**MODERN ISLAMIC GOVERNMENT**

***Abstract***

The paper seeks to explore the different aspects of modern day democracies and the Islamic system of Khilafat. In the first section, the origins of democracies are explored and its founding principles are described. The evolution of democracy to its current form is also traced and a brief explanation of the various types of democratic systems is given. Liberal democracy and its institutional frame work is also discussed.

Next, the paper explores the ideas of governance in Islamic texts. First, various quotes from the Quran regarding governance and leadership are used as reference material. A brief explanation or Tafseer of the Ayat is also included. Secondly, the rich Islamic literature on Hadith is explored to identify the Holy Prophet’s (SAWW) teachings on the topic. The main features for good governance in the prophetic traditions are identified and explained. Lastly, the historical aspects of the Khilafat are discussed with special emphasis on the Rightly Guided Caliphs. The views of contemporary scholars on governance are also mentioned to give a complete picture of the system of Khilafat.

In the last section, we explore the strengths and weaknesses of both liberal democracy and Khilafat. Comparisons are made between the similarities and differences of their institutions in detail. The differences are discussed in the context of technological and logistical differences of 6th century Arabia and the 21st century world. Finally, the paper is ended with a conclusion of our research on the topic.

***Modern Governments***

There are various systems of governance in the world today. Social scientists and historians use various terminologies to describe and compare the difference in social, economic and military success of these different systems. However, there is lack of consensus on the best system of government since political inclinations are influenced by people’s ethnicity, religion, culture and life experiences. Nevertheless, certain systems of governance have gained more traction in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Democracy is often considered the best system of governance in modern times 1,2,3,4,5 Today, there are 97 democratic states out of 167 countries (58%) with only 21 (13%) classified as autocracies or dictatorships6.  Moreover, many countries claim to be democracies even though their governments do not adhere to democratic norms7. With an increasing number of democracies in the world today, many researchers believe a democratic system of governance will eventually replace all others8.

First formulated as a system of governance by Greek philosophers like Socrates and later on by his student Plato, democracy dates back all the to the 5th century BC 9. Later, Aristotle proclaimed:

*“Now a fundamental principle of the democratic form of constitution is liberty… the popular principle of justice is to have equality according to number, not worth, and if this is the principle of justice prevailing, the multitude must of necessity be sovereign and the decision of the majority must be final and must constitute justice, for they say that each of the citizens ought to have an equal share; so that it results that in democracies the poor are more powerful than the rich, because there are more of them and whatever is decided by the majority is sovereign. This then is one mark of liberty which all democrats set down as a principle of the constitution.”*

He went on to say:

*“And one is for a man to live as he likes; for they say that this is the function of liberty, inasmuch as to live not as one likes is the life of a man that is a slave. This is the second principle of democracy, and from it has come the claim not to be governed, preferably not by anybody, or failing that, to govern and be governed in turns; and this is the way in which the second principle contributes to equalitarian liberty.”10*

According to Peter Hall this political philosophy created in Athens was *"in a form so complete that hardly added anyone of moment to it for over a millennium"*. 11

These ideas laid the groundwork for modern day democracies. Although there are many different forms of democratic governments in the world today, they all share some core values. According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is “Government of the people, by the people, for the people.”12Mahatma Gandhi famously stated “I understand democracy as something that gives the weak the same chance as the strong.”13 Most democratic states are additionally described as liberal. These states adhere to the ideals of capitalism, secularism and liberalism. According to Paul Krugman:

“I believe in a relatively equal society, supported by institutions that limit extremes of wealth and poverty. I believe in democracy, civil liberties, and the rule of law. That makes me a liberal, and I’m proud of it.”14

These ideals are institutionalized by regular elections held (on a multi-party basis) to elect the heads of state or representatives that in turn elect the heads of state. The elections enfranchise most people regardless of their wealth, social status, gender or ethnicity by giving everyone equal voting rights. Heads of state have fixed terms in office and are answerable to the country’s judiciary or parliament/house of representatives. All citizens including members of the government are considered equal before the law. The law or constitution in turn is created according to the will of the majority and can also be amended. Individuals have the right to own private property and business and are guaranteed civil and human rights by the state.15

According to Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson in their famous book, Why Nations Fail, democracies are successful because they create a healthy balance of power between different state institutions while maintaining a minimum amount of state centralization. This prevents an individual or entity from accumulating too much authority which eventually leads to the social and economic downfall of a nation. Hence, the diverging interests of the head of state, the elected representatives and the judiciary help regulate and distribute power. This pluralism of governance creates a ‘virtuous cycle’ that drives economic growth and creates greater incentives for the people to preserve the system.

Liberal democracies may exist as constitutional monarchies (with a monarch or king as the ceremonial head of state) or republics (where the head of state is not a monarch). They may follow a parliamentary system (where elected representatives select a prime minister) or presidential system (where the president is directly elected by the people or by electoral college votes of each state’s electors).16

***Quran about Governance***

[ 5:55] إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّـهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ و

“Your friend is but Allah and His apostle and those who have believed- those who establish the prayer and give the poor-rate”

This ayat show that you must have to follow the person how believe and follow Allah and Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and how care poor and follow islamic rulers told by Allah and Prophet(P.B.U.H.).

الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا

[22:41] عَنِ الْمُنكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّـهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

“Those who if We establish them in the earth, shall establish the prayer and give the poor-rate and command that which is reputable and restrain that which is disreputable and unto Allah is the end of all affairs”

This ayat is almost same as above aya but in this aya Allah say that these special people forbid people from bad and order them to do good deeds.

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَكُمْ خَلَائِفَ الْأَرْضِ وَرَفَعَ بَعْضَكُمْ فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ دَرَجَاتٍ لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ [6:165] الْعِقَابِ وَإِنَّهُ لَغَفُورٌ رَّحِيم سَرِيعُ

“And He it is Who hath made you successors in the earth, and hath raised some of you over others in degrees, that he might prove you by that which He hath vouchsafed unto you. Verily thy Lord is swift in chastising, and verily He is Forgiving, Merciful.”

In this aya Allah said that I have sent you on earth with no restriction it is you who have to select good or bad but way will be shown to you. Then he will give some People higher you to examine you.

قُلِ اللَّـهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتَنزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّن تَشَاءُ وَتُعِزُّ مَن تَشَاءُ وَتُذِلُّ مَن

[3:26] عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ تَشَاءُ ۖ بِيَدِكَ الْخَيْرُ ۖ إِنَّكَ

“Say: O Lord of all dominions, You give whom it pleases you the Kingdom, and You take away the power from whosoever you will; You exalt whom You please and debase whom you will. All goodness is Yours (entirely). Indeed, You have the power over the things.

In this aya allah said Allah give government/power to whom who is worthy for this as in previous ayas.

[4:59] يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّـهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنكُمْ

“O You who believe! obey Allah and obey the apostle and owners of authority from amongst you.”

In this aya Allah also said about any person in authority (ruler) to follow but different school of thought have different opinion for this.

According to ayat [5:55] and ayat [22:41] we have to follow the person who is most religious and has qualities to rule. As stated in ayat who have some certain qualities like He follows Allah and Prophet order , pray and give poor rate etc. Allah, The creator, made him rulers because he knows the which is best for governance.

On the other hand, **Democracy** is modern system of ruling which is not preferable by Islam because democracy is the system in which government in rules and ruler are made by people will be followed. It has no religious value because there is no Islam in it.

**Khilafat** is banished on November,1922 which is end of Ottoman Empire. It is government in which ruler is only selected by people and rules made by Allah is followed. Some school of thoughts consider it Islamic, but some consider it non-Islamic.

One school of thought believe in wilayat**.**

***Hadith about Governance***

Islamic view of good governance is qualitative and not mechanical.

Feature of good Governance:

1. Rules of law (As-shura)
2. Khilafah
3. Equity
4. Accountability and Transparency.
5. Justice
6. Al-amr bil maruf wa nahi an al-munkir.

Now, in terms of hadith, these points are described as:

* **Rules of Law (Al-Shura).**

It can be said that Shura is one of the most important manifestations of civilization that Muslims contributed to its creation and consolidation in the Muslim community. So, Shura was a kind of expression of the divine will on the basis of what the

*Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “My nation shall not agree upon an error.” (Majah)*

* **Khilafah.**

In a well-known hadith, the Prophet Muhammad SWT is reported to have observed:

*Prophet Hood shall remain among you as long as God wills. Then khilafat on the pattern of prophet hood will commence and remain as long as He wills. A corrupt monarchy shall then follow and it shall remain as long as God wills. There shall then be a oppressive despotism which shall remain as long as God wills. Then once again khilafat will arise on the principle of prophet hood (Masnad-Ahmad)*

This hadith not only reassures us about the repetition of well guided khilafat but it also permits a historical judgment on what was to follow the early Khilafat.

As a result, we can say:

A khalifa has the promise of divine support so long as it remains firmly based on the precept of prophet hood – that is, the principles and prototypes demonstrated by prophets. He is bound by the rules of great law. He decides questions of rule after discussion with the chosen representatives of the people.

* **Equity.**

Prophet Muhammad SWT said: *O mankind, your Lord is one and your father is one. You all descended from Aadam, and Aadam was created from earth. He is most honored among you in the sight of God who is most upright. No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, no colored person to a white person, or a white person to a colored person except by Taqwa (piety) (At-Tirmithi).*

Therefore, it would be improbable to declare the complete equality of human beings, although humans are essentially equal in rights, duties and accountability, and there is some degree of similarity in physical and mental behaviors, which enables them to understand and apply rules and laws.

* **Accountability and Transparency:**

Abdullah reported that Allah’s Messenger Muhammad SWT said*:*

*Every one of you is a guardian and accountable (mas’ul) for his charge. Thus the Khalifa is a custodian of the people and He is responsible for them. And a man is a guardian of his household and he is accountable for them; and a woman is in charge of the household and her children and she is accountable for them; and a servant is guardian of his master’s property, every one of you is accountable for his subjects (Bukhari).*

Narrated Abdullah ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him):

*A man is a guardian of his father’s property and is responsible for it*. (The Prophet continued,) *So all of you are guardians and responsible for what is under your care* (Al-Bhukari)

* **Justice and freedom of speech.**

The Quran, the holy scripture of Islam, considers justice to be a highest virtue. It is a basic objective of Islam to the degree that it stands next in order of importance to belief in God’s exclusive right to worship (Tawheed) and the truth of Muhammad SWT prophet hood.

The Prophet (s) tells us:

*"Whoever among you sees a vice (or wrong), he should change it with his hands; if he is not able to do that, then he should check it with his tongue; and if he cannot do that, then he should consider it bad in his heart (and wish for its removal) and this is the sign of weakest in faith"* (recorded in Muslim, Tirmidhi, Abu Daud and Ibn Majah).

Another famous hadith says; *"The best Jihad is to say what is just (or truth) in the face of a tyrant"* (Abu Daud, Tirmidhi, Nisai and Ibn Majah).

On another occasion Prophet SAWW said; "When people see a tyrant and do not hold his hands, it is not far that Allah Taala sends a common punishment on them" (Abu Daud and Tirmidhi), thus categorically emphasizing its importance.

* **Al-amr bil maruf wa nahi an al-munkar**

*The Holy Prophet SWT said: “How will it be for you when your women will commit sins and your youth will transgress and you will not order for acknowledged virtues nor forbid from sin?*

Amr bil ma‘ruf wa nahy an al-munkar which means ordering good and forbidding evil, is a Jihad related principle. It seeks to intelligently carry the benefits of Islam to the people and to inform them of the meaning of what devil do. The Quran calls Muslims the model community which requires to convey the Prophet SWT message to entire humanity and to live the Quran, just as the Prophet did.

***Caliphate***

Traditional political concepts in Islam include leadership by elected or selected successors to the Prophet known as Caliphs, (Imamate for Shia); the importance of following Islamic law or Sharia; the duty of rulers to seek Shura or consultation from their subjects; and the importance of rebuking unjust rulers.

According to a number of scholars and preachers, the concepts of liberalism and democratic participation were already present in the [medieval Islamic world](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Islamic_Golden_Age).[[1]](#footnote-1)

Al-Mawardi said that if the rulers meet their Islamic responsibilities to the public the people must obey their laws, but a Caliph or ruler who becomes either unjust or severely ineffective must be impeached via the Majlis al-Shura. [Al-Juwayni](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Juwayni) argued that Islam is the goal of the ummah, so any ruler who deviates from this goal must be impeached. Al-Ghazali believed that [oppression](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oppression) by a caliph is sufficient grounds for impeachment. Rather than just relying on impeachment, [Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ibn_Hajar_al-Asqalani) stated that the people have an obligation to rebel if the caliph begins to act with no regard for Islamic law. Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani said that to ignore such a situation is *[haraam](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haraam" \o "Haraam)* and those who cannot revolt from inside the caliphate should launch a struggle from outside.

*Majlis ash-Shura* : Deliberations of the [Caliphates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caliphate), most notably [Rashidun Caliphate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidun_Caliphate) were not democratic in the modern sense rather, decision-making power lay with a council of notable and trusted companions of [Mohammad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mohammad) and representatives of different tribes (most of them selected or elected within their tribes)[[2]](#footnote-2)

Islamic lawyers commented that when the rulers refuse to step down via successful impeachment through the Majlis, becoming dictators through the support of a corrupt army, if the majority agree they have the option to launch a [revolution](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Revolution) against them. Many noted that this option is only exercised after factoring in the potential cost of life.[[3]](#footnote-3) Various Islamic lawyers, however, place multiple conditions and stipulations on the execution of such a law, making it difficult to implement. For example, the poor cannot be penalised for stealing out of poverty, and during a time of drought in the [Rashidun caliphate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rashidun_Empire), [capital punishment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capital_punishment) was suspended until the effects of the drought passed.4

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19 [Process of Choosing the Leader (Caliph) of the Muslims: The Muslim Khilafa: by Gharm Allah Al-Ghamdy](http://www.2muslims.com/directory/Detailed/225505.shtml) [Archived](https://www.webcitation.org/5wTrqdsDD?url=http://www.2muslims.com/directory/Detailed/225505.shtml) 2011-02-14 at [WebCite](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WebCite" \o "WebCite)

20Geaves, Ron (1 July 2010). [*Islam Today: An Introduction*](https://books.google.com/books?id=pzCvE-P75CAC&pg=PA61). A&C Black. p. 61

***Comparison***

Although having vastly different origins, both democracy and Khilafat share many similarities. When comparing the two systems, many historians and Islamic scholars tend to overlook the differences in the social attitudes and technological advancements of 7th century Arabia and the 21st century.

Three of the Four Rightly Guided caliphs were selected by consensus of the people. Although direct nationwide elections were not conducted as they are today, there was still a semblance to democracy in their selection. However, proper elections on a large scale were not practically possible because of the long time it took to relay information. Conducting free and fair elections in an empire where it could take a rider to travel months from one end to the other would not only create political anarchy, it would also take several months for a successful transition of power.

Many scholars oppose democracy because it creates its constitution according to the will of the majority, not the exact will of God. However, they fail to realize that there is no single version of sharia that can be universally implemented today. There are major disagreements on the most basic Islamic laws such as the treatment of minorities, criminal laws and family laws. In such circumstances, only the most popular opinion on a specific issue can be enforced and this again can only be determined by democratic means.

Some scholars fear elected officials would pass laws that directly oppose Islamic teachings. This begs the question whether Islam can be forced on people that are fundamentally opposed to it? In the Quran, Allah says “And to rehearse the Qur'an: and if any accept guidance, they do it for the good of their own souls, and if any stray, say: "I am only a Warner".” (Surah An-Naml, 92). Furthermore, the Prophet(SAWW)

is told “Say: "As to the knowledge of the time, it is with Allah alone: I am (sent) only to warn plainly in public."” (Surah Al-Mulk, 26). In Surah Barah Allah says “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.” [2:256].

Even though the modern form of democracy is not outlined in Islam, there are no traditions directly opposing it. Moreover, the Rightly Guided Caliphs implemented many new techniques to improve governance such as the formation of a police force, judiciary and hierarchies in government. This shows that Islam is a progressive religion and is willing to adopt newer technologies to improve the lives of the masses.

Nonetheless, democracy has its own shortcomings including creating polarizing politics and voter fraud. As Winston Churchill said, “No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.…”

***Conclusion***

There are many similarities and differences between Khilafat and Liberal democracy and each system has its own merits as well as shortcomings. Scholars should not consider democracy as a foreign idea but instead see it as a continuation of the methods of the early days of Islam. Muslims should try to adopt an Islamic Democracy that integrates their local customs as well as creates a stable government and mode of succession. Many contemporary Islamic leaders have implemented democracy with great success. Muhammad Ali Jinnah Said “Democracy is in the blood of the Muslims, who look upon complete equality of mankind, and believe in fraternity, equality, and liberty.”

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)