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Alcoholic Drinks and Public Interest in case of Noe-liberalism and Islam

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I. Introduction:

Francis Fukuyama has explained that searching a meaningful pattern in the past events of mankind will always show the clash between different ideologies, in which each idea attempted to establish itself as the universal faith for organizing the society and institutions according to its specific blueprint. He further explained that the triumph of liberalism over Marxism and Fascism, established the superiority of liberalism brought history to an end-point of mankind ideological evolution and the universalization of western liberal democracy as the final form of human civilization. (Hunter, 1998). In fact, the end-point of mankind ideological evolution was famously disseminated in the recent past by Karl Marx who believed that the direction of historical development (History as a dialectical process) was a purposeful one determined by the interplay of material forces and would come to an end only with the achievement of communist utopia that would finally resolve all previous contradictions. The concept of history as a dialectical process which has a starting point, a middle and an end-point was derived by Karl Marx from his German predecessor George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel believed that mankind has passed through a series of primitive stages of consciousness on his path to the present in which each stage represented a distinct form of social organization. Consciousness or ideas are large unifying world views that might best be identified under the title of ideology. Ideology comprises religion, cultures, and complex of moral values underlying any society. He further predicted that the developing countries in the future will be the terrain of conflict in the future (Fukuyama, 1989).

Have we in fact arrived at the end-point of mankind ideological evolution? Should we believe that neoliberalism is capable to provide greatest interest to the greatest number. Pursuit of public interest has been the subject of debate since the dawn of history. Majority if not entirely of Philosophy, religious studies, economics, ethics and politics is concerned with the questions and ideology of good life. Harmonizing the interests of the society against the interests of individual is the central idea of public, political, economic and social dialogue. Discovering and then implementing the principles which serves the common good is a fundamental goal of any society. In the framework of neoliberalism, it is believed that there are no fundamental contradictions that cannot be resolved, and which can be settled by an

alternate socioeconomic system. But Muslims believes that Islam already provided the best and ever-lasting ideology for the well fare of humanity. Like Christianity, In Islam end-point of man's ideological evolution would be the day of judgment that would usher in the kingdom of Heaven, at which the earth and earthly event will literally cease to exist. In the ideology of Islam there is no flaw, and imperfection but in fact it is the greatest gift of Allah to Mankind revealed to Prophet Mohammad (SAW), and is mentioned in the Holly Quran in the following words.

“This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion”¹.

In Quran it is reported that mankind from Prophet Adam (AS) up to Prophet Noah (AS) were one single community (ummah) and were possessor of the true one religion of the unity of God. During Prophet Noah time self-admiration and clash of interest emerged which resulted in formulating different ideologies and civilizations. In finding the truth, God has left men's moral, intellectual and social development to their reason, aided by Prophetic guidance².

Neoliberalism, ideology of the hegemonic west, has been presented across the globe in the preceding and current centuries more than any other socio-economic system. Neoliberal agenda as a socioeconomic system, liberation from religious and social constraint is the only useful social and economic order, which gave rise to modern civilization and economic conveniences unknown in the past. Critics documented that from Russia to Venezuela neoliberalism as a socioeconomic system has been a time of economic suffering, declining income, anxiety and resentment, of starving, rioting and looting harshly pointed out by the Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohammad. Neoliberalism triumphed only in the west and failed everywhere else (Sot, 2003). Naomi Klein in her book, “The Shock Doctrine” reported that the roots of neo-liberalism can be traced to an extremist doctrine that cannot exists side by side with any religion. Based on Biblical Prophecy of great floods and great fire, this invention requires global culture and socioeconomic transformation. Contemporary global violence, economic crisis, are not the outcome of misconduct and incompetence, but they are

¹ Quran 5:3

² Quran 10, 19

an integral part of neoliberal agenda which can progress only in the backdrop of disasters (Gray, 2007). In continental Europe, Asia, Americas and Africa neoliberal form of socioeconomic system has been implemented in the form of austerity budgets and structural adjustments conditions of the International Monetary Fund and World Trade Organization. But in the case of the 13-oil producing countries in the middle east their oil wealth enabled them to escape the austerity measures of IMF and WTO. In the sight of neoliberal reformers oil is not a sacred sign for fulfilling basic human needs but a curse in implementing the neoliberal agenda in these countries. To reform the economies of the Arab-Muslim world, there is a need of radical reduction in the revenue of oils. Neoliberal agenda which was achieved elsewhere in the form of structural adjustment conditions of the IMF and WTO will be achieved in the Arab-Muslim world by force (Lafer, 2004).

Since the terrorist attack on World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001 and the subsequent US led war on terror and imaginary violence committed by Muslims across the globe, interference in the economic and social affairs in places where Muslims are in majority have been labelled as form of extremism. Before the September 11 attack on WTC, ordering the right conduct and forbidding the evil and wrong were an integral part of Muslim community (Amar bil Maroof and Nahi anil Munkar). The ideology of Islam is based on the dogma of intervention in the social and economic affairs of mankind which is in sharp contrast to non-intervention dogma of neoliberalism either in the form of free trade, free market and free competition. In Islam intervention in mankind social and economic affairs is a distinguishing characteristic of the truthfulness of Islam. The incompatibility of Islam with the crux of triumphant neoliberal world order was forecasted by Western Philosophers long before the attack on WTC. In the concluding period of Cold war, (Bernard Lewis, 1990) first introduced incompatibility of Islam with liberalism in the form of clash of civilization which did not receive popularity at that time. He further explained that this clash of civilization among the Muslims toward the liberal western countries is a reaction to our Judo-Christian tradition of the past, our liberal present and the expansion of both of these across the planet. Clash of Civilization got popularity when (Sameul P. Huntington, 1996) asserted that Islam is unable to co-exist with progress, modernization, democracy, human freedom, economic development, technological change, gender equality, free markets, the separation of religion and state, and suggested that the war between the liberal West and Islam is unavoidable.

In ancient Socratic debate, a dialogue between two individuals on some essential issue like the nature of the good and the meaning of justice were settled on the logic of contradiction, that is, the less illogical side wins. In case if both sides were observed during the conversation to be self-contradictory, then another ideology were introduced free from the contradictions of the initial two. But this newly emerged opinion may itself comprise another, unanticipated contradictions, thus giving rise to yet another dialogue and another solution. These types of discussion took place not only on the level of philosophy, but between socio-economic systems as well. In western philosophical debate history is a dialogue between societies, in which those with grave internal contradictions fail and are replaced by others that succeed to overcome those contradictions. Neoliberalism, is the latest discovery of European academic dialogue, and is treated as the most advanced state of human civilization free from contradictions. Liberation from religious and social constraint is the only useful social and economic order, unknown in the past.

Based on alcoholic this paper on one side will highlight the internal contradiction, but on it will also show relationship between public interest and neoliberalism and Islam. The aim is to identify whether Neoliberalism or Islam provides greatest interests to the greatest numbers. To enhance the public interest and reduce the personal, social and economic impact of alcoholic beverages, many governments spent billions of dollars every year. Alcoholic drinks have deep and intense medical, social, moral, political and legal repercussions. The remaining part of this article is organized in the following manner. Section two discussed the economic and social cost of alcoholic drinks. Section three highlight the dialectics of alcoholic drinks in case of neoliberalism. Section four examines the wisdom behind the prohibition of alcoholic drinks in Islam. Section five highlights the implementation of recent policy prescription and its outcome in reducing the economic and social costs of alcoholic drinks. Section seven concludes and discuss the policy recommendations.

II. The social and economic cost of alcoholic drinks:

The economic cost of alcohol-related crime is huge and enormous. In the United States of America, every year the use of alcoholic drinks is responsible for an average of 79,000 deaths and 2.3 million years of potential life lost, making it the third leading preventable cause

of death in this country. In 2006 the total estimated economic cost of excessive drinking was \$223.5 billion, approximately \$746 for each man, woman, and child in the U.S. in 2006. Of the total cost, 72.2% came from lost productivity, 11.0% from health care costs, 9.4% from criminal justice system, and 7.5% from other effects. The cost from binge drinking was \$170.7 billion, underage drinking \$24.6 billion, drinking during pregnancy \$5.2 billion, and crime \$73.3 billion (Bouchery, Harwood, Sacks, Simon, & Brewer, 2013). Another study estimated that in England the total social cost of alcohol is £55.1 Billion. It comprises £22.6 billion cost to individuals and households, £21.9 billion human value cost, £3.2 billion to public health and care services, £5 billion to other public service (social care, criminal justice and fire services) and £7.3 billion to employers in the form of lost productivity, absence and accidents (*The Economic Impacts of alcohol* 2016.). On global scale, alcohol is responsible for 3.3 million deaths every year. In general, 5.1 % of global burden of disease and injury is regarded as being caused by alcohol. In similar age between 20 to 39 years around 25 % of total deaths is being caused by alcohol. Recent research determined a strong causal link between infectious diseases like TB and HIV/AIDS (“WHO | Alcohol- Fact sheet,” 2015).

III. Neoliberalism and the dialectic of alcoholic drinks:

Neoliberalism the latest European innovation, is an alternative method of organizing society so that everyone can do whatever he/she desires, with a minimum of rules and regulations. Neoliberal agenda as a socioeconomic system, was implemented in the global north from mid nineteenth century up to the end of the nineteenth century. These countries then implemented a new economic system called “Welfare State” specifically after the decades following WWII. The philosophy of free market ideologies came again in 1980 due to the strong influence and support of US president Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. This philosophy received further momentum and legitimization due to the collapse of Marxism in former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. In term of alcohol proponent of this ideology opined that addictive substances should be made legal for adults but it should be also made pure for potency and efficiency. Proponents of this approach opined that the current war on alcohol has been unsuccessful and the associated costs-including enlarged police forces, the constructions of more prisons, an overburdened court system and untold human cost have increased markedly. In other words, the overall impact of alcohol to users, to

other people, and to the ravaged inner cities in which the trade takes place would be lower if government regulation were relaxed and the resources currently devoted to supply restrictions were instead put into treatment and counselling. To paraphrase the opinion of free markets ideologists, the legalization of every type of addictive substance will be a far more superior policy approach than the prohibition. Legalization of addictive substance might increase the number of addictive users, but this approach will also decrease the economic and social impact on society through a decrease in robbery, theft, prostitution as well as on a number of other channels. Free market ideologist argued that the adverse impact of prohibiting alcohol to the entire society is much greater than the benefits accrued through prohibitions (Campbell R. McConnell, 2006).

In fact, neoliberal emphasis on the legalization of alcoholic drinks was derived from Christianity which encourages the use of alcoholic drinks in religious festivals. Drinking alcohol is a form of worship, which is regularly held at Churches in the name of Eucharist or Sacred Meal or Holy Communion. These rites are classified as the most important rituals in Christianity and it is regularly observed so as to pay tribute to the sacrifice of Jesus. It is believed that Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to eat bread and drink wine one day before his alleged arrest and Crucifixion (The Holy Bible, 1611). Another verse in the Holy Bible claims, that Prophet Lot not only used alcoholic drinks but also committed incest with his two daughters which later on became the source of human generation (The Holy Bible, 1611). The permissiveness of alcoholic drink came to Christianity from Judaism which originated in the middle east around 3500 years ago. Another similarity between the Judaism and Christianity is Torah which is similar to the contents of the Old Testament of Bible. Like Christianity, Judaism too encourage the use of alcoholic drinks. It is believed that daily work is for the welfare of human body while Almighty has selected Sabbath and Festivals for the welfare and enhancement of human soul. The day of Shabbat is observed as a day of rest on the seventh day of each week. Jews considers Sabbath and festivals as, “the seasons of the “Lord” and “Holy convocations”³. Holy convocation is understood as to set-apart an appointed time (Sabbath or Festivals) to God, so as to read, understand His Laws and then use them in his life (Natsarenes, n.d.). In the Jewish religious festivals as well as on the eve of

³ Isa.I viii. 13, 14

Sabbath, holiness and sacredness of the day is mentioned before the use of alcoholic substances. To make the festival holy in Judaism, special blessings for wine are recited before the meal⁴. The importance of wine among the Jews as an essential food item can be verified from the fact that in the case of fire on the day of Sabbath, the presence of three food items must be made obligatory, which includes a basket of loaves, a cake made from preserved figs and a jar of wine. Like the ancient Greeks, it is believed that Judaism is also a cheerful religion in which there is no joy without a wine. From the above discussion it is evident legalization of alcoholic drinks came to neoliberalism from the ancient Greeks, Christians and Jews.

IV. The Logic behind the Prohibition of Alcoholic drinks in Islam:

Islam is an Abrahamic religion like Judaism and Christianity. It is based on the belief that the whole universe is created and sustained by an all-powerful, all-knowing God who guides humanity through prophets and revelations. Islam, in fact, respects the pre-existing monotheistic religions, claiming that it completed them with the final revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad, which is the Qur'an. Besides others, Quran has various commandments that interfere in human lives for perfection. Quran states that God created mankind and appointed for him a fixed period of life which he will spend upon the earth (Usmani et al., n.d.). Through revelation on Prophet Mohammad, God has commanded a certain code of life as the correct one, but at the same time granted freedom of action on man so as to know whether or not he adopts this code as the actual basis for the benefits in this life on the earth. In Quranic view human being is the best among all creatures on the basis of their wisdom, intellect and knowledge. Human is the only creature which has the capability to differentiate between good and bad. In Quranic view this world is a place for test and this test requires some people to be fortunate and some to be unfortunate. Some are created with wealth and power, while others are created as weak and poor. The fortunate and unfortunate are not only tested for tolerance and thankfulness to God (Allah) but also to know that how each of them uses their freedom for himself and society. In short, every human being is tested according to their own circumstance (Qasimi n.d 67.2.). Imam Ghazali (1105) stated that mankind utilizes his freedom in his life time to behave either in manners like Lion, Pigs, Cattle, Devil and

⁴ Deuteronomy 7: 13

Angels. Assault and battery are the principle characteristics of lions. Like lion, some human being does have the appetite of superiority and proudness. Human tries to be proud, to dominate, to compete, to be aggressive either based on his/her colour, wealth and strength. Like pig's some human being behaves in an extremely mean and inappropriate manner. Like cattle/animals, some humans do have the behavioural tendencies to eating, drinking and increasing their progenies. Similarly, evils, its ramifications, villainous deeds and the treachery are the signs and symbols of devils, while the activities of Angels who try to behold the glory of Allah/God, are freed from immoral sensual pleasures and arrogant anger on his fellow-men. Accordingly it is considered that humans are successful only if they behave like Angels which not only beneficial to the self but also to the entire humanity. The attitudes and behaviour of Lions, Pigs, Cattles and Devils are considered as a punishable acts (sin). A question arises if humans do have the behavioural tendencies of Lions, Pigs, Cattles, Devils and Angels, then why they get success and salvation by behaving only like angels and not like lion, pigs, cattle and devils? Accordingly, Islam regards human being as the noblest, perfect and best among all creatures. In Islam this worldly life is a test of human behavioural freedom until death. It is a test of God/Allah to evaluate who is better in his deeds and action for himself and for the entire humanity in order to determine the final destiny which is either Heaven or Hell. As the intellect is something unique to humans, and a mark of our humanity, Islam prohibits all those things which could potentially harm the human mind and intellect. As such, there is a prohibition against alcohol, wine or anything that corrupts the mind such as drugs, etc: In Quran it is expressed in the following words;

“O believers! Intoxicants and gambling (games of chance), dedication to stones (paying tribute to idols) and division by arrows (lottery) are the filthy works of Shaitan. Get away from them, so that you may prosper. Devil desires to stir up enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and to prevent you from the remembrance of Allah and from Salah (prayers). Will you not abstain?” (Usmani et al. n.d.5:90) .

Prophets Mohammad, peace be upon him said, ‘Every intoxicant is alcohol and every intoxicant is forbidden. To discourage the presence of alcohol in society, and frighten those who drank behind the closed door, the Prophet (SAW) said,

“ the wine-presser, the one who has it pressed, the one who drinks it, the one who conveys it, the one to whom it is conveyed, the one who serves it, the one who sells it, the one who benefits from the price paid for it, the one who buys it, and the one for whom it is bought”⁵.

Almost everywhere across the planet, states have banned majority of the intoxicant materials excepts alcoholic drinks, even though there is strong evidence that only ruin and destruction is the ultimate outcome of alcoholic drinks.

V. **Alcohol Preventive Policies and reduction in violence:**

By 1730, non-intervention in the market of alcoholic beverages resulted an estimated 7000 gin shops. Wide-spread addiction, historical account of violence and social devastation battered the inner city of London. In order to better serve the greatest interest for the greatest number, Great Britain introduced preventive legislation in 1734. These legislations got wide spread support specifically after the event when a woman named Judith Dufour strangled her two-year old year son and sold his clothes for Gin. Thomas Fielding, a social historian of the time, wrote about the consequences of Gin trade in his political brochure *An Enquiry into the causes of the late increase of Robbers:*

"A new kind of drunkenness, unknown to our ancestors, is lately sprung up among us, and which if not put a stop to, will infallibly destroy a great part of the inferior people. The drunkenness I here intend is ... by this poison called Gin ... the principal sustenance (if it may be so called) of more than a hundred thousand people in this Metropolis."

These preventive measures were a turning point in the social history of London and which in reality did reduce the overindulgence of spirit drinking, but even after these legislation medical men still assigned eight of the death of London adult to Gin (Sword, 2017). Although, the history of alcohol preventive policies existed some 3,000 years ago. After World War I, several countries first introduced laws and then cancelled it for the sale of alcoholic drinks. In recent times preventive measures in case of alcoholic beverages received universal recognition by the publication of the 1975 WHO sponsored monograph, “Alcohol

⁵ Narrated by Abu Dawood and Ibn Majah

Control Policies in Public Health Perspective”. This report managed the World Health Assembly recommendation that countries should layout national alcohol policies giving emphasis to preventive measures (Donald A. Brand et al 2007). In the Brazilian city of Diadema, the effect of restricting alcohol availability on homicide, assault, vehicle crashes and violence against women were investigated. The policy to restrict the sale of alcoholic beverages after 11.00 PM were introduced in July 2002. This intervention in the market of alcohol resulted in the reduction of 106 deaths per year. The average monthly assault drop from 48 to 25 against women (Duailibi et al., 2007).

VI. Conclusion:

The above discussion shows that clear contradiction arises in neoliberalism in case of alcoholic drinks. Complete application of neoliberalism and its associated ruins and destruction can be recalled from the period of gin epidemic and gin craze which occurred in England between 1720 and 1730. Non-intervention in the gin market resulted in the increase of gin consumption roughly from negligible to 19 million gallons per year. Non-intervention in the market as root cause of personal, social and economic ills of humanity can be observed from the pictorial contribution of William Hogarth in the form of Beer street and Gin Lane paintings. The pleasure and happiness as depicted in the painting of Beer street is followed by gin lane which depicts the personal, social and economic ills of alcoholic drinks (Nicholls, 2003).



BEER STREET.

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Regarding the policy prescription, one can easily observe a strong and positive relationship between alcohol prohibition and intoxicants. In the teaching of Quran there is no flaw and contradiction which is mentioned in Quran in the following words;

“Do they not then consider the Quran carefully? Had it been from other than Allah, they would surely have found therein a many contradictions”⁶.

In sharp contrast to the logic of non-intervention in the social and economic affairs of mankind, Islam regards intervention as the panacea of human social and economic ills. It is a universal fact that hatred and enmity has linear association with intoxicants and gambling. No one can deny the fact that the use of intoxicants disrupts the whole social setup. Addictive substance which is neither a necessity nor a comfort good continues to cost countless damage and destruction to humanity around the globe.

⁶ Quran 4:82