sayyid Qutb after his death continued to spread and play an important political role in the modern political life of the Islamic world, but also influence the politics of Western countries.*

**Key words:** Sayyid Qutb, Islamic Fundamentalism, Jahiliyyah, Jihad, Islam.

**Introduction.** Genetically, all people are approximately the same. It does not happen that a person was born and immediately became what he is known in history. Behind each there is a certain life of his own that shaped him as a person. For this reason, the actions of any person should be understood through the history of the era in which he was born, developed as a person, without this materialistic understanding, full awareness and assessment of his actions is impossible. Scientists and politicians talk and write about Qutb that he is simply an ideological Muslim philosopher calling for terrorism and a crusade against Christians and the entire Western world. But his figure in the modern Muslim world is not only ambiguous, but also very significant; he is an incredibly powerful philosophical-political and extremely iconic Muslim figure who shaped the ideology of the development of the Muslim world of the modern era. How Qutb became Qutb and what context of the historical events in which he was born, studied and acted will help reveal the essence of this question. Discarding political narratives, let us trace the life path and political activities of Qutb from a historical point of view.

**Purpose of the study.** The purpose of the article is to study the scientific works of Sayyid Qutb as

the basis for the formation of the ideology of modern Islamic fundamentalism.

**Research methods.** For the article, the following research methods were used: the analysis method, the systematic approach and the content analysis method.

To better understand the personality and development of Sayyid Qutb thought, we should turn to his life path, which led to the formation and development of his teaching.

The full name of Sayyid Qutb is Sayyid Ibrahim Husayn Qutb. He was born in 1906 in Egypt in the city of Asyut. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Egypt, which at that time was called the Egyptian Khedivate, was an autonomous vassal state subject to the Ottoman Empire. In 1914, with the outbreak of the First World War, Great Britain declared war on the Ottoman Empire and ceased to recognize the rights of the Turks to Egypt. Between 1914 and 1922, Egypt was a protectorate of the British Empire until the country gained independence. Despite the fact of gaining independence, the Kingdom of Egypt continued to build a pro-Western foreign policy. The corruption of the Egyptian king and the country's authorities, the counter-elite began to pursue policies aimed

at political and economic reform of the country. Thus, two opposing state elites were formed. The first was the military, the second was Islamic scholars dissatisfied with the excessive secularism of Egyptian society. One of the leaders of the Egyptian Islamic fundamentalist movement, later known as the Muslim Brotherhood, was Sayyid Qutb [1, p. 287–311].

The Egyptian political life in which Qutb grew up was dynamic and rapidly changing. Qutb parents encouraged his desire for education and at the age of ten he became a hafiz, which in Arabic means a memorizer, that is, a person who memorizes the Qur'an. Three years later, the family moved to the city of Helwan, which allowed him to enroll in the Dar al-Ulum preparatory school in Cairo, a prestigious pedagogical university, where he entered in 1929. After graduating from university in 1933, he was appointed as a teacher at Dar al-Ulum, and a few years later joined the Egyptian Ministry of Education. Over the next ten years, Qutb was interested in literary activities, writing poetry, autobiographical essays, literary criticism, novels and stories.

A religiously educated man, Sayyid Qutb became an active member of the opposition Wafd Party and a prominent critic of the Egyptian monarchy, which brought him into inevitable conflict with the leadership of the Ministry of Education. In 1947, freed from government service, Sayyid Qutb became the editor-in-chief of two magazines: Al-Alam al-Arabi (The Arab World) and Al-Fikr al-Jadid (New Thought). At the same time, due to editorial differences, he was forced to leave the Arab World magazine; in turn, the magazine "New Thought" was banned after six issues, due to criticism of tyranny, corruption and appeals to a just Islamic society.

In 1948, the Egyptian Ministry of Education sent Qutb to the United States in the hope that direct acquaintance with America would incline him to secular politics and force him to abandon opposition activities that were increasingly taking on the contours of radical Islam. However, America left a mostly negative imprint on Sayyid Qutb mind. While celebrating the achievements of the United States in the field of production and social organization, Sayyid Qutb paid great attention to materialism, racism and sexual permissiveness as the dominant features of American life.

Sayyid Qutb stay in the United States coincided with the first Palestinian war. He received this event with alarm, since American society was marked by an uncritical acceptance of Zionist ideals against the backdrop of widespread anti-Islamic prejudice. After receiving a master's degree in education from the University of Northern Colorado at Greeley, Sayyid Qutb decided to turn down the opportunity to stay in America to earn his doctorate and returned to Egypt in 1951, where he became increasingly active in the Ikhwan ul-Muslimeen (Muslim Brotherhood). A special revelation for him was the fact that

in the United States they joyfully greeted the news of the murder on February 12, 1949 of Imam Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood organization. The perception of the Ikhwan, that is, the brothers, as the defenders of Islam further strengthened his commitment to hardline Islam when the British official James Hayworth Dunne told him that the Ikhwan represented the only obstacle to the establishment of "Western civilization" in the Middle East.

On July 23, 1952, the Egyptian monarchy was overthrown in a coup d'etat organized by a group of military men calling themselves the Free Officers. They were formally led by General Muhammad Nadguib, but it soon became apparent that Jamal Abdul Nasser was their driving force. The Ikhwanists initially welcomed the coup, but it later became apparent that the revolution was being led by the Revolutionary Command Council towards a secular rather than an Islamic state. On July 26, three days after the revolution, the Ikhwanists publicly declared that the new authorities should establish Sharia law as the basis of Egypt.

On July 19, 1954, the military entered into an agreement with Great Britain, which meant that British troops would withdraw from the Suez Canal in exchange for Egyptian cooperation with the mother country. The Ikhwanists categorically rejected the treaty and condemned it as treason against Islam. In response, the military decreed the dissolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and arrested the organization's leaders, including Sayyid Qutb, and 4,000 of their members, many of whom were sentenced to life imprisonment. After his arrest, Qutb was subject to torture; he was tried by three judges, one of whom was future Egyptian President Anwar Sadat.

In the courtroom, Sayyid Qutb tore off his shirt to show signs of torture. He was sentenced to fifteen years in prison and was now destined to spend the rest of his life in prison, with the exception of eight short months of relative freedom in 1965. The torture and ill-treatment suffered by Qutb and other prisoners over the years, as well as the murder of twenty-one members of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Liman Tura military prison in June 1957, led Sayyid Qutb to believe that an unprecedented regime had come to power in Egypt, the regime was brutal and the main problem was no longer overt foreign rule or lack of social justice. It was rather a total usurpation of power by forces extremely hostile to Islam, as a result of which the entire life of society became entrenched in social patterns alien to Islam.

Sayyid Qutb believed that the Egyptian government, like all other governments of the Muslim world, in its ignorance and disregard for the divine commandments, was comparable to pre-Islamic Arabia, and that the state could rightly be designated by the same term – jahiliyya (primitive rudeness and ignorance preceding Islam). The term jahiliyya acquired central meaning for Sayyid Qutb, encapsulating

the bleakness of the Muslim predicament and serving as an epistemological device for the rejection of all beliefs other than Islam.

According to Sayyid Qutb, the new jahiliyya had deep historical roots, it was nurtured and protected by the entire coercive system of the modern authoritarian state, for this reason it could not be easily corrected in the short term. Only a long-term program of ideological and organizational work combined with the training of a dedicated vanguard of believers capable of defending Islam in times of extreme danger (if necessary, resorting to force) and leading the change from jahiliyya to an Islamic state, Said Qutba believed.

In December 1964, Sayyid Qutb was released from prison. It is said that his release was due to continuing ill health and partly due to the intercession of Abdul Salam Arif, the President of Iraq, who invited him to settle in his country. On August 5, 1965, Sayyid Qutb was rearrested on charges of subversion, terrorism and sedition.

Sayyid Qutba was sentenced to death. After numerous attempts by politicians and scholars to intercede on his behalf, including the king, Sayyid Qutb was hastily hanged on August 29, 1966 [5, p. 27–192].

Among the many works written by Qutb, the most important and influential are “Our Struggle Against the Jews” and “The Struggle of Islam and Capitalism”, published in 1951, and “Milestones on the Path” in 1964.

To understand the cause-and-effect relationships of the appearance of the work “Our Struggle against the Jews”, one should pay attention to a number of political events that occurred during this historical period. In particular, the Muslim Brotherhood, led by Sayyid Qutb, was an ally of Nazi Germany in World War II and, in the event of a successful German military campaign in North Africa, planned to come to power in Egypt with the support of the German army. The content of the work was also influenced by the loss of the Arab Coalition to the young state of Israel in the first Arab-Israeli War of 1948–1949, which was perceived by the population and elites of Arab countries as a humiliation.

The work “Our Struggle Against the Jews” is a manifesto of Arab and Islamic anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Qutb refers to the Islamic form of anti-Semitism as a process of Islamization of anti-Semitism, he argues that antisemitism in the Middle East is a phenomenon imported from Europe, which distinguishes between European, Islamic and Arab antisemitism.

According to Sayyid Qutb, in Islamic ideology, Muslims must die in a space battle against the Jews, because Muslims have no other choice, since the Jews have been waging war against Muslims since the birth of Islam in Medina in 622. For Qutb, Jews represent absolute evil, thereby automatically becoming the enemy of Islam from the “beginning of time”.

The war against the Jews will never end, because the main goal of the Jews is the destruction of Islam and Islamic values. Qutb argues that the Jews wage their war against Islam through intrigue, conspiracies, and the armed forces of other countries, which they manipulate by infiltrating government to gain access to government. The space war should be waged not only against Jews, but also against the United States, as the quintessence of Western values that are alien to the Islamic world [4, p. 10–13].

The cosmic war of Islam against the Jews is a metaphor that signifies a struggle of ideas. Sayyid Qutb outlined its main narratives in five points:

- there is a worldwide Jewish-Western conspiracy to destroy Islam;
- Jews want to rule the world and therefore deprive Islam of the right to participate in its governance;
- Jews use various secret organizations (for example Freemasonry) to achieve world domination, the main one of which is Zionism;
- Since the Crusades, Jews have used Christians as brute force in the fight against Islam for the purpose of world domination;
- America is ruled by Jews with the help of which they achieve their goals [2, p. 28].

As can be seen from the list of ideological narratives of Sayyid Qutb, the work “Our Struggle against the Jews” is a right-wing radical Islamic manifesto claiming that there is a world Jewish conspiracy, the purpose of which is to destroy the Islamic world and prevent its representation from participating in the global governance of the world. The threat to the existence of Islam, Sayyid Qutb believes, is posed not only by world Jewry, but also by Christians and the entire Western world, which is subject to manipulation by the same Jews in order to seize Arab lands, resources and destroy Islam as a religion, ideology and way of life.

In “The Struggle between Islam and Capitalism”, Qutb argues that capitalism is contrary to the teachings of Islam because its economic system is based on usury and monopolism, practices prohibited in Islam. He accuses capitalism of developing an unbridled cult of consumption and the limitless pursuit of profit. These factors, in his opinion, contribute to the destruction of basic human values, such as respect for other people, selfless love and collective creation for the common good.

Qutb also criticizes the socialist model of the USSR, which was used by its satellites in the Eastern European bloc. He believes that the system proposed by the USSR denies religion, the human right to private property and destroys the instincts inherent in nature in humans.

Qutb does not share the American and Soviet model or idea of society, considering them to be Western social constructs that represent hostility to the Islamic model. Criticizing both systems, he

accuses them of destroying man's natural faith in God and instilling faith in a materialistic culture.

According to Qutb, the capitalist model led to the development of imperialism in Europe and the United States, the seizure of new markets and resources of less developed countries. The permanent race for new markets and the desire for dominance of one empire inevitably led to the First and Second World Wars. The Cold War, which began immediately after the end of World War II, in Qutb's worldview does not seem to be a struggle of ideologies, but just a struggle of two different economic models, systems for producing goods, delivering them to consumers and advertising these goods. For Qutb, there is no difference between a consumer of material goods in the USA or the USSR, since thinking is focused on obtaining material values. He believed that the struggle of the future will take place between the material and spiritual worlds, and in this struggle of the future, the spiritual world will be represented by Islam, which can offer people an alternative model for their lives. According to Qutb, in Europe spirituality was destroyed first by the Reformation, and then by the Nietzschean idea of social philosophy, where European people rejected religion as the main system of their existence. In accordance with the Qutb view, Russia, spirituality has been destroyed since the October Socialist Revolution, after which the Soviet government replaced people's faith in God with faith in the construction of communism, which is based on providing people with material goods.

Reflecting on the issues of Islam and its practice, Qutb comes to the conclusion that a Muslim cannot follow Islam in private life and then accept a non-Islamic model in public life. Islam, according to Qutb, is a perfect way of life that should embrace both spiritual and worldly affairs of man: political, economic and social, regulating them through prescribed laws, creating a unique harmony between man, nature and God.

Qutb questions the modern system of production and consumption of material goods. He argues that modern states in Europe were able to emerge after the separation of religion from the state, after which the system of production, management of the economy, and social life was given to the administrative apparatus, not associated with religion and faith in God. Qutb questions the separation of religion and state, stating that it was not a natural process, and that all aspects of human life should be regulated by religion and God. He also denies modern human laws, saying that they were artificially invented and proposes a return to God's laws, which were created by nature itself. Islamic laws are higher than the laws created by people, since they come from the Almighty Himself.

Qutb notes that the communists offer the idea of social justice. In such a system, a synergy between Islam and communism may be created, but according

to Qutb, Muslims may not realize that behind the social justice of the communists lies the same materialistic view of life, which can lead Muslims to a secular view of existence, which poses a threat for their spiritual life. Also, communists are capable of replacing the religious rituals of Muslims with political ones, artificially invented by various figures of the communist movement. True Islam does not accept the model of capitalism, which leads to greed and the decline of human morality and ethics; Islam denies the economic determinism of communism, believing that solving people's economic problems can solve all the problems of humanity and end conflicts throughout the world.

Qutb proposes a return to classical Islamic economics. Islam teaches moderation in the consumption of goods, rejecting excessive wealth and extreme poverty; revive the system of paying compulsory tithes from income, that is, *zakat* (mandatory annual tax) and *sadaq* (any good deed), since these taxes are divine and obligatory for Muslims. Such a system, according to Qutb, allows for the redistribution of resources from rich to poor, like *riba* – an illegal increase in financial resources or funds for which no human labor was expended. Usury should also be prohibited. Thus, despite the fact that Sayyid Qutb does not deny the system of capitalism itself, he proposes rules for limiting them, under which the economy transforms into a pre-capitalist system of relationships [4, p. 177–200].

The manifesto "Milestones" (arb. *Ma'alim fi-t-tariq*), published in 1964, sometimes translated as "Landmarks in the Path", refers to the major political work written by Sayyid Qutb. The American statesman, scientist and US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger commented in his book "World Order" on the manifesto of Sayyid Qutb as a declaration of war by Islam on the existing world order created by the USA, the USSR and their allies.

It must be kept in mind that Sayyid Qutb's work "Milestones" was written during a period when the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa were more divided. At that time, the allies of the USSR that supported its foreign policy in the Middle East region were Egypt, Syria and Iraq. The United States, in turn, relied on the implementation of its Middle East policy on Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Iran, providing them with economic assistance and security guarantees. Qatar, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, at that time, were still under the British colonial system. Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria had just gained independence and were still fighting for independence from France. Such an Arab world was observed by Sayyid Qutb, in which the determining role in domestic and foreign policy, economics and social structure of the Arab (Muslim) world was played by the USA, USSR, Great Britain and France. Based on these observations, Qutb, through his work



“Milestones”, proposes a path of Islamic revival for the Arab and Muslim world.

In his manifesto, Qutb sees Islam as a universal system of freedom that would reject the rule of superpowers, empires, international organizations and military blocs, the division of peoples into races, languages and countries, regional and national interests. He proposes to overthrow the entire known system of world order and replace it with the rules set out in the Koran, that is, to impose the dominance of the Koran throughout the world.

The process of expansion of Islam began in the VII–VIII centuries and must continue until it covers the entire earth and liberates all of the world's humanity. The implementation of this project will require extreme measures and determination, and the end result of this process, according to Qutb, should be the liberation of every person on earth.

Qutb rejects modern governments and nation states, considering them artificial and having no right to exist. He also rejects the system of world order that emerged after the Westphalian, Tehran and Potsdam conferences, where the Islamic world was assigned a peripheral role, says Henry Kissinger, analyzing the work of Sayyid Qutb [3, p. 74–75].

A number of scholars speak about the work of Sayyid Qutb exclusively from a negative point of view, missing the historical prerequisites for the formation of the idea of the Muslim world. Thus, the Ukrainian researcher N.V. Nesprava considers Qutb manifesto a destructive teaching that promotes extremism and terrorism, highlighting five reasons for his conclusions:

- Qutb teaching promotes the dominance of Islam throughout the world;
- inciting hatred and hostility on religious grounds;
- propaganda of religious war;
- agitation for the construction of a totalitarian Islamic society;
- a violent way to achieve a goal through offensive jihad.

Researcher M.V. Nesprava believes that Sayyid Qutb manipulates extracted quotations from the Koran, calls for a fight against Westernized Muslims in Islamic states, as well as for waging war against non-Muslim nations and, ultimately, building a society similar to the Muslim society of the VII century [7, p. 161–167].

**Conclusion.** Sayyid Qutb was and remains one of the most influential Islamic thinkers who influenced the development of radical Islam in the modern world. Despite the existence of certain elements of similarity between the views of Qutb and the ideology of modern Islamists, there are still fundamental differences between them. In his works, he portrays Islam as a force that opposes, as the author puts it, Western secular imperialism. Qutb did not call for

or support all-out violence, which began to spread in the Islamic world in the late seventies, and later became global as a result of the high activity of international Islamic terrorist organizations. Jihad, first of all, should be directed against sinful and corrupt Muslim political regimes, Qutb believed.

One of the main messages of Sayyid Qutb is the social transformation of Muslim society and its secular government from a state of corruption and ignorance (*jahiliya*), to a state of Islamic enlightenment and social justice. Qutb, being a participant of his time, disagreed with a world order dominated by British colonialism, American capitalism and militarism, Soviet communist expansionism and regional Zionism in the Middle East.

Qutb believed that at the basis of everything material there is a religious objective truth that provides answers to all life's difficulties and world problems. In his opinion, Western capitalism and Eastern communism are man-made social and economic constructs that contradict the divine principle and drag man into sinfulness and spiritual ignorance. Qutb uses a binary position in which the *jahiliyya*, represented by Western society and the society of the socialist bloc, form their life principles and ideology on the basis of materialism and an Islamic society that calls for spirituality, social justice and morality.

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## Сайїд Кутба як головний ідеолог сучасного ісламського фундаменталізму

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*Стаття присвячена життю та діяльності Єгипетського мислителя, політика, вченого та громадського діяча Саїда Ібрагіма Кутба. Саїд Кутба один із найвпливовіших архітекторів сучасної ісламської політичної думки. Наукові роботи Кутба надихнули багатьох мусульман на насильницьку боротьбу проти багатьох властей мусульманських країн, так і проти держав, які перебувають за межами ісламського світу. Інші прихильники ідей Саїда Кутби знаходили у його роботах заклик до ненасильницької боротьби проти автократичних режимів мусульманських держав та спроби реформування державних систем для встановлення соціальної справедливості. Кутб надав наступним поколінням ісламістів моральну силу для боротьби за своє бачення світу та за свої ідеали. У своїх роботах він відобразив історію ісламу та мусульман як досвід страждань та безсилля під гнітом західної цивілізації. Через цю філософську конструкцію Саїд Кутб пропонував мусульманам відшкодувати історичні збитки через боротьбу проти західного світу. У своїх статтях і книгах, написаних між 1948 і 1966 роками, Кутб звинувачує західний світ у аморальному способі життя, відходу від релігії, а також на маніпуляцію мусульманськими країнами. Він закликає до створення ісламського суспільства, на основі якого він планував збудувати ісламську державу. Критичне мислення Саїда Кутби, а також висока освіченість дозволили йому створити досить мобільну та гнучку ідеологію, яка вийшла за межі контексту Єгипту середини ХХ століття та вплинула на дискурс ісламських фундаменталістів від Сирії до Пакистану. Так само, ідеологічний вплив Саїда Кутби не тільки зводиться до його наукових праць, але також має коріння з його життєвого шляху, боротьби проти Єгипетської влади та його страти, яка зробила його в очах мусульман і особливо ісламських фундаменталістів мучеником та борцем за ісламську ідею. Його смерть стала символом боротьби проти корупції та диктатури арабських політичних режимів, а також символом опору колоніальної та експлуатаційної політики західного світу. Ідеологія ісламського фундаменталізму Саїда Кутби після його смерті продовжила поширюватись і відігравати важливу політичну роль у сучасному політичному житті ісламського світу, але також впливати на політику західних країн.*

**Ключові слова:** Саїд Кутб, ісламський фундаменталізм, джахлія, джихад, іслам.