

Governing under Islam and the Islamic Political System

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Abstract

This article elicits some positive and normative bases of Islamic governance. It argues that the Islamic state should be a republic since the prophet was "selected" by God and the four rightly-guided caliphs were "elected", thus a case is made for a republican spirit which should be integral to any just state. Also, the article argues that there should be a division of power, not only between government and judiciary, but also, between the government and the religious establishment. Lastly, it concludes with thirteen features deemed essential to the establishment of an Islamic State.

To ask a Muslim to address this topic is both strange and typical. It is strange because Muslims claim to follow a religion that provides a scheme for all aspects of life: Islam being both religion and civilization, nobody should have any doubts about the Islamic system of state and government.

It is typical because contemporary Muslims do grope for an answer to the question of how to govern Islamically, and are still torn over the issues involved. I would not be a Muslim if I would not seek enlightenment from the sources, i.e., Qur'an and Sunnah, and from Islamic history. But with history the trouble begins. In fact, one can only distinguish three periods of Islamic history from which to draw conclusions:

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- The Islamic-Jewish Confederation of al-Madinah, ruled by the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (SAWS), from 622-632, that is 10 years.
- The so-called Golden Era of the "four rightly guided caliphs", Abu Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali from 632-661, that is 29 years.
- The period since the rightly guided caliphs, i.e., 1340 solar years, during which the Muslims were ruled by caliphs, kings, emirs, sultans, generals, colonels, and revolutionary guides – a period characterized by tyranny, despotism, abuse of power, injustice and exploitation of the poor.

What, if anything, is to be learned from a period in which the Muslims had the good fortune of being ruled by a man of God, Muhammad (SAWS), who had all the blessings and charisma of Allah's last prophet and also excelled as statesman, diplomat, strategist, judge, father, and husband? Clearly, most features of that exceptional period cannot be copied. We have to work without the benefit of divine inspiration (*wahy*) and revelation (*tanzil*). Nevertheless, the prophetic period does yield some permanent rules:

(a) The state of Madinah was a federal republic, not a monarchy. Muhammad (SAWS) had declined the crown offered to him by his Makkan adversaries, and he never tolerated being treated like an Arab king. Indeed, he made no effort to play power into the hands of one of his daughters, including Fatima. This is remarkable because there were no other republics in existence at the time. There were only monarchs in sight, like the emperors of Byzantium and of Persia and the king of Ethiopia. In addition, the Qur'an has nothing flattering to say about monarchs. An-Naml (27): 34 makes the Queen of Saba say (and she should know): ...Verily, whenever kings enter a country they corrupt it, and turn the noblest of its people into the most abject. And this is the way they always behave.

Belqis said that long before George Washington. In sum, we can safely conclude that an Islamic State should be a Republic.

(b) In spite of being Allah's Messenger, Muhammad (SAWS) did not run his community like an autocrat. On the contrary, he observed the Qur'anic command of consultation (*shura*) as embodied in 2: 233, 3: 159 and 42: 38. At least in one incident the prophetic *sunnah* indicates that decisions reached through consultation are binding: before the fateful battle of Uhud on 23 March 625, the Prophet (SAWS) had wisely counseled against giving open battle. He rightly believed that the Muslims could oppose Makkan numerical superiority better in door-to-door street fighting. During *shura* he did not prevail because a majority of the Muslims, eager to show their

prowess (and out for spoils), voted for giving battle from the slopes of Mount Uhud. The Prophet (SAWS) consented against his better judgment, and we know the rest. So it may be concluded that consultation is both obligatory and binding.

(c) When dictating the constitution of al-Madinah the Prophet (SAWS) took into account that its population was composed of different tribes, and of tribes of different religions. Thus, he created a confederation. We can conclude that an Islamic state need not, and should not be centralized.

Moving to the so-called Golden Period, one is struck, above all, by the unique fact that the first four caliphs were elected. This is remarkable because, at the time, no other head of state had been elected. The Muslims innovated politically. True, the electorate was limited, and the procedure followed differed in each case. However, in Abu Bakr's and 'Utmann's cases, there was competition between different candidates and discussion of their merits. No doubt, the modern principle of government by popular election can be based on these early precedents.

The *rashidun* left another precious legacy, implemented vigorously by at least 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Ali ibn Abi Talib: the rule of law. Consequently, judges could rule against the caliph, and did. When a judge of the name Shuraih rose from his seat because 'Ali entered, the caliph told him: "This is your first injustice!" This attitude was astounding because, at the time, no other ruler world-wide considered himself bound by the legal order – but rather above it. In stark contrast to this idea of kingship the best Muslim rulers throughout history sought to abide by the *shari'ah*, at least in theory.

We may deduct a further rule from Islamic history, fully compatible with Qur'an and *Sunnah*, i.e., that the ummah should be ruled not by committee but by an *amir*. Considering all the Sowjets and Politbureaus this rule is not without practical import, and is followed by all Islamic Movements.

The republican spirit was maintained by the rightly-guided caliphs. 'Umar excluded his own son from the list of six possible successors established by him, and also 'Ali on his deathbed refrained from nominating one of his sons. However, the split, at the time, into *Sunni*, *Shi'i* and *Khariji* camps and parties already signalled the rise of Muslim monarchies since the Sunnis only considered a Quraishi as qualified for the caliphate and the Shi'a only a direct descendent of the Prophet (SAWS) via Fatima. Nevertheless, blood was not meant to replace merit but became the decisive factor.

Subsequently, the republican principle was upheld only by the dwindling *Kharijiyyah*, later called *'Ibadiyyah*. It survived only in lonely places like the Mozabite region around Ghardaia in Southern Algeria.

What can we learn for our topic from the rest, the longest part by far, of Islamic history? I submit three points:

(a) Islam can survive without a caliph, but not without the *shari'ah*. Ibn Taymiyyah was level-headed enough to admit the conclusion that the rule of law is more important for Islam than the rule of self-appointed spokesmen of God.

(b) Islam suffered least in periods during which strong-minded *fuqaha* resisted corruption by refusing to be integrated into royalty. No wonder that such *'ulama* were in and out of prison, like Abu Hanifa, Ibn Hanbal, and Ibn Taymiyya.

We might conclude that there should be a division of power, not only between government and judiciary but also between government and the religious establishment. No good can come of it when the Shaykh al-Azhar, as currently, is a mere government employee. The *fuqaha*, at any time, lose much of their function if they can no longer hold up the *shari'ah*, like a mirror, to those in power for being too closely allied with them. In that sense, and in that sense only, there should be a separation of State and religion, even in Islam – not on secularist but on religious grounds.

(c) There was much despotism, but one thing Muslim tyrants never dared to pose as legislators - except within the framework of the divine norms of Qur'an and *Sunnah* and in areas left open for regulation (*mubah*). However evil they may have been, none of them challenged the Qur'an and *Sunnah* as the supreme law of the land.

This, to my mind, is of extreme importance for the modern theory of state: Islam is the first civilization which conceived of unchangeable constitutional law, i.e., a legal framework which is not at the disposition of lawmakers – no matter how large their majority, and with which all legislation must be compatible. This key concept was discovered in the West only during the American and French Revolutions.

Is there nothing else on which to draw from Muslim history and thought? Well, there is and there is not. The only names coming to mind as authors in political science are al-Farabi (870-950), al-Mawardi (974-1058), Nizam-al-Mulk (1018-1092) and Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406).

- Al-Farabi's writings on the ideal caliph in the ideal State are no more useful now than those of his major source, Plato's "*Republic*".

- Al-Mawardi, supreme justice in Baghdad, with his books on *Siyasat al-Mulkand* and *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* may be the founder of Islamic political science; but all we can learn from him is how the administrative machinery functioned under Abbaside rule.

- Nizam al-Mulk, Persian wazir of the Seljuq Sultan Malikshah, with his book *Siyasat Nameh*, produced a primer for his boss while idealizing his own office and justifying the pre-Islamic Persian concept of absolute monarchy.¹ Typically, he would demand obedience without questioning for a "prince" as long as he held authority, *de facto* authority sufficing.

- Ibn Khaldun, in his world history (*Kitab al-'Ibar*) and the famous introduction to it, *al-Muqaddimah*, was not really interested in an Islamic theory of State but in a genetic, natural theory whose foundation was his famous concept of social solidarity (*asabiyyah*). His insights were too abstract to be of operative value today.²

No wonder that the well-known two volume *History of Muslim Philosophy*³ devotes only 154 out of its 2449 textual pages, that is 6%, to Islamic political thought.

It is, therefore, time now to turn to the modern scene, and in so doing, to return to the primary Islamic sources. The history of modern Muslim political thought cannot be divorced from the experience of colonialism. In fact, the strong political commitment of contemporary Muslims was a by-product of the struggle for independence. All early populist Islamic movements of the 20th century - in Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and later in Algeria and Tunisia - were highly politicized.⁴ In the process, some western concepts inevitably encroached upon Muslim thinking in truly a dialectical manner.

Take the modern slogan of "all sovereignty belongs to Allah" (*la hukma illa'lah*), which makes sense only if set against the rise of the Occidental sovereign national State in the post-Renaissance era. If the State - and later on, Reason - became virtually deified during 18th century Enlightenment, it was only natural for Muslims to insist on the sovereignty (*hakimiyyah*) of God.⁵ Unfortunately, this is no more than saying that God exists and that His Will must be observed. However, the slogan of "all sovereignty belongs to Allah" was wielded as if it provided a concrete solution to concrete political problems. Thus, Maududi proudly proclaimed that "sovereignty in this universe does not and cannot vest in anyone but God" and added: "The right to rule belongs to God alone."⁶

Alas, in practical terms such statements mean as little as the equally empty promise that "Islam is the solution" (*al-Islam huwa al-hal*). To people operating with such slogans one should say: "O.K. And now what?" The slogan about God's sovereignty, while true, is no solution whatsoever because it is people, and people alone, who as God's vice-regents on earth (24: 55), as theologians, lawyers, governors and administrators, must translate Allah's norms into practice. *Hukm Allah* does not mean that Allah takes care of politics. To quote Fathi Osman: "God's law is not an alternative to the human mind, nor is it supposed to put it out of action."⁷ In fact, no political decision is possible without previous human *ijtihad* .

The situation is similar with another dominating modern slogan: *Al-Islam din wa dawla*. It, too, is a reaction to western realities: the thorough secularization of the public sphere under the doctrine of "separation of state and church" as it is practiced most purely in France and Mexico. In fact, however, the word "secular", when applied to most western democracies, is a misnomer⁸ since they all still depend on religious or pseudo-religious foundations. Here again, the Muslim counter-slogan makes a true statement: State and religion should be in a harmonious relationship. Religion should not become a private affair.

But at the same time, the slogan obscures that, for Muslims, too, religion and State are two different things. In fact, we do not say *ad-din ad-dunya* but speak of religion and state as two entities. As already mentioned, in the real Muslim world most of the time there has been a healthy separation of the two domains: both cooperating with each other, neither dominating the other, as is the case in most of the world, including Great Britain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, and Russia.

In other words: an Islamic state, while conceptually a theocracy, need not, and should not, be run by an *imam* , i.e. by Islamic clergy, in practice. In that sense laicism, i.e. the absence of a ruling clergy, is indeed Islamic.

Recent history also explains the anti-democratic current still prevalent in certain Muslim circles.⁹ Indeed, one may still encounter Muslims even in the United States who consider democracy as *shirk billah* or, like members of Hizb at-Tahrir, as *nizam al-kufr* (system of disbelief) and shout the non-sensical slogan of "Shura, not Democracy!"¹⁰ The President of the American Muslim Council (AMC) is of the opinion that "unfortunately, moderate Islamic leaders do not have a strong enough base to unequivocally come out in support of democracy" even now.¹¹

This reflects that the Muslim world first encountered democracy under detestable colonial rule, and saw it used for the destruction of traditional

Muslim power structures. Thus it was quite natural that Muslims engaged in the struggle for independence would reject democracy lock, stock and barrel as an invention of the devil, i.e., as un-Islamic and incompatible with Qur'an and *Sunnah*. In the process, Muslims became victims of nominalism. They believed that democracy is unacceptable because, translated from the Latin, it means "government of the people, by the people". If so, as Shaykh Nahnah of Algeria suggested, the problem might be solved by renaming democracy *shuracратиyya* or with Maududi to speak of an ideological "theo-democracy".

What counts is, of course, not the name but the essence of democracy: representative government for the control of officeholders through mechanisms like division of power; obligatory consultation; and periodic reelections. None of this excludes the acceptance of Allah as sovereign and rule of the shari'ah. All of this is compatible with Islam. Fathi Osman is therefore right in demanding that "the *shura*-democracy polemics have to be settled once and for all."¹² Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi put it bluntly: "People who say that democracy is *kufir* for him neither understand enough of Islam nor of democracy."¹³

The Muslim discourse in political matters evolved amazingly during the 20th century, even though, according to Graham Fuller, "political Islam is still in its infancy."¹⁴ Originally it was dominated almost singly by Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) whose highly rhetorical book "*Milestones*" (Ma'lim fi-t-Tariq, 1964)¹⁵ played the very role for the political consciousness of the Islamic Movement that Karl Marx's *Communist Manifesto* (1848)¹⁶ had played for socialists movements.

What interests us here is not Sayyid Qutb's doctrine that Islam "is a movement to wipe out tyranny" ¹⁷ justified to use physical force against any oppressor, "removing all obstacles in its path" ¹⁸ but rather his view that all existing states are un-Islamic and illegal¹⁹. Radical, as he was, he claimed that "a Muslim has no country except that part of the earth where the *shari'ah* of Allah is established....no nationality except his belief ... no relatives except those who share the belief in Allah"²⁰. "Nationalism here is belief, homeland here is *dar al-Islam*, the ruler here is Allah, and the constitution here is the Qur'an."²¹

Qutb did not believe in the possibility of an Islamic democracy²² and warned against looking for similarities between Islam and existing political systems, saying "We reject these systems in the East as well as in the West. We reject them all!"²³

As a result, many Islamic movements even now still have an authoritarian internal structure. Hassan al-Banna in particular led the early Muslim Brothers like a traditional shaykh. If Jeffrey Lang has observed correctly, many immigrant Muslims in America still have reason to complain that their Islamic centers remind them of totalitarian systems of the Middle East.²⁴

Rejectionism is, however, bound to become a thing of the past. Indeed, Mumtaz Ahmad signalled this in 1996 by calling one of his articles, "*Islam and Democracy: The Emerging Consensus*."²⁵

Again, one single author made all the difference in changing the Muslim's political paradigm: Muhammad Asad achieved this with his small but crucial book on "*The Principles of State and Government in Islam*",²⁶ solely based on relevant Qur'anic norms and 70 *ahadith*. This indispensable book appeared three years before "*Milestones*" but had a lasting effect.

Like Qutb, Asad insisted that "there has never existed a truly Islamic state after the time of the Prophet and of the Madinah Caliphate"²⁷, so that "the past thousand years or so of Muslim history can offer us no guidance."²⁸ But in contrast to Qutb, Asad considered it "naive to believe that a genuine Islamic government must be closely modeled on the early Caliphate"²⁹, and objected to the insertion of the western concept of "revolution" into the Islamic concept of *jihad*.

In retrospect, two of Asad's points were perhaps more revolutionary than all of Qutb's fiery language, and that in a constructive sense:

Asad made the *ummah* realize that the title *khilafa* had been wrongly appropriated by Muslim rulers who should have been content with their Qura'nic title Amir.³⁰ According to the Qur'an all Muslim citizens of an Islamic state are indeed *khulafa*. Each and everyone is God's vice-regent on earth (2: 30; 6:165; 24: 55; 27: 62; 73: 72; 35: 39). How could these six verses become inoperative during 1300 years of Islamic history? They were neglected by those in power because when vice-regents assemble in a *majlis ash-shura* their vote has much more weight and dignity than if mere subjects assemble.

Hassan al-Turabi made much of this point when laying the democratic foundations of the Islamic movement in Sudan.

Asad's second revolutionary point was methodical. He realized that a modern Islamic state could not be built on obsolete medieval *fiqh* which, based on often highly subjective interpretations and deductive human rea-soning, had nevertheless become sacrosanct.³¹ Following Ibn Hazm,

Asad proposed henceforth to call *shari'ah* only those few eternally unchangeable provisions of Qur'an and Sunnah which are (i) normative in nature and (ii) clear in and by themselves (*al-nusus*).³²

By going back to Qur'an and Sunnah only, Asad was able to establish that:

- (1) There is no specific Islamic form of state;³³
- (2) Foremost duty of an Islamic State is to enforce the *shari'ah*;³⁴
- (3) No legislation must run counter the letter or spirit of the *shari'ah*,
- (4) Obedience to a properly constituted government, Muslim or not, is a Muslim's religious duty;³⁵
- (5) Government subject to consent is a most essential prerequisite of an Islamic State;³⁶
- (6) Without a certain amount of differentiation between Muslims and non-Muslims there can be no Islamic state;³⁷
- (7) The principle of *shura* (42:38) demands the widest possible suffrage;³⁸
- (8) Majority decision is the best method for resolving differences of opinion;³⁹
- (9) Decisions of the *majlis ash-shura* are legally binding on the executive;⁴⁰
- (10) It is not unIslamic to form competing political parties⁴¹ since differences of opinion within the *ummah* may be a divine blessing,
- (11) A "presidential" system of government, somewhat akin to that practiced in the United States, would correspond more closely to the requirements of an Islamic polity than a "parliamentary government";⁴² and that a
- (12) Supreme court should act as guardian of the constitution, i.e., the *shari'ah*.⁴³

Important books require few pages: "*The Communist Manifesto*" had only 45, "*Milestones*" 133, and "*The Principles of State and Government*" just 107 pages. Asad's views are now widely accepted in the Muslim world. Even Sayyid Qutb's *Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood (al-ikhwan al-muslimun)* now considers the *ummah* as the real source of power, envisages a written constitution guaranteeing human rights, free and fair elections, limited terms of presidency, and rotation of power through "a plurality of parties in Muslim society."⁴⁴ The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood evolved to the point that in 1994 they officially accepted the right of Muslim women to vote, be elected, occupy governmental positions, and do public work in general.⁴⁵

Clearly, Muhammad Asad could not have swung Muslim opinion single-handedly towards Islamic democracy. He did have willing helpers indeed, including Fathi Osman (Los Angeles), Hassan al-Turabi (Khartoum), Rashid al-Ghannouchi (London), and Jeffrey Lang (Lawrence, Kansas) who came out strongly for a pluralistic, democratic Islam⁴⁶ and women's political equality.

Hassan al-Turabi, speaker of the Sudanese parliament, while treated by the American administration as a terrorist, is one of the more liberal, genuinely Islamic thinkers of our era. Nobody has done more for the re-validation of Muslim woman on the basis of Qur'an and Sunnah than he, with his book on "*Women, Islam and Muslim Society*", which first appeared semi-anonymously in 1973. He came to the conclusion that "a revolution against the condition of women in the traditional Muslim societies is inevitable."⁴⁷ Clearly, democratization and an Islamic re-empowerment of women will go hand in hand, or not at all.

Shaykh Gannouchi, condemned to death in his home country Tunisia, had this to say in 1999: "Many Islamists associate democracy with foreign intervention and non-belief. But democracy is a set of mechanisms to guarantee freedom of thought and assembly and peaceful competition for government authority through ballot boxes ... We have no modern experience in Islam that can replace democracy. Islamization of democracy is the closest thing to implementing *shura*. Those who reject this thought have not produced anything different than the one-party system of rule ... I do not see any choice before us but to adapt the democratic idea. It might even be dangerous to ignore democracy ... The ones who can gain most from democracy are the Muslims."⁴⁸

Fathi Osman, renowned Islamic scholar of Egyptian origin, sees democracy based on both the very nature of man and the written sources of Islam, considering pluralistic society as God-given (5: 48; 11: 118 f.). For him, "full democracy is the only system that can secure human rights for each individual and group in a contemporary State..." There is not a better framework for securing equal rights and responsibilities for all. Thus, there is "no better alternative to democracy." Its mechanisms provide the practical ways for implementing *shura*. Indeed, Muslim parliamentarians are the modern Qur'anic *al-naqd wa al-hal*. Parliament in its legislation must respect the absolute supremacy of the permanent norms and principles of the *shari'ah*; but "as long as there is room for *ijtihad* there is room for legislation."

Osman is adamant that democracy does not imply either of the two extremes of the political spectrum – theocracy or secularism. He admits that majorities may not always be right. "However, the fallibility of the majority cannot ... be used as an excuse for autocracy and authoritarianism."

Osman also makes the point that according to 9: 71 both men and women share the responsibility to assure what is right (*al-ma'ruf*) and prevent what is wrong (*al-munkar*); therefore Muslim women should be admitted as parliamentarians, government ministers, judges, and military and police officers.⁴⁹

Jeffrey Lang, like all Muslims, considers secularism as irreconcilable with Islam but neatly distinguishes democracy from secularism. He asks the good question why democracy should be more of a challenge to the supreme authority of God than any other system of rule? He also makes the good point that there is not one existing model of an Islamic state – neither Saudi Arabia nor Pakistan nor Iran – that would be acceptable to a majority of Muslims. Therefore, when discussing an Islamic state, he sees Muslims usually engaged in either rejection or dreaming. What clinches the discussion for him is the fact that modern democratic republics simply do the best job of protecting individual rights.⁵⁰

It is now possible, and also high time, to sum up:

The Islamic political system, based on Qur'an, *Sunnah*, reason, and historical experience should include the following 13 features:

1. All Muslims should live in a world-wide, but decentralized Islamic commonwealth organized as a republic.

2. The *shari'ah* is the supreme constitution of any Islamic state. This does not exclude the adoption of a written constitution with a bill of God-given basic rights.

3. It is up to each generation of Muslims, as God's vice-regents on earth, to decide on the specific form of their State within the framework of the *shari'ah*.

4. There must be a parliament, based on universal suffrage, whose decisions are binding on the executive.

5. Legislation must be in accordance with the letter and spirit of the *shari'ah*.

6. There should be a plurality of Islamic political parties assuring rotation of power.

7. Head of state is to be a single person (male and Muslim), not a collective body, periodically elected.

8. There must be a supreme judicial court to judge on the constitutionality of laws and impeachment.

9. Any citizen, Muslim or not, male or not, can be member of government.

10. Women can fill the office of prime-minister, minister, member of parliament, justice, army and police officer.

11. All citizens are equal before the law. But legislation, for valid reasons and in a non-discriminatory manner, can reflect differences between Muslims and non-Muslims and between women and men.

12. Non-Muslims can hold full citizenship unless they prefer the status of *dhimmi* (protected religious minority).

13. All government is to be considered a trust of God (4: 58) with the purpose of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong and ensuring both justice and Islamic *jihad*.

There remains the question how to proceed with the realization of these elements in the western world. Shall Muslims create political parties? Draft counter-constitutions? Run for office?

Shaykh Ghannouchi, having the European situation in mind, is rather sceptical, saying, "If Muslim minorities adopt the ideas of Islamic governance laid out by Sayyid Qutb ... they will have signed their own death warrant ... The role I suggest for Muslim minorities is to reinforce the Islamic presence in the countries they live in – not to work to establish an Islamic government." He is strictly against setting up parties that carry the word "Islam" in their name; rather Muslims should participate in existing, open, national parties. "The most a minority can hope for is participation in politics."

Ghannouchi, therefore, suggests that Muslims in the West better focus on social work and institutions of civil society because, "what is achieved socially is more permanent and better than what is achieved politically."⁵¹

There is much wisdom in what Shaykh Ghannouchi has to say, even though the situation looks less difficult in the United States than in Europe. On the Old Continent, Muslims – when engaging in political competition – still risk provoking a backlash. In the United States, political and religious pluralism seems better founded. It is, however, true that the Muslims, before entering the political arena at the national level, must establish their democratic credentials among themselves. They must not only become stronger in numbers and better educated Islamically at the grass roots level but practice pluralism among themselves. All offices in Islamic centers

should be up for periodic election. All Islamic movements should be led by elected amirs. To practice freedom of thought internally would go a long way towards reducing fear of Islam externally. Democratization would indeed be an effective contribution to Islamic *da'wah*.

Muslims share a common craving for harmony and a common fear of being split in 73 sects. But differences of opinion, also leading to different Muslim parties – as in Malaysia – are legitimate, and with Abdurrahman Alamoudi I believe that Muslims can learn to "disagree amicably".⁵² Mind you, the first Islamic commonwealth, the state of Madinah, knew two political parties already. They were called *al-muhajirun* and *al-ansar*...

Prof. Sulayman S. Nyang asks Muslim political activists in America to "cut through the thick forest of political quietism" and go for a swing vote in future national elections.⁵³ Clearly, as suggested by Lord Nazir Ahmad, this cannot be done outside the mainstream two-party system, either of Great Britain or the United States.⁵⁴ Prof. Ali Mazru'i developed a whole action program for American Muslims to get into the political act – from voter registration via running for school boards to grooming candidates for Congress with the aim of Islamization of the souls, the *ummah*, knowledge, and – one day – much of the world.⁵⁵

Only with such a proactive, assertive program will Muslims achieve at least their minimum goals: To empower Muslims in the West with their rights as guaranteed by Occidental constitutions, and to familiarize our fellow Europeans and Americans with the Muslim communities in their midst. On this long road, Muslim consensus on their political system is of crucial importance.

Notes

1. Nizam al-Mulk, *The Book of Government*, London 1960; *Trait de gouvernement*, Paris 1984; Das Buch der Staatskunst Siyasatnama, Zurich 1987.
2. Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah*, Princeton 1969.
3. M.M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, 2 vol., Wiesbaden 1963.
4. Hassan Turabi, *Islam, Democracy, the State and the West*, Round Table, Tampa, FL 1993, p. 19.
5. See Bustami Muhammad Khir, *Concept of Sovereignty in Contemporary Islamic Movements*, Vol 1, No 1, Markfield, LE, UK, March 1995, pp. 5 ff.
6. Abu 'Ala al-Maududi, *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, Vol. I, *Economic and Political Teachings of the Qur'an*, B. *Political Teachings*, Wiesbaden 1963, pp. 192 f.

7. "Human Rights on the Eve of the 21st Century", paper submitted to the conference on Islam & Modernity in London, July 6, 1996, p. 6.
8. This is Jeffrey Lang's view as well: *Struggling to Surrender*, Beltsville, MD, 2nd ed.1995, p. 191.
9. An example is Abdul Rashid Moten's article on Democratic and Shura-Based Systems: A comparative Analysis in *Encounters*, Vol 3, No 1, Markfield, LE, UK, March 1997, pp. 3-20. Also see Azzam Tamimi, *Democracy in Islamic Political Thought*, same issue, pp. 21- 44.
10. See Azzam Tamimi, *Democracy: The Religious and the Political in Contemporary Islamic Debate*, *Encounters*, Vol 4, No.1, Markfield, LE, UK, March 1998, pp. 3- 64.
11. Interview with A. Alamoudi, *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Vol 2, No 4, Annandale, VA, Summer/Fall 1996, p.117.
12. op. cit., footnote 7, p. 24.
13. *Ash-Shark al-Awsat*, London, 5 February 1990.
14. Graham E. Fuller, "Political Islam and U.S. Policy", *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Vol 5, No 1-2, Winter/Spring 1999, p. 157.
15. *Milestones*, Indianapolis 1990.
16. Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manifest der Kommunistischen Partei*, Berlin 1945.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
24. *Even Angels Ask*, Beltsville, MD, 1997, p. 229.
25. *Middle East Affairs Journal*, Vol 2, No 4, Summer/Fall 1996, pp. 29 - 38; Italics are mine.
26. *The Principles of State and Government*, University of California Press 1961, 2nd ed. Gibraltar 1980.
27. *Ibid.*, p. v.
28. *Ibid.*, p. vi.
29. *Ibid.*, p. ix.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

34. Ibid., p. 34.
35. Ibid., p. 35.
36. Ibid., p. 36.
37. Ibid., p. 40.
38. Ibid., p. 45.
39. Ibid., p. 50.
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