

What are vital principles and features of Islamic Political system? Discuss the concept of Shura, Khilafat, Shariah in Islamic political system. How these are aligned to modern democracy.

I. Introduction

The Islamic political system is not merely a framework of governance but a comprehensive model of divine sovereignty and social justice. It seeks to harmonize spiritual accountability with political responsibility, ensuring that power remains a trust (amanah) and justice (adl) the ultimate purpose of ^{the} state. The Quran declares:

"Indeed, Allah commands you to return trusts to their rightful owners; and when you judge between people, judge with fairness."

(Quran - Surah Nisa: 58)

This divine directive establishes that authority in Islam is neither hereditary nor absolute but conditional upon fulfilling moral and ethical obligations. The essence of Islamic governance is the establishment of justice and accountability through divine

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guidance and public consultation, reflecting many democratic ideals while remaining rooted in moral absolutes. Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah, in *The Muslim Conduct of State*, emphasizes that the Islamic political order eschews a balance between divine command and popular consultation, making it distinct from autocracy. Thus, the Islamic political system, rooted in Tawheed, khilafat (vicegerency), shura (consultation), and Shariah (divine law), provides a moral and participatory model of governance that shares several parallels with modern democratic ideals while differing in its foundational source of authority.

II: Vital Principles of Islamic Political System

1. Tawheed (Oneness of God)

The pillar of Islamic political system stands on the ^{foundation of} recognition that all authority ultimately belongs to Allah alone. The leader (Ameer) of the state is answerable to Allah first and then people of the state. This principle abolishes human supremacy and establishes divine sovereignty as the moral foundation of all political power. Abdul A'la Mawdudi writes about Tawheed in his seminal work, *Islamic Way of Life*, No man has the right to rule over another in his own authority; sovereignty belongs to Allah. Moreover, Quran also

proclaims,

"The command belongs to none but Allah."

(Surah Yusuf: 40)

This ensures that governance in Islam is bounded by moral law, preventing despotism and aligning authority with justice and divine accountability.

2. Khilafat (Viceroyalty)

Building upon Tawheed, khilafat represents the human responsibility to implement divine will on earth through just governance. In this regard, Quran says:

"Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority (khilafah)."

(Surah Al-Baqarah: 30)

This verse grants humans the duty to preserve the balance, justice, and order. This principle transforms leadership from a position of privilege to one of responsibility. The Khulfa-e-Rashidin — Hazrat Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (may Allah be pleased with them) — exemplified this model of governance. Their leadership was characterized by consultation (Shura), justice (Adl), and accountability to public, reflecting the political legacy of Prophet (PBUH) in

action Hazrat Abu Bakr's inaugural address:

“Obey me as long as I obey
Allah and His Messenger. If

I disobey, I deserve no obedience.”

captures the democratic and moral spirit of
Islamic leadership. Thus, Khilafat in Islam
is not an authoritarian institution but a
system of ethical stewardship, anticipating the
ideals of modern participatory governance.

3. Shura (Consultation)

Shura embodies the participatory nature of
the Islamic political system, emphasizing
consultation in public affairs. The Quran praises
believers “whose affairs are determined by
consultation among themselves (Surah Ash-Shura:
38)”, making collective deliberation a religious
obligation rather than a political preference.

Ibn Taymiyyah in *As-Siyasah Ash-Shar'iyah*
explains, The ruler who isolate himself
from counsel will err in judgement and
betray the trust of leadership. Consultation
shows inclusivity, mitigates tyranny, and
reflects a system of shared responsibility
that aligns with modern representative
democracy while remaining grounded in
divine ethics.

4. Shari'ah (Divine Law)

At the heart of Islamic political order lies

Shariat - the comprehensive moral and legal framework derived from the Quran, Sunnah, and consensus (Ijma), and analogy (Qiyas). It defines both the rights of rulers and duties of citizens, ensuring that justice and equality prevails over personal or class interest. The Quran states: And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed, then it is those who are the disbelievers (Surah Al-Maidah: 44). It underscores the supremacy of divine law. According to Dr. Hamidullah in "The Muslim Conduct of State": "The Islamic state functions under the rule of divine law, not the whim of men; its constitution is moral, not material."

III Core Values Underpinning the System

Justice (Adl), accountability (mubasaba), equality (musawat), and collective consultation (Shura) lie the ethical foundations that define the Islam political system. These values ensure that governance in Islam is neither autocratic nor exploitative but rooted in moral responsibility and social balance. The Quran declares:

"O you who believe! Be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses

for Allah, even if it is against yourselves, your parents, or close relatives."

(Surah An-Nisa: 135)

These verses place justice above personal or social interest, emphasizing its centrality in political and moral life.

IV. Critical Analysis on alignment of Islamic political system with Modern Democracy

While modern democracy is grounded in the sovereignty of the people, the Islamic Political system centres on the sovereignty of Allah - yet both converge on the ideals of justice, consultations and accountability. The Quran affirms that,

"And those who have responded to their Lord and established prayer and whose affairs are [decided] by consultation among themselves."

(Surah Ash-Shura: 38)

This verse lays the foundation for Shura, an institutional mechanism that mirrors democratic participation but operates under divine moral boundaries. According to Abul Ala Maududi in *Islamic Way of Life*, Islamic

governance is not a theocracy of clerics nor a secular democracy, but a moral democracy where rulers act as trustees (khalifah) accountable to God and the people. Critically, the Islamic framework limits human authority through divine law (Shariat), ensuring that freedom does not become moral relativism. Modern democracy, in contrast, risks detachment from absolute ethics when legislation relies solely on majority will. As Dr. Ishtiaq Husain Qureshi observes, The Spirit of Islam, Islam integrates moral restraint within political freedom, ensuring that justice is not subject to fluctuating public opinion but anchored in divine permanence. Thus, while Islam and democracy share participatory ideals, Islam transcends procedural governance by embedding spirituality, ethics, divine accountability into political practice.

V. Conclusion

The Islamic political system stands as a comprehensive ^{moral} model that fuses justice, faith, and governance into a single framework. It neither isolates religion from politics nor allows political authority to exceed divine limits. In a world facing

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political polarization and moral uncertainty,
the Islamic political system offers a time-
less paradigm where governance becomes
a form of worship, justice becomes the
highest law, and leadership becomes a
trust before God and humanity.