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Can One Speak of a Qur'ānic Political Theory?

**A Hermeneutical Study Employing Semantic and
Thematic Approaches**

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School of Government and International Affairs
University of Durham

Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Durham

2014

DECLARATION

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My final words are for my brother and friend, Mohammed Hadi Ailan, although separated by oceans, you have never failed to advise, prove read and to discuss ideas. Thank you for your time and your prayers.

ABSTRACT

In our time, it is not unusual for Islam to be portrayed as a political ideology. Constant references towards “political Islam”, “Islamism” and “Islamists” have become part of the intellectual language and are rarely challenged in terms of their foundational claims. This thesis investigates the fundamental premise that the Qur’ān may contain a political theory. In doing so, a detailed investigation has been conducted in defining concepts of the “political” from within the Muslim tradition by particularly locating these concepts within the Muslim intellectual tradition. The leading research question also seriously considers the hermeneutical issue about how scripture is read to yield a holistic understanding of the entirety of the message. The work of Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1994) has been employed as one of the major methodological tools in analysing the Qur’ān. Alongside Izutsu’s semantic analysis, the thematic approach has also been utilised to provide a more holistic understanding of the Qur’ān. Within this framework, this research has proposed that the Qur’ān indeed contains a hierarchy of concepts that is indicative of the Qur’ān itself prioritising concepts.

With this in mind, a cluster of concepts emerges which forms the main analyses. Accordingly, the idea of a caliphate theory that is equated with an “Islamic state” has been postulated to be non-Qur’ānically based. In fact, it is found that the very proposition is contradictory in terms, as the modern state itself is a European invention, both in structure and form. This study also explored the concept of *sharī‘a*, arguing that there are two fundamental natures of *sharī‘a*, the first is that it has mainly been a force of challenge and opposition to power; the second is the emphasis upon individual free choice. One comes to the conclusion that the Qur’ān is intentionally silent towards any political structure or system, yet at another level the Qur’ān reinforces, justice, rights, accountability and apposes injustices of all kind.

In an attempt to provide a potential readings of the Qur’ān to render answers to the research questions, the inferences generated from the research are put together with other Qur’ānic concepts such as *taqwā* and *ihsān* with the goal of understanding the role of the individual and the community in the wider Qur’ānic *Weltanschauung*. The nature of the individual is dynamic; his or her core nature is in constant turmoil but desires perfection. With the desire of perfection comes the drive towards bettering oneself and one’s surroundings. There is a tension or paradox between being an individual and belonging to the collective and between living in the mundane but believing in the sacred. This tension (or paradox) could be solved by means of a constant relationship between refining oneself (looking inward) and projecting outward with the *taqwā* that is developed.

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TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration system applied in this thesis is based on the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*.

Consonants:		
ع '	ز z	ق q
ب b	س s	ك k
ت t	ش sh	ل l
ث th	ص s	م m
ج j	ض ḍ	ن n
ح ḥ	ط ṭ	ه h
خ kh	ظ z	
د d	ع '	
ذ dh	غ gh	
ر r	ف f	

Vowels

ا ā

و ū

ي ī

ى ā

DEDICATION

I am blessed with parents that have fulfilled my heart and mind with the love of God and love for others. I am truly blessed for having the loving, compassionate, kind parents I have. I dedicate this humble work to them.

To my beloved sister Ishrāq, for her unconditional love, support and sharp mind; to my beloved Hudā for her emotional support, forgiving self, and constant wisdom; to my brothers Mohammed and Rādī for caring, helping and trusting me. To my lovely Duḥā, Nārī and Nabīl I know that you have prayed for me both in silence and in action. Thank you for being patient with me and forgiving me in my shortcomings. Thank you for all your kind words and support.

Finally, I dedicate this work for the gentle souls, angels, for those smiles and innocence that transcends everything towards an absolute goodness: to my nephews Ihāb, Ismā‘īl, Kareem and my nieces Abrār, Ruwayda and Salsabīl.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The impression that Islam is best understood as a political ideology is evident throughout contemporary research into the increasingly popular field of “political Islam”. The strong scholarly emphasis upon the study of radicalism, fundamentalism, political Islam or modern Muslim¹ political movements makes this clear.² The belief that Islam is to be understood above all as a political ideology has reached a fever pitch since the 1979 revolution in Iran and continues to burn all the more acutely since the events of September 11 2001.³ The view within Western discourse that Islam to be understood primarily within a political framework is continually reinforced at a semantic level through the use of popular terms and phrases. Such labels include “Islamism”, “political Islam”, “Islamic activism”, “Islamic reformism”, “Islamic revivalism” and “Islamic fundamentalism”. These labels unfortunately reduce the complexity of the matter into something overly simplistic. Even the single Western label “Islamism” incorporates and merges a wide variety of meanings and encompasses a wide spectrum of Muslim thinkers and activists, reformers and traditionalists alike.⁴ It is clear, therefore, that addressing questions of definition, both by those inside and outside Muslim cultures, is critical to exploring the relationship between politics and Islam.

Especially in the 20th century Islam has been examined to determine how compatible it is with “democratic values”, “science and rationality”, “human rights” and more

¹ The use of the word “Muslim” rather than “Islamic” is an intended distinction. For further discussion see the section on ‘Muslim and Islamic’, p. 25.

² The list of books and journals are in the thousands, the following list are but a few examples: N Lahoud, *Political Thought in Islam: A Study in Intellectual Boundaries*, Routledge, London, 2005; S Cronin, *Reformers and revolutionaries in modern Iran: new perspectives on the Iranian left*, Routledge Curzon, London, 2004; S A Arjomand, *From nationalism to revolutionary Islam*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1984; M Ayoob, *The politics of Islamic reassertion*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1981; N Ayubi, *Political Islam: religion and politics in the Arab world*, Routledge, London, 1991; S Zubaida, *Islam, the people and the state: essays on political ideas and movements in the Middle East*, Routledge, London, 1989; N Feldman, *The fall and rise of the Islamic state*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008; M E Marty & R S Appleby, *The Fundamentalism project*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991; D F Eickelman & J P Piscatori, *Muslim politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996; I Hamid, *Modern Islamic political thought: the response of the Shī'ī and Sunnī Muslims to the twentieth century*. I.B. Tauris, London, 2005; J L Esposito, *Islam and politics*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N.Y., 1998.

³ The political development since the so called ‘Arab spring’ further reinforces this view.

⁴ See V Nieuwenhuijze, ‘Islamism: A Defiant Utopianism’, *Die Welt des Islams*, New Ser., Vol. 35, no.1, Apr.199, pp. 36.

generally “modernity”.⁵ Such comparisons however appear to make questionable assumptions regarding the nature of Islam and the nature of politics arising out of a Eurocentric understanding of religion and political science. The very parameters of these comparisons can be challenged.

Hence, it is problematic to claim that within Islam, politics and religion are thoroughly interconnected. Such a claim is based upon a very specific understanding of how religion and politics are construed and a limited view of what exactly secularism means. This claim also begs the question of how one might be able to ‘measure’ the degree to which any kind of separation or association exists. As Ovamir Anjum notes, in place of the narrow Western discussion relating to the presence or the absence of ‘secularism’ the self-understanding about politics observable through Muslim history possesses a ‘variety of complex and surprising attitudes toward the possibility of restraining political power’.⁶

In an attempt to demystify these issues Western and Muslim academics have debated and discussed the concept of “political Islam” but to no avail. Even the term “Islamism” defined as ‘the ideology advocating the creation of a society and state based on Islamic principles’ remains hopelessly vague.⁷ After all, just about any religious, political, or cultural belief that offers truth claims about the nature of the world would have social and political implications. The definition, which says nothing about what the phrase “Islamic principles” might actually mean or how these principles are put in practice, is at best a tautology and at worst so broad as to be meaningless.

Another more common definition of “Islamist” or “political Islam”, proposed by Sivan, is also ultimately unsatisfactory. For Sivan, political Islam constitutes the development of a state based on Islamic teachings (of God’s laws) and the rejection of

⁵ For example, J L Esposito & B François, *Modernizing Islam: religion in the public sphere in the Middle East and Europe*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, N.J., 2003; also see J Cooper, LR Nettler, & M Mahmoud, *Islam and modernity: Muslim intellectuals respond*, I.B. Tauris, London, 1998.

⁶ O Anjum, *Politics, law and community in Islamic thought: the Taymiyyan moment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. xiv.

⁷ J Gunning, *Re-thinking Western constructs of Islamism: pluralism, democracy and the theory and praxis of the Islamic movement in the Gaza Strip*, Doctoral thesis, Durham University, 2000. Available at Durham e-Theses Online: <<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/1586/>> , p.1.

or insurrection against any regime that does not govern through the use of such laws.⁸ Such a definition unfortunately does not distinguish between several distinct ways in which different scholars have understood the application of God's laws. For instance Sivan's definition includes Abū al-A'ālā Mawdūdī's (1903-1970) worldview that the state (either as a modern nation state or as a caliphate system) must comply with a specific structure in regards to punishment laws⁹ and the view that society be governed more generally by the Islamic principles of equality and justice, as in the case of Ghannouchi's ideas in Tunisia.¹⁰

In both of these examples, the laws of the Qur'ān and the *sunna* are both implemented, but they are implemented on the basis of very different hermeneutical approaches. This is because even though "*sharī'a* law" is viewed as divine, its jurisprudence (*fiqh*) is understood as a human endeavour. The implementation of *sharī'a* itself that is called upon in reality is the implementation of jurisprudence formulated by the early jurists, extracted from a particular socio-political context. The point that is overlooked is that these jurisprudential inferences are human improvisations addressing particular contexts. Also overlooked is that the main body of the Sunnī orthodox jurisprudence related to politics is in reality a polemical response to competing sects such as Shī'ite and the Mu'tazilite.¹¹ Consequently Sivan's definition that a Muslim is one who denounces contemporary society as corrupt and Godless, calling for the implementation of Qur'ān and the *sunna* (even if by force) remains vague.¹² This is because some have understood it as democracy arguing for justice and equality yet the source of reference remains to be the Qur'ān and the *sunna*.¹³ Furthermore, when defining "political Islam", Sivan like many fails

⁸ See E Sivan, *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1985.

⁹ See Mawdūdī's work AA al-Mawdūdī, 'Political Theory of Islam', in A Khurshid, (ed.) *Islam: Its Meaning and Message*, Islamic Council of Europe, London, 1976, pp. 159–61. Even Mawdūdī's earlier career shows a considerable amount of contextuality considering the formation of Pakistan and his attempt to participate in parliamentary government before denouncing it. Given this, the political movements that developed as an intellectual religious arguments must be read in their own context. The same could be said about Sayyid Quṭub's (1906-1966) slow radicalisation after Nasser's torture techniques in 1954.

¹⁰ See R Ghannouchi, 'Participation in Non-Islamic Government' in C Kurzman (ed.), *Liberal Islam a source book*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, pp. 89-95.

¹¹ See Chapter Two p. 69.

¹² See M Campanini, & C Higgitt, *The Qur'an: Modern Muslim Interpretations*, Routledge, London, 2011, p. 91.

¹³ Examples include Jamāl al-Dīn Afghānī (1838-1897), Mohammed 'Abduh and Mohammed Iqbal (1877-1937) just to name a few.

to take into account the idea of “bindingness” as a distinctive argument of “Islamists”, which adds yet a further layer of complexity when discussing Muslim worldview of politics and definition(s). The concept of “bindingness” refers to the notion that a Muslim necessarily must actively pursue an action; otherwise her/his salvation is in jeopardy. Examples of such bindingness includes prayer and the belief in the Oneness of God.

1.2 IMPETUS OF STUDY

The Arabic phrase that states Islam is both a religion and a state (*islām dīn wa dawla*) sparked the research leading to this thesis. The key question that arose was whether the Qur’ān has an overt prescription of a form of government that is binding to its adherers. A significant number of Western Muslim intellectuals have argued emphatically that the Qur’ān has a clear prescribed political theory, a political theory that specifies structures and systems. The strong degree of certainty that the Qur’ān contains such an overt prescription of a form of government that can be called Islamic struck this author as curious. The author also found it intriguing that Western non-Muslim academics were also quite certain on this point. This prompted the in-depth study as to what the Qur’ān actually says about the matter.

Preliminary research revealed that the claim that the Qur’ān contains a clear prescribed political theory either in the form of Islamic state, government or administration has not been supported by solid scriptural analysis, neither by holistic nor systematic methodology. Furthermore, existing research does not possess any kind of comprehensive methodology in the way it addresses either the definition of political theory or the hermeneutical issues involved in reading scripture. Accordingly, the aim of this investigation is to explore and examine whether there in fact exist specific form(s), structure(s) and system(s) in the Qur’ān that can definitively said to be prescribed and hence binding for all adherents of Islam.

1.3 BRIEF LITERATURE REVIEW

In the introduction to Khalid Harub's *Political Islam: Context Versus Ideology*, the development of contemporary 'political Islam' is accounted for in three ways, none of which need be mutually exclusive.¹⁴ The first explanation, which views the emergence of 'political Islam' or 'Islamism' as a response to colonial or imperial hegemonies is found in the writings of Francois Burgat,¹⁵ Ali Mazrui¹⁶ and Alastair Crooke.¹⁷ Here Islamism is understood as an expression of liberation against 'direct Western military control over Muslims'.¹⁸

In support Munaz argues in her introduction that the 're-assertion of cultural identity is in fact one of the key issues for today's Islamist movement' referring to the colonial experiences of the Muslim world and the European domination.¹⁹ She further explains that

Much of the Muslim world is undergoing a process of Islamic re-assertion which, far from being strictly religious, is closely linked to the need to find its own political and cultural language, cannot be divorced from either the experience of colonialism or the failure of modernization and secularization process set in motion by post-colonial elites during the 1960s and 1970s.²⁰

Following Munaz's description, the second explanation, featured in the writings of James Piscatori²¹ and John Esposito²², more specifically attributes the emergence of Islamism to the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924. In this view, the reaction that is termed 'political Islam' arose in response to four factors: (1) the abolition of the pan-Islamic caliphate system, (2) the pressures of modernity, (3) westernization and (4) the imposition of the modern nation-state. In this way the defunct 'caliphate system' was transformed into a utopian dream of unity and a renewed golden age.²³

¹⁴ K Harub, *Political Islam: Context Versus Ideology*, Saqi, London, 2010. See the Introduction.

¹⁵ F Burgat, *Face to face with political Islam*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2005.

¹⁶ AA Mazrui, *Islam: Between globalization and counter-terrorism*, James Currey, Oxford, 2006.

¹⁷ A Crooke, *Resistance: The essence of the Islamist revolution*, Pluto Press, London, 2009.

¹⁸ Harub, p. 15. Also see Z Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, Croom Helm, London, 1978, p. ix.

¹⁹ GM Munaz, *Islam, Modernism and the West: cultural and political relations at the end of the millennium*, I.B. Tauris in association with the Eleni Nakou Foundation, London, 1999, p. 7.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ JP Piscatori, *Islam in a world of nation-states*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

²² JL Esposito, *The Islamic threat: Myth or reality?* Oxford University Press, New York, 1999.

²³ See the work of O Roy, *The failure of political Islam*, Tauris, London, 2007.

This hope can be seen as early as 20th century writings of Ḥasan al-Bannā (1907-1949) the founder of Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt²⁴, Abū A‘lā Mawdūdī (1903-1979) the founder of Jamā‘at Islāmī party in Indo-Pakistan²⁵ and Taqiuddin al-Nabhānī (1907-1977) the founder of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr in Palestine²⁶ endeavoring to define Islam as primarily a political system.²⁷ Put in another way, Islamic teachings and practices are only truly fulfilled within clear political boundaries. Later on, by the middle of the 20th century, the vision of “caliphate” system was compromised with the acceptance of the modern nation-state serving as the overall political model, with the exception of Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr. This is seen in the writings of Mohammed Asad (1900-1992),²⁸ Mohammed Iqbāl,²⁹ Mawdūdī and even within the subsequent development of Ikhwanī (Muslim Brotherhood) thought. The way these writers managed to legitimise the political aspect of Islam was by developing the theme of *return*, this is the idea of returning back to the ‘original inspiration of the first community of believers’.³⁰

The modern “Islamist” seeks to retrieve and reinstall a type of a religious state that arguably existed in the time of the Prophet. Therefore implicit in this argument is the view that Islam has a specific theory on politics and state. The historical authenticity is enforced by invoking religious and juridical text in an attempt to prove the ‘obligatoriness’ of an “Islamic state” and therefore its bindingness.³¹

The third explanation, seen for example in the works of Quintan Wiktorowicz,³² situates political Islam within the theory of social movement, arguing that Islamism

²⁴ H Al-Banna, *The Message of Education and Guidance*, Western Sunrise Press, New York, 1977. See the work of RL Euben, & MQ Zaman, *Princeton readings in Islamist thought: texts and contexts from al-Banna to Bin Laden*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.

²⁵ AA Mawdūdī, *Political theory of Islam*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1980. Also see AA Mawdūdī, *The Islamic law and constitution*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1960. And see the works of Nasr, S V Reza, *Mawdudi and the making of Islamic revivalism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1996.

²⁶ T Nabhānī, *The Islamic State*, al-Khilafah Publications, London, 1998. Also see his book *Islams system: Niḍām ul-Islām*, Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2004.

²⁷ Roy, p.viii.

²⁸ M Asad, *The principles of state and government in Islam*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961.

²⁹ M Iqbāl, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, Ashraf, Lahore, 1965.

³⁰ Roy, p. xiii.

³¹ See NM Ayubi, *Political Islam: religion and politics in the Arab world*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 1.

³² Q Wiktorowicz, *Islamic activism: A social movement theory approach*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Ind, 2004.

developed as a response to a multiplicity of societal strains. These include the unjust distribution of wealth and the failure of the state apparatus in the form of despotic authoritative regimes.

Thus, it is reasonable to argue that the notion of an ‘Islamic’ state is a modern assertion by ideologues such as Sayyid Quṭub (1906-1966)³³ and Abū Al-A‘lā Mawdūdī. However, what complicates this study is that the concept of “Islamic state” and “Islamic government” have been argued by many Islamists as having its roots and prescription as early as the first century in Muslim history, thus providing this concept with authenticity.³⁴ Yet as Afsaruddin argues, according to the historiographical evidence available, that the early Muslim community were caught by surprise with the death of the Prophet; therefore, uncertainties arose regarding governance.³⁵ She concludes that it is clear there was ‘no blueprint for an “Islamic government”’.³⁶

In support of Afsaruddin, Ayubi argues that the original Islamic sources (that is the Qur’ān and the *sunna*) have little to say about the state and government.³⁷ Yet, one of the first challenges facing the early Muslims after the death of the Prophet was that of a political nature. Indeed, most likely the first disagreement that arose in the Muslim community was of a political nature, one which consequently developed into sectarian differences between Murji’ites, Khārij’ites and Shī’ites.

The debate regarding political boundaries in Muslim theology, however, has rarely been articulated well. Khalid Abou El Fadl has an insightful formulation. The underlying question of any articulation that involves the merger of Islam and politics at any level involves the issue whether political boundaries are imperative to protect the moral community. Furthermore, there is the question as to whether such political boundaries are necessarily conducted in a particular structure and form. That is to say, whether its means, structure and particularity are binding. Asked in another way, the

³³ S Quṭub, *al-‘Adālah al-ijtimā‘īyah fī al-Islām*, Dār al-Shurūq, Beirut, 1975; S Quṭub, *Ma‘rakat al-Islām wa-al-ra‘smāliyah*, Dār al-Shurūq, Bayrūt, 1975; S Quṭub, *Ma‘ālim fī al-ṭarīq*, Dār al-Shurūq, Cairo, 1970. Also see the work of AS Mawsilili, *Radical Islamic fundamentalism: the ideological and political discourse of Sayyid Quṭb*, American university of Beirut, Beirut, 1992.

³⁴ See A Afsaruddin, ‘The “Islamic State”: Genealogy, Facts, and Myths’, *A Journal of Church and State*. 48, no. 1: 153. 2006, p. 153.

³⁵ *Ibid.* p. 155.

³⁶ *Ibid.* p. 156.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

crux of the question is whether ‘God’s morality must necessarily be actualized through a political community dedicated to fulfilling this morality’.³⁸ If one understands God’s morality in terms of a set of prescribed laws, then the question acutely becomes: does God’s Law require a political community with clear political and territorial boundaries?

Formulated in this way, different thinkers have answered the question differently, from a strict yes (such as Maudūdī,³⁹ Quṭub and others) to yes with reservations (such as Mohammed ‘Abduh,⁴⁰ Mohammed Asad, Mohammed Iqbāl to some extent, Mohammed Rashīd Riḍā⁴¹ and Rāshid al-Gannouchi⁴²). These thinkers have pointed to Qur’ānic concepts of justice, the role of mankind as a deputy (*khalīfa*), problems of oppression, corruption, the *umma* (community) and its role to encourage good and forbid evil.⁴³ The thought process of these thinkers also merges Islamic thought with the western concepts of democracy and political engagement. The camp that argued for an emphatically no also relies on the argument that the Qur’ān speaks of general moral principles and not legal. Thinkers such as ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Rāziq (1888-1966),⁴⁴ Mohammed Khalaf-Allah (1906-1997), Jamāl al-Bannā (1920-2013)⁴⁵ Maḥmūd Mohammed Ṭāhā (1909-1985),⁴⁶ Abdullahi An-Na’im,⁴⁷ Abdelwahab El-Affendi⁴⁸ and Khaled Abou El Fadl⁴⁹ are a few of these contemporary scholars.

Although each thinker may offer a distinct argument as to why a moral community does not necessitate a territorial boundary, each relies upon a hermeneutical tradition

³⁸ K Abou El Fadl, ‘The Unbounded Law of God and Territorial Boundaries’ in AE Buchanan, & M Moore, (ed.), *States, nations, and borders: the ethics of making boundaries*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, p. 214.

³⁹ See unpublished thesis of R Ahmad, *The concept of the Islamic State as found in the writings of Abul A’ La Maududi*, University of Durham, 1969.

⁴⁰ M ‘Abduh, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Dār al-Manār, Cairo, 1950.

⁴¹ MR Riḍā, *Al-Khilāfah aw al-imāmah al-‘uẓmā: mabāḥith shar‘īyah siyāsīyah ijtimā‘īyah islāhīyah*, Maṭba‘at al-Manār, Egypt, 1922.

⁴² R Ghannūshī, *Ḥuqūq al-muwāṭānah: waḍ‘īyat ghayr al-Muslim fī al-mujtama‘ al-Islāmī*, Tunisia, 1989.

⁴³ K Abou El Fadl, ‘The Unbounded Law of God and Territorial Boundaries’, pp.214-215.

⁴⁴ A ‘Abd al-Rāziq, *Islam and the fundamentals of authority; a study of the caliphate and government in Islam*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1928.

⁴⁵ J Bannā, *Al-Islām wa-al-‘aqlānīyah*, Dār al-Fikr al-Islāmī, Cairo, 1991.

⁴⁶ MM Ṭāhā, *The second message of Islam*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, N.Y., 1987.

⁴⁷ AA Na’im, *Islam and the secular state: negotiating the future of Shari‘a*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 2008.

⁴⁸ A El-Affendi, *Who needs an Islamic state?* Grey Seal, London, 1991.

⁴⁹ See K Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and violence in Islamic law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

that searches for the purpose behind a specific text (*maqāṣid*). Each also refers to the Qur'ānic notion of earth being created by God undivided.⁵⁰ What unites these authors is their definition of being *islāmiyūn* (Islamist), yet not in the conventional western understanding of an Islamist. This kind of diversity in thought is unaccounted for in any definition of Islamist. For instance, Abou El Fadl's conclusion seems convincing when he asserts that

If one can imagine that moral communities are akin to an open text whose significance and meaning are constantly being explored and developed, then the risk is that political and territorial boundaries would be akin to artificial constraints that close the text and stun the evolution of meaning.⁵¹

He further quotes verse 49:13 arguing that 'these political boundaries threaten to transform the moral community of Islam to political entities, and to transform the universality and transcendentalism of the Islamic Message into a closed determined and parochial reality'.⁵²

Missing in any of the above writings is a systematic hermeneutical methodology that focuses upon scripture alone. Although many utilize Qur'ānic verses, seldom if any of the research provides a clear methodology for analysing these verses other than by linguistic criteria.

1.3.1 The Qur'ān and Political Theory

While there are many books on 'political Islam', 'Islam and Politics' and 'Islamic political movements'⁵³, there has been little written in the field of political theory in the Qur'ān alone. Hamid in his translated book from Arabic *The Qur'an and politics: a study of the origins of political thought in the Makkan Qur'an* is one example.⁵⁴ A major limitation to this work is his lack of systematic methodological approach and his unconvincing arguments.

⁵⁰ For example, K Abou El Fadl, 'The Unbounded Law of God and Territorial Boundaries', p.215.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 225.

⁵² Ibid. p. 226.

⁵³ See footnote 2.

⁵⁴ EA Hamid, *The Qur'an and politics: a study of the origins of political thought in the Makkan Qur'an*, trans. A Lu'lu'a, The International institute of Islamic Thought, London, 2004.

According to Hamid the ‘political’ is the ‘authoritative body which can issue certain rules of behavior’.⁵⁵ Political thought, therefore, is concerned with authority in general, that is to say how it should be practiced; how is it acquired; what is the relationship between the individual and authority; and political thought is also concerned with constitutional law.⁵⁶ Hamid claims that the Meccan verses have political principles that were not only abstract philosophical structures to be realised in Medina but also the revealed verses were connected to the Meccan historical realities.⁵⁷ His last point is not disputed, what is contended is whether the verses’ principles in Mecca are of a political or an ethical nature.

Although one could agree with his definition of the political, there is a confusion in understanding the verses that Hamid has interpreted to be the foundation of Muslim political theory. For example, verses 6:133 and 165 God promises to raise whom He wishes.⁵⁸ Here, there might be a merger between God’s promise (outside human action) and human action. In other words, it is only God who could raise who He wishes and thus it is not in the hands of human beings.

Arguably, the assertion that Islam is a ‘system of normative values, which acts as a criterion for identifying the major social objectives, evaluating institutions and justifying the claims of legitimacy’ is an acceptable assertion.⁵⁹ However, it is problematic to claim that Islam ‘justifies political power as well as the use of force and the right to obedience’.⁶⁰ The idea that Islam ‘justifies political power’ is a misreading of classical literature that in fact attempts to restrain power.⁶¹ Hamid’s argument also assumes Islam has prescribed a particular acceptable political order that goes beyond the general category of justice and injustice. Finally, Hamid himself argues that ‘[r]ule and sovereignty are in the hands of God alone’.⁶² This is because our understanding and implementation of that understanding remain human and constructed.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 20.

⁵⁹ Hamid, *The Quran and Politics*, p. 15.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ See Ovamir Anjum’s valuable work *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

⁶² Hamid, p. 15.

Hence, Hamid is right to suggest that it is impossible to approach the Qur'ān with a purely blank mind.⁶³ That is to say, one is unable to be objective without any influence from one's own experience and culture. This is not to say that we are unable to understand the Qur'ān but rather that our reading of it depends upon the question asked and upon our own experiences.⁶⁴ As mentioned earlier, at best, Hamid's work lacks methodological strength and at worst, he fails to substantiate his argument effectively.

In contrast, Manzooruddin Ahmed in an article entitled *The Classical Muslim State* maintains that not only there are confusions about concepts such as state, government and community, but that the primary aim of Islam is not to establish a state.⁶⁵ Ahmed makes six main arguments to support his protestation:

- 1) The caliphate should not be confused with modern nation state
- 2) Prophet Mohammed did not set out to find a state in Medina; rather he aimed for a moral community that later assumed political characteristics in the form of territory.
- 3) The caliphate developed as a social necessity rather than as anything Qur'ānic. Hence, there is no defined theory of caliphate; it has developed through the course of Muslim history.
- 4) There is no concept of modern political sovereignty in the historical caliphate. What does exist in classical literature is an attempt to restrain power rather than justify power.
- 5) From the above, therefore, there is no obligation to bring back a caliphate system.
- 6) In conclusion, the supremacy of the Qur'ān and the *sunna* could be accommodated by means of a modern constitutional democracy.⁶⁶

⁶³ Ibid. p. 25.

⁶⁴ For further discussion see Chapter One p. 29. Other scholars of the Qur'ān also make similar points. See the work of F Esack, *Qur'an, liberation & pluralism: an Islamic perspective of interreligious solidarity against oppression*, Oneworld, Oxford, 1997. Also see A Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'ān towards a contemporary approach*, Routledge, Abingdon, 2006. And Y Muḥammad, *Maṅṭiq fahm al-naṣṣ: dirāsah maṅṭiqīyah tu'ná bi-baḥṭh ālīyāt fahm al-naṣṣ al-dīnī wa-qibalīyātih*, al-Dār al-Bayḍā' Afīrīqyā al-Sharq, Morocco, 2010.

⁶⁵ See M Ahmed, 'The Classical Muslim State', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1962, pp. 83-104.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Some of the findings in this brief article are echoed in Chapters Three and Four. What is striking about Ahmed's argument is his affirmation that it is futile to construe any political theory in the Qur'ān.⁶⁷ The writings of the early Muslim jurists, consequently, attempt to fill this void by reading into verses such as 4:58 and 5:83.

However, what is interesting in Ahmed's article is the time in which he published his work. It is reasonable to assume that the rise of the radical militant Muslims have shaped the kind of argument Ahmed is making, particularly given that he was involved in discussions on the nature of Pakistan's government.⁶⁸ For this reason, one needs to be careful when reading his work as it might be a reaction against a particular ideology rather than a fully independent analysis of scripture. Notably, if the Qur'ān is silent about all political institutions, why is democracy favoured? The same challenge might also be posed to most 20th century scholars who advocate constitutional democracy. It is difficult, then, not to see their work as a reaction to Western imperial domination or at worst an intellectual bankruptcy.

Another scholar who examines the Qur'ān directly is Qamaruddin Khan in his work *Political Concepts in the Quran*.⁶⁹ He postulates that the evidence suggesting that the Qur'ān has a clear prescribed form of government and administration is questionable. He further argues that the Qur'ān does not provide any 'principle of constitutional law or political theory'.⁷⁰ The aim of Islam then is only in creating a moral order. Interestingly, Khan does not deny the political establishment in Medina, but argues that it was 'incidental to historical situation, and not the essential aim of his Prophetic mission'.⁷¹ His conclusions are the closest to those of this study, predicating that:

- i) Any political theory developed in Muslim history is the result of historical circumstances rather than anything in the Qur'ān.
- ii) The state is seen as part of the function of society and not as an integral part.
- iii) Islam aims to establish a social order based on moral values, hence any structure of society that embodies these values is considered Islamic. This

⁶⁷ Ibid. pp. 90-91.

⁶⁸ See his other work M Ahmed, *Pakistan, the emerging Islamic state*, Allies Book Corp, Karachi, 1966.

⁶⁹ Q Khan, *Political concepts in the Quran*, Islamic Book Foundation, Lahore, 1982.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 73.

⁷¹ Ibid.

means, the emphasis is on values rather than upon the particular structure of any institutions.

- iv) Any discussion on ‘political Islam’ must be seen as a contemporary debate that earlier Muslim discussions knew nothing about.⁷²

Although Khan’s work reiterates the hypothesis of this enquiry, his research is limited because he does not provide a methodical way of analysing the Qur’ān.

Another noticeable work that supports the general arguments of this research is a short book published in 1925 entitled *Islam and the Foundation of Governance* by ‘Alī ‘Abdul Rāziq (1888-1966) which states clearly that Islam in its essence is a message of guidance; it does not contain any political theory or an indication of establishing an Islamic state.⁷³ He substantiates his argument on two grounds. One, the Qur’ān is silent about any clear institutional and systemic inferences. The second, the role of the Prophet has been described clearly in the Qur’ān as a messenger and one who warns others rather than a political leader (contrary to many who see his role as both). He proclaims that:

Muhammed...was a messenger of a religious call, full of religiosity, untainted by a tendency to kinship or a call for government, and that he did not have a government, nor did he rule, and that he, peace be upon him, did not establish a kingdom, in the political sense of the term or anything synonymous with it.⁷⁴

‘Abdul Rāziq’s work without a doubt was highly controversial due to the time in which it was published. He not only made the argument about the role of the Prophet in the Qur’ān but further criticised how rulers historically claimed legitimacy by means of Islamisation of the caliphate theory. This is because, he contends, there is no consensus (*ijmā’*) amongst the scholars on the requisite of the caliphate as the Qur’ān and the *sunna* is silent regarding the obligation of having a specific political system.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid. pp. 73-74.

⁷³ A ‘Abdul al-Rāziq, *Al-Islām wa-uṣūl al-ḥukm*, Al-Mu’assasa al-‘arabī lil Dirāsāt wa al-nashr, Beirut, 1988.

⁷⁴ A ‘Abdul al-Rāziq, ‘Message Not Government, Religion Not State’, in C Kurzman, (ed.) *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, pp. 29-30.

⁷⁵ A ‘Abdul al-Rāziq, *Al-Islām wa-uṣūl al-ḥukm*, pp.19-29 also see pp. 38-41.

He further asserts that ‘there was no governmental organization, nor were there trustees or judges [or] a seat of government’ in the time of the prophet.⁷⁶ In support, Manzooruddin Ahmed argues that the question of political leadership was not the concern of the early companions of the Prophet when he was alive.⁷⁷ The question of any political establishment came after his death, therefore, any discussions on politics involves the problem of silence of the Prophet himself (and the interpretation of this silence). Although this is contested by Shī‘ites who argue that the Prophet did in fact designate, one could reasonably hold the view that the fact that it is debatable suggests that the traditions that have been attributed to the Prophet Mohammed are at least unclear.

‘Abdul Rāziq’s idea is also echoed by Mohammed Khalaf-Allah (1906-1997) when he equates *shūrā* (consultation) with institutional legislative authority.⁷⁸ Combining several ideas together, he argues that the consultation must be in matters of worldly issues and that these matters necessarily are known by experts in the political not the religious sphere, quoting verses 5:101-2 and 4:83. His reference to these verses stems from the common assertion made by ‘Islamists’ regarding the following verse 4:59 that says ‘Obey God and the Prophet and the people in authority’. Khalaf-Allah’s definition of ‘people in authority’ are those people who are trustworthy and have acquired the ‘know-how’.⁷⁹ Thus he has a much wider understanding of ‘people in authority’.

However, the same verse is also quoted by Ḥasan al-Bannā arguing that ‘there are clear verses containing the most decisive evidence that it is our duty to rule by that which is in the Book of God’.⁸⁰ Similar arguments are also made by Ghannouchi, although the interpretation and the application of ‘people in authority’ is broader than the latter.⁸¹ The difficulty with this idea is not what God has sent down but rather

⁷⁶ A ‘Abdul al-Rāziq, ‘Message Not Government, Religion Not State’, p. 36.

⁷⁷ See M Ahmed, ‘The Classical Muslim State’, pp. 83-104.

⁷⁸ M Khalaf-Allah, ‘Legislative Authority’ in C Kurzman, (ed.) *Liberal Islam: A Source Book*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998, p. 38.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 43.

⁸⁰ Cited in I T al-Fārūqī, ‘Towards a new Methodology for Qur’ānic Exegesis’, *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1962, p. 36.

⁸¹ See R Ghannouchi, ‘Participation in Non-Islamic Government’ in C Kurzman, (ed.) *Liberal Islam a source book*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998.

understanding what ‘God sent down’ refers to.⁸² One must then figure out how to determine what exactly is the meaning(s) of these commands and then determine the precise actions.

Both ‘Abdul al-Rāziq and Khalaf-Allah tried to reconcile western democracy with Islam. Their ideas may have also been intended to undermine the caliphate claims of the Egyptian king in the wake of the repeal of the Ottoman Empire.⁸³ They must also be read as an attempt to reconcile modernity with what they perceived to be the Islamic teachings.⁸⁴

In addition, although ‘Alī ‘Abdul al-Rāziq’s work is interesting there are two major difficulties with it. The first is a technical issue of his own work being merely a short survey which needs to be developed more deeply with a clearer methodology. A more serious challenge, as mentioned earlier, is the time during which he wrote. For example, Rashīd Riḍā charged that ‘Alī ‘Abdul al-Rāziq wrote to encourage Ottoman Turkey to adopt the idea of the nation state; his work is thus reactionary and ideological.⁸⁵

Scholarly work written in English seems to follow the Islamists’ assertions’ without seriously examining their assumptions. For example the work of Watt, *Islamic political thought: the basic concepts*⁸⁶ and later his book *Islamic political thought*⁸⁷ examines the development of Muslim political thought in history. Antony Black’s book *The history of Islamic political thought: from the Prophet to the present*;⁸⁸ is another example of a historical survey of claims and debates taken place in Muslim history without an examination of the scripture. The work of Rosenthal *Political*

⁸² al-Fārūqī, p. 36.

⁸³ AH Hourani, *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798-1939*, Oxford University Press, London, 1962, pp.184-192.

⁸⁴ AA Raziq, ‘Message Not Government, Religion Not State’.

⁸⁵ See unpublished thesis of JHJ Al-Hamidi, *Modern Islamic theories of the state with special reference to Rashid Ridha and 'Ali 'Abdul-Raziq*, University of Dundee, 1991, retrieved from <<http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.306198>>

⁸⁶ WM Watt, *Islamic political thought: the basic concepts*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1968.

⁸⁷ WM Watt, *Islamic political thought: the basic concepts*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998.

⁸⁸ A Black, *The history of Islamic political thought: from the Prophet to the present*, Routledge, New York, 2001.

thought in medieval Islam: an introductory outline;⁸⁹ adds a valuable contribution in examining political philosophers that have been influenced by Greek philosophies but does not examine the assumptions themselves.

Both the work of Patricia Crone *Islam and government: a history of medieval Islamic political thought*⁹⁰ and Ann Lambton's work *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: The jurists* are historical examinations of Muslim political thinking.⁹¹

The problem with the majority of the work noted above, such as Lambton's argument, is that the meaning of *sharī'a* for instance is taken to denote the same as jurisprudence (*fiqh*) itself.⁹² Lambton goes on explaining that the 'basis for the Islamic state was ideological...the primary purpose of government was to defend and protect the faith'.⁹³ The limitation of such arguments lies in the failure to recognise that these debates were taking place as a reaction to the silence of the Qur'ān and arguably the Prophetic tradition.⁹⁴ A general shortcoming of the western literature on Muslim political theology is the lack of exploration of the primary sources using a systematic methodology.

Hence, there is a need for research that develops a systematic methodology in examining the Qur'ānic verses and locating the development of political concepts in their historical context. It is this gap that this study aims to fill.

1.4 THE AIM AND NATURE OF THIS RESEARCH

This research explores and examines existing concepts that have been perceived to be political and aims to explore a Qur'ānic based understanding of the individual and

⁸⁹ EIJ Rosenthal, *Political thought in medieval Islam: an introductory outline*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958.

⁹⁰ P Crone, *Islam and government: a history of medieval Islamic political thought*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2003.

⁹¹ AKA Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981.

⁹² Also see the work of I M Lapidus, 'The Golden Age: the Political Concepts of Islam', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 524 no. 1, 1992, pp. 13-25.

⁹³ Ibid. 13.

⁹⁴ See Chapter Two p. 69 for an in depth discussion.

community that reinforces a moral worldview that could have a political implication. In doing so this thesis is doing two things:

- 1) Deconstructing and examining the existing Muslim political theology and
- 2) Pointing towards a radically different emphasis in the Qur'ān.

This investigation fundamentally asks whether God intended for Muslims to establish a state (that is an explicit political boundary) and specifically, whether the Qur'ān envisages a form of government that is binding (*mulzim*) for all adheres of Islam. In this way, the research fits into wider debates involving Muslim political theory. With the Qur'ān as the focal point of analysis, many complex issues arise in the course of the study. These include principles of hermeneutics, methods of semantic analysis, the ways in which the analysis may be situated within the wider history of scriptural interpretation, the interplay between the particular and the universal and the distinction between value systems and principles.⁹⁵ Above all, this thesis is concerned with issues of interpretation, not in negotiating truth claims, focusing on the multilayered content of the Qur'ān.⁹⁶ Thus the study does not address as to whether the Qur'ān records the true words of God, but rather what range of possible meanings does the Qur'ān convey and whether it is possible to obtain a Qur'ānic worldview.

Hence, the task is complex, as the topic of Muslim political theology has overlapped both Muslim history and Qur'ānic hermeneutics.

There are significant advantages to this exclusive focus on the potential meanings and worldview that the Qur'ān presents. It has the potential to reduce the influence of dogmatic and sectarian thinking/discussions regarding the kind of framework one accepts as a form of reference. This, therefore, may aid in examining the Qur'ān with fresher 'eyes'. In doing so, one may be able to read new and insightful meanings. This is particularly the case in Chapter Five *The Theory of Law*. Reading the Qur'ānic injunctions prior to dwelling upon the jurisprudential discussions on *fiqh* (legal opinion) and *sharī'a* (Muslim normative law) gives us the possibility of allowing new

⁹⁵ For this reason, Chapter One is dedicated for methodology only.

⁹⁶ N S Eggen, 'Conceptions of Trust in the Qur'an', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. 13 (2): 2011, pp. 56-85. p. 56

interpretation(s). This is not to argue that the literature available is not valuable, but with the Qur'ānic methodology employed one is automatically pushed into reading the scripture first.

1.4.1 Problematising Definitions

Defining 'political theory' or 'theory of politics' is not an easy task. The word *siyāsa* conceivably equates to the word 'politics' in English. *Siyāsa* comes from the root word *s-w-s*, the form *sā'is* refers to the person that manages or tends horses or the like.⁹⁷ However, the concept does not occur in the Qur'ān and finding an equivalent Arabic word of politics does little to define the concept itself. According to Ovamir Anjum the concept *siyāsa* was developed by the Umayyad to mean the rulers 'wise management of men and groups and distributing resources among them in a way that ensures stability, prosperity and other desired ends for the political community'.⁹⁸

What is needed is a workable definition of political concepts that emerged from within Muslim tradition to avoid imposing a Eurocentric viewpoint that could distort that tradition.

This is because for over the past 300 years, the field of political theory has been decidedly European, driven and influenced by Romanticism and Enlightenment ideals.⁹⁹ Typically a survey in history of political thought begins with Plato and Aristotle and ends with Renaissance theorist Machiavelli. The 1,800 years which separate Aristotle and Machiavelli are largely ignored, suggesting that there were no significant contributions to political thought during that time.¹⁰⁰ As a result, the notion of political thought becomes synonymous with Western political

⁹⁷ See for example EW Lane & S Lane-Poole, *Arabic-English lexicon*, F. Ungar Pub. Co., New York, 1955, p. 1466.

⁹⁸ O Anjum, *Reason and politics in Medieval Islamic thought the Taymiyyan moment*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2008, p. 47.

⁹⁹ KH Bullock, 'Re-Telling the History of Political Thought', *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp29-49.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.31. Also see RMJ Wolff & C McKinnon, *Political Thought*, Oxford University Press, 1999, Oxford.

thought.¹⁰¹ “Western” intellectual tradition predominates, with all other traditions placed in the periphery. To begin with, such a framework neglects Muslim thinkers such as al-Farabī, Ibn Sīnā and Ibn Rushd, to name a few, whose transmission of the better part of Greek philosophy was fundamental to the rise of the Renaissance. As summarised by Bullock, ‘Islamic political philosophy, has had a role to play in the formation of the canon of western political theory itself’.¹⁰² That is to say that ‘by erroneously claiming Plato and Aristotle as the founders of traditional western political philosophy, and by overlooking the intermediate role of Muslim intellectuals, the canon has been represented as a monocultural nature’.¹⁰³

The claim that there was no contribution to the field within nearly 2,000 years (the years that separate Aristotle and Machiavelli) has dismissed the rich and highly sophisticated intellectual heritage of Muslim thinkers.¹⁰⁴ Bias, not knowledge, has equated political thought solely with the Western canon and has not recognised Western political thought as merely one of many traditions.¹⁰⁵

Accordingly, this thesis will define political theory on internal grounds, or ‘within’. The emphasis upon seeking to understand the tradition from ‘within’ has been addressed most notably by Edward Said.¹⁰⁶ Said, along with other thinkers, is concerned that when Westerners study Islam and the Middle East, they impose upon them a western Christian and European framework in a process he terms ‘Orientalism,’ with ‘Orient’ a term referring to the Middle East and Far East.¹⁰⁷ Studying Islam based on its own terms has the advantage of allowing the people

¹⁰¹ Bullock, ‘Re-Telling the History of Political Thought’, p. 31. It is noteworthy that even the categorisation Greek philosophy to be “Western” heritage is misleading. Some have argued that the Ancient Greeks perceived themselves to be “Eastern”.

¹⁰² Bullock, p. 44.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 45.

¹⁰⁴ Similar understanding prevails in economics theory and knowledge. See for example the work of Schumpeter, J Alois, *Economic doctrine and method, an historical sketch*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1954. Schumpeter highlights the ‘great gap’ we have in our knowledge in the medieval period. Such an Eurocentric position is challenged by Islamic moral economists such as Mehmet Asutay. See M Asutay, & AR Abdul Rahman, *New developments in Islamic banking and finance: bridging ideas and realities*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2010.

¹⁰⁵ Bullock, 46.

¹⁰⁶ EW Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London, 2003.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

studied to articulate, define and explain their history and traditions on their own terms rather than be defined by the European colonisers.¹⁰⁸

A pertinent example of Orientalist tendencies is seen in the way early writings of this kind speak of Muslims as *Mohammedans* rather than Muslims.¹⁰⁹ The move to assign the followers of a religion a label based on the name of the founder of that religion is likely based upon the categories of Christianity. The reasoning is thought to be that just as Jesus Christ was viewed as the revelation and those who follow him are called Christians, they assumed that Muslims viewed Mohammed as the revelation itself and hence his followers should be called ‘Mohammedans.’ This reasoning, however, reflects a gross misunderstanding of Muslim theology. To Muslims, Mohammed is viewed only as a Prophet, not the revelation; followers of Islam are referred to as Muslims as described in the Qur’ān.¹¹⁰

The way followers of Islam have been called ‘Mohammedans’ is but one example of how categories can be incorrectly imposed. It shows, however, how important it is to take into account an understanding of the socio-political and cultural realities that comes from ‘within’ the tradition being studied rather than from other, external cultures. Naturally, this does not mean that one cannot compare and contrast the views of different cultures from different times or places as any intellectual heritage may be subject to the influence of another. It does mean, however, as noted above, that if one neglects to take into account how the culture under study defines and understands itself, one risks seriously distorting and misinterpreting the intellectual heritage.¹¹¹

Consequently, the third chapter of this thesis, which will also contain the primary literature review, will trace political concepts as emerged within Muslim political

¹⁰⁸ Also see the point Fazlur Rahman makes in his review essay ‘Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies’ in RC Martin, *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies*, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, 1985, pp.189-202.

¹⁰⁹ See for example the title SW Koelle, *Mohammed and Mohammedanism*, Rivingtons, London, 1889; HAR Gibb, *Mohammedanism; an historical survey*, Oxford University Press, London, 1953; another example, is J Schacht, *The origins of Muhammadan jurisprudence*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1950.

¹¹⁰ The root word of Muslim is *s-l-m* it comes to mean peace, safety, tranquility, completeness, being free from obstacles; to submit to; to become resigned to; to hand over. From this root word 18 forms occur in 140 verses. The form Muslim occurs twice, *Muslimīn* (plur.) once, and *Muslimūn* (plur.) 36 times. See EM Badawi & M Abdel Haleem, p. 450.

¹¹¹ For further discussion see F Rahman, ‘Approached to Islam in Religious Studies Review Essay’.

history as the Muslims themselves have understood them. As our enquiry is in the field of political theology, the worldview and the lens in which it is written will inevitably be different. Therefore as a guiding principle this study takes the meaning of *political concepts as those concepts that have been seen to be an important structural tool in public sphere in relation to power*. These concepts are studied on the basis of how they are deduced from the Qur'ān. The way in which it is collected is through noting specific concepts attributed to the Qur'ān, most notably arising from political events. What makes this task manageable, as discussed in Chapter Three, is the sheer repetition of these concepts.

1.4.2 Research Question

The research question may be in part delineated by sketching out what it is not investigating. For instance, the study does not debate the notion of whether there is political thought in Muslim tradition(s). For example, the work of Abū Nasr al-Fārābī (259-339 AH/ 870-950 AD)¹¹² and Abū al-Walīd Mohammed Ibn Rushd (519-594 /1126-1198)¹¹³ are one of the classical works in political philosophy that were influenced by the Greek philosophers. Nor is it about Muslim political movements or activism. It is therefore not a research that examines Muslim political thought throughout history.

Thus, the investigation is not concerned with whether there was any sort of political engagement in the time of the Prophet or any other time. The focus of this study is to see if there are any direct and clear commands in the Qur'ān by God to conduct human affairs in a particular set of way(s) as opposed to other ways. In other words, as opposed to a command which can be seen as a religious duty set upon a Muslim in the Qur'ān.

¹¹² The first date is the Muslim lunar calendar dating back to the date of the Prophet's immigration from Mecca to Medina; the second is the Gregorian date. This format of dating will be used from here on. See for example his works *Kitāb ārā' ahl al-madīnah al-fāḍilah* and *Kitāb al-siyāsah al-madanīyah*, Dār wa Maktabah al-Hilāl, Bayrūt.

¹¹³ See for example his *al-Ḍarūrī fī al-siyāsah: mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Siyāsah li-Aflāṭūn*.

It is about investigating the assertion that there is a clear political expression evidenced in the scripture. The expression of this is based either upon political theory in the form of establishing a state, government, system or upon administration that is seen to have been prescribed as a command in the Qur'ān and therefore binding.

Since this investigation is looking into the Qur'ān, the term “binding” has a specific meaning. It refers to the fact that the followers of Prophet Mohammed must pursue the teachings as prescribed command (rather than as something merely described). This prescribed command, therefore, becomes eternal, universal, non-temporal, and applies to all circumstances, in all places and at any time. Examples of binding commands would be that of prayer and fasting.

In order to address the research question, this study has availed itself of a combination of methodologies in examining the Qur'ānic concepts which have been argued to be politically oriented. A workable definition of political concepts may be found arising from Muslim history as political concepts emerge. Political concepts in turn are broadly defined in terms of understanding of governance. Therefore as a guiding principle this study takes the meaning of *political concepts as those concepts that have been seen to be an important structural tool in public sphere in relation to power.*

1.5 METHODOLOGY

Conceptually the fundamental premises in reading the text depend on the readers' conception of the nature of reality (ontology), their theory of knowledge (epistemology) and their philosophy of history.¹¹⁴ Due to time constraints the focus of this enquiry is epistemic in nature. To be able to answer the primary question of this research there are two challenges ahead of us. The first lies in defining political theory from within the Muslim tradition. The second consists of determining the hermeneutical tools used to interpret the Qur'ān. The latter is an epistemological

¹¹⁴ See Y Muḥammad, *Manṭiq fahm al-naṣṣ: dirāsah manṭiqīyah tu'ná bi-baḥṭh ālīyāt fahm al-naṣṣ al-dīnī wa-qibalīyātih.* al-Dār al-Baydā' Afrīqyā al-Sharq, Morocco, 2010.

endeavour that would help address our question: *can one speak of a Qur'ānic political theory?*

One possible way of tackling the former challenge is to identify political concepts in Muslim history that have been argued to be forms of political expression in the Qur'ān.

The focus of the research is limited to the Qur'ān as a starting point due to it being central focal point of the belief system of a Muslim worldview. The methodology adopted here in terms of scriptural hermeneutics is a combination of approaches – the novelty of the work consists in using both the thematic approach (emphasising holistic synthesis of the message of the Qur'ān) and method of semantic field approach proposed by Toshihiko Izutsu's (1914-1994). Detailed discussions on both of these approaches are presented in the Methodology Chapter.

It suffices here to say that the semantic and the thematic approaches examine the linguistic structure and the interconnectedness of concepts to each other. This is a major departure from the verse-by-verse (atomistic) exegesis (*tafsīr*) of the Qur'ān by instead employing a concept-by-concept or theme-by-theme *tafsīr*. The themes in this research were selected by looking at terms used by both Muslim classical and modern literature on Muslim political thought as well as within historical accounts. Such themes were only later attributed to the Qur'ān after the terms themselves became heavily used.

1.5.1 Method and Focus of Research

The study focuses on synchronic and lexical interrelations between terms and concepts as they appear in the Qur'ān. It is worth mentioning that the verses are searched by their root word and its derivatives creating a cluster of verses; each cluster of verses is considered as a theme and each theme will be analysed separately using the methodology. The hermeneutical research is also aided by commentaries

when necessary.¹¹⁵ Although the focus of this research on the Qur'ān is limited due to practical time constraints, the major exegetical works for the Sunnī and Shī'ite schools of thought are also consulted. The website <www.altafsir.com> has been very useful in looking at the exegetical work. This website contains all the major exegetical works for the Sunnī and Shī'ite schools of thought. Furthermore, as the methodology adopted is detailed and time consuming, it would have not been possible to also analyse the *ḥadīth* genre as well. However, some narrations may be alluded to as supportive evidence.

This study uses 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali's translation of the Qur'ānic text using the website <http://www.quranexplorer.com/quran/> unless stated otherwise. Finally, the Qur'ānic dictionary of Badawi and Abdul Haleem has been essential in identifying the root word of each concept, how many times it has been mentioned, its forms, its derivatives and its meanings in English.¹¹⁶ The advantage of using this dictionary is that it shows the 'inventory of the basic concepts covered by the root...in an attempt to show the range of semantic scatter it composes'.¹¹⁷ In addition, the lexicographical genre referred to as *al-Wujūh wa al-Nazā'ir* is also used.¹¹⁸

These extra-Qur'ānic sources are intended to add some measure of diachronic perspective to the research. The central aim of this research is to conceptualise the Qur'ānic worldview *via* particular semantic and thematic hermeneutical approaches.

1.5.2 Distinction in History

There is an important distinction this thesis is making between the Qur'ānic period and the post-Qur'ānic period when looking at political concepts. This distinction is not new; using different language Askari offers a similar distinction between that of

¹¹⁵ Such as the works of Moḥammed bin Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* entitled *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (d. 310/922); Abi Ja'far Moḥammed bin al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067); Abū 'Abdullah al-Qurṭubī (d. 671/1272); Ibn 'Ashūr (d.1393/1973).

¹¹⁶ EM Badawi & MA Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur'anic usage*, Brill, Leiden, 2008.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. p. xix F.

¹¹⁸ This includes Dāmaghānī, Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad, and 'Arabī 'Abd al-Ḥamīd 'Alī, *al-Wūjuh wa al-nazā'ir: li-alfāz Kitāb Allāh al-'Azīz*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, Beirut, 2003; and Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad, and Ṣafwān 'Adnān Dāwūdī, *Mufradāt alfaẓ al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam, Demascus, 1997.

the prophetic and the post- prophetic periods. He argues correctly that the political forms of the post-prophetic period are different from the prophetic ones, therefore this distinction is essential for the enquiry.¹¹⁹ The significance of the Qur'ānic period is due to its binding (*mulzim*) nature.

The approach of this thesis with respect to the prophetic and post-prophetic periods may be illustrated in the following thought experiment. We could undertake a thought experiment and propose to have a *veil of ignorance* regarding any discussions that occurred during the post-Qur'ānic period, but remained fully aware of the social-economic and cultural situation of the 7th century Ḥijāz and the history before that. We could also fully embrace the spiritual journey of the soul, its strength, its weakness; and if we could manage to imagine ourselves in Mecca being with the Prophet and living its trials and tribulations; we could imagine the internalisation of true Oneness (*tawḥīd*) and the process of getting rid of our lower self's (*nafs*) attachment and associations to other gods. Then a verse descending from heaven for example with respect to a man's inheritance could be read as restricting the man rather than giving him more power. It is this *veil of ignorance* as a thought experiment that outlines the outlook of this thesis in reading the Qur'ān, and sheds light upon the importance of the distinction between Qur'ānic and post-Qur'ānic period.

1.5.2.1 Muslim and Islamic

Further to the above distinction there is also another differentiation, conceptually and methodologically, between *Islamic* and *Muslim*. Within the current debate the majority of the literature writes as though the two concepts are synonymous to each other and therefore does not distinguish between the attempt to follow a faith and the faith itself. That is to say, when one mentions 'Islamic' theory or 'Islamic' history one refers to one particular meaning and when one is talking about Muslim history and Muslim thought one is referring to a different set of meaning(s). The former makes absolute truth claims that imply that it is epistemologically infallible, that is to say

¹¹⁹ H Askari, *Society and State in Islam: An Introduction*, Islam and the Modern Age Society, India, 1978, p. 76.

that it is God's intended meaning with no possible misunderstanding; whereas, the latter has the possibility of constructed human understanding.

Hence, although the majority of the writings refer to the field as "Islamic" political thought, conceptually an accurate formulation should be Muslim political thought. This is reflected throughout this study. In addition, this applies to other fields, such as Muslim political system, Muslim political institutions, Muslim state and Muslim politics as terms that define the socio-historical element of Muslims on an epistemic level.

This view is endorsed by Colin Turner in his differentiation between Islam and *islām*, giving one a capital 'I' and the other a small 'i'. The latter is seen as the Qur'ānic notion of 'internal act of belief and submission' and the former as 'the historical Muslim community with its objectification and systemization of beliefs and ritual practices'.¹²⁰

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

The study is critical to our modern age, not merely because it clarifies numerous misconceptions, but because of the nature of the methodological approach employed. To begin with, such an approach moves the debate away from such polarised camps as the so-called "secularists" and "Islamists" and shows a great deal of depth and complexities within the tradition of exegesis and Muslim political history. Hence, this research moves away from an ideological debate to a more analytical discourse in looking into the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, within western academic circles, there are few, if any, examinations of the Qur'ān at the depth that this investigation hopes to achieve. Most research has been limited to surveys of historical account of events and prominent Muslim writers as mentioned earlier.

¹²⁰ C Turner, *Islam without Allah? The rise of religious externalism in Safavid Iran*, Curzon, Richmond, 2000.

Although there has been a contemporary attempt to develop uniquely Muslim political theory and claims based on Qur'ānic concepts such as *bay'a* (oath of allegiance), *ulī al-amr* (people in authority), *khilāfa* (vicegerent) and *shūrā* (consultation) the findings of this research has serious implications with respect to the meaning and application of these concepts.¹²¹

Four major implications arise from conducting this study. Firstly, the study's identification of the hierarchy of concepts in a wider Qur'ānic framework has implications for issues of methodology. Secondly, one realises that medieval political thought cannot be separated from the sectarian polemical discussions between the groups that evolved from the first Muslim civil war. The third, and possibly the most serious implication –if the findings are substantial- would be the restructuring of the existing call for an establishment of an “Islamic state”. Finally, the approach of relying on the Qur'ānic worldview may conceivably bring about a paradigm shift; that is to say, when searching for a Qur'ānic worldview, one is looking predominantly on the world behind the scriptural text that does not present itself in ‘systemic/structural’ focus but is of a different emphasis. It is this *distinct outlook* that creates the paradigm shift.

1.7 CONTRIBUTION AND ORIGINALITY

This research makes a significant, original contribution by its use of an interdisciplinary approach as well as by its combination of two methodologies in the following ways:

- i) Due to the combination of methodologies adopted in this study, it attempts to construct, by using semantic and thematic approaches, a comprehensible view of the politico-religious concepts that many writers have alluded to but to which they have not applied a rigid, holistic and critical approach.

¹²¹ See Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

- ii) Although this research is claiming that there is no prescribed political theory or a systematic political system in the Qur'ān, it indicates a plausible Qur'ānic worldview of the individual and the community.

1.8 CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

One may see three challenges in conducting this kind of research. The first is the challenge of looking into scriptural text for a conception of political theory. That is to say that many see the two fields unrelated and may need different analytical tools. Another challenge of asking a question about political theory is the possibility of there being a Eurocentric element in the question itself. That is to say that the question is framed from the European perspective, experience and understanding of political theory and thought which may exclude the thought and the intellectual heritage of the “other”. However, it is important to point out here that the Eurocentricity of the research lies not in the question itself but rather in the premises, the tools and the method adopted that could either be culturally biased or not. The constant attempt of the author to refer back to the primary sources of Muslim tradition and Muslim intellectual heritage will further reduce such bias in the research.

A related point is that the question asked arises from contemporary issues and therefore one might be imposing a particular reading on the scripture that was not a concern at the time of revelation. However, the fact that references have been made to the Qur'ān in relation to the question in hand allows us to investigate the substantiality of the claim itself.

1.9 OVERVIEW

This thesis will break fresh ground. Although there has been considerable research within the history of Muslim political thought, this work will examine political theory in the Qur'ān by means of a fully rigorous methodological scrutiny.

Building up to this task, this work will first demonstrate the Qur'ānic methodology adopted in this study in Chapter Two. Then in Chapter Three it will outline the historical development of concepts currently attributed to the Qur'ān and in most cases these concepts are in fact either not Qur'ānic or improperly quoted out of its contextual framework. Chapters Four and Five constitute an analytical study of political concepts that have been identified in Chapter Three. The final Chapter points towards a Qur'ānic worldview of the individual and the community suggesting a paradigm shift.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The questions asked regarding how to understand the text, the context and how to distinguish the universality of it and its particular application needs a systematic methodology that moves away from the premise of seeing the Qur'ān as purely a law book. Such a methodology has simply not been present in most studies of the Qur'ān. Instead, writers typically analyse verses in isolation as part of an atomistic (*tajzi'ī*) verse-by-verse approach most likely inherited from the legal tradition.¹

This chapter provides an alternate methodology. With full awareness of the tentative nature of attributing meaning to a given passage in the Qur'ān, especially with regard to political concepts, this chapter unites two methodologies: the semantic and the thematic. To establish the usefulness of this amalgamation, this chapter will also analyse the Qur'ānic methodologies in classical, medieval and modern hermeneutical traditions. In doing so, this study identifies a combination of hermeneutical tools for analysing the Qur'ān that should provide a more holistic understanding of the meanings the Qur'ān may be conveying.

As we will see as we analyse verses said to have political implications, both the juristic and the atomistic approach have impacted the readings of these concepts. This is particularly significant as many rightly observe that the Qur'ān is not merely a book of law.² In fact, the majority of the verses in the Qur'ān could instead be described as ethico-theological in content and not legal.³

This chapter will begin with a brief summary of exegetical inclinations followed by a critical evaluation of their limitations. It will examine the Qur'ānic hermeneutical

¹ See the section 'Towards a Thematic Approach' p. 54 in this chapter.

² For further discussion see the section on Qur'ānic hermeneutics p. 31.

³ Rahman argues this as does Saeed. See F Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'ān*, Bibliotheca Islamica, Minneapolis, 1980; A Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'ān: towards a contemporary approach*, Routledge, London, 2006.

tradition, outlining the theo-philosophical readings that arguably *imposed* understandings of these philosophical assumptions onto the Qur'ān.

Towards the end, this chapter will also explore the idea that within the Qur'ān there exist a hierarchy of concepts. Significantly, this locates any Qur'ānic concept within a wider Qur'ānic worldview showing the concepts position in the hierarchy. Consequently, this chapter lays out the key methodological tools for Chapters Four, Five and Six.

2.2 QUR'ĀNIC HERMENEUTICS

Qur'ānic hermeneutical tradition is a rich one, covering topics from linguistics all the way to historical understanding of the time of revelation. At a conceptual level, Qur'ānic hermeneutical tradition has varied in its guiding principle of interpretation. Some scholars held the view that to interpret the Qur'ān according to the Prophet's commentary, his companions (*saḥāba*) and their followers (*tābi'īn*) was the best possible way of understanding the Qur'ān; therefore, they rely predominantly on traditions attributed to them. Abdullah Saeed labels this approach traditional or textual.⁴ Examples of this sort of interpretation are present in the works of Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr and Ibn Taymiyya.⁵ By adopting this kind of premise as to the way in which the text is perceived, these writers have to some extent limited the framework with which the text can be interpreted.

Some interpret a given Qur'ānic verse by means of additional verses from elsewhere in the Qur'ān. Still others, adopting a third approach, have employed their own informed opinion or reasoning (*ijtihād*) in deducing meaning from text. More recently still, some have emphasised the importance of examining the context of revelation as a hermeneutical tool. This approach is what Saeed terms contextual.⁶

The first documented exegeses of the Qur'ān tended to consist of brief explanations of unclear, uncommon or ambiguous words or phrases.⁷ Gradually increasing until it covered the entire Qur'ān, by the third/ninth century *tafsīr* had become a discipline in and of itself.⁸ The further away generations of Muslims were from the time of revelation, the more pressing became the need for the Qur'ān to be explained.

Later volumes of work became even more substantial, now also including theo-

⁴ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, pp. 42-56.

⁵ For more details see the section on 'Tradition Oriented Exegesis' p. 34.

⁶ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, pp. 116-125.

⁷ For example as seen in the work of Muqātil, is one of the earliest exegesis (see p. 34). Also see the work of A Rippin, 'Tafsir' in M Eliade & CJ Adams (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Macmillan, New York, 1987, pp. 236-244.

⁸ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 10.

philosophical, legal and mystical *tafāsīr*.⁹ Saeed further highlights that '[w]hile we cannot speak about Sunnī, Shi'ī or Khārijī tafsīr in the first/seventh century, we can certainly use those terms in the third/ninth century'.¹⁰

The multitude of different types of texts within the Qur'ān, including theistic, ethical, spiritual, legal and general lessons (wisdom), has naturally led to a wide variety of interpretation, with each reader gravitating to a different type of text and then using it as the basis of determining the predominant core message of the Qur'ān. To be sure, pre-existent theo-philosophical convictions also affect interpretation as the Qur'ānic text is then used to support particular belief systems (e.g. the philosophers, the Sufis, the Shi'ite and so on).¹¹ Such pre-existent inclinations would also be linked to whether the reader had a theo-philosophical or juristic understanding of the text beforehand.¹²

At present time, according to Rahman, Western literature on the Qur'ān falls into three main categories: (1) works that trace the influence of Judeo-Christian ideas on the Qur'ān, (2) works that reconstruct the chronological order of the revelation and (3) works that describe the content of the Qur'ān (either as a whole or certain aspects of it).¹³ Muslim scholarship for their part, according to Rahman, have two problems: (1) the failure to relate the Qur'ān to contemporary issues and (2) a fear of developing a contemporary understanding of the Qur'ān, proclaiming that any attempt would deviate from the traditional opinion.¹⁴ By highlighting the contemporary relevance of the Qur'ān to Muslim life and providing a methodical reading(s) of scripture, this thesis will make considerable progress in addressing both of these pressing problems.

⁹ For further details see the work of C Gilliot, 'Exegesis of the Qur'ān: Classical and Medieval' in JD McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Brill, Georgetown University, Washington DC, 2002, Vol. II, pp. 99-124.

¹⁰ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 10.

¹¹ For more detail regarding this issue see Y Muhammed, *Manṭiq fahm al-naṣṣ: dirāsa manṭiqīya tu'nā bi-baḥṭh āliyāt fahm al-naṣṣ al-dīnī wa-qibalīyātih*, Afīṭqyā al-Sharq, al-Dār al-Bayḍā', 2010. Also by the same author see Y Muhammed, *Madkhal ilā fahm al-Islām: al-fikr al-Islāmī, nuḏumuh, adawātuh, uṣūluh*, Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1999.

¹² See for example Y Muhammed, *al-Falsafah wa al-'irfān wa al-ishkālīyāt al-dīnīyah: dirāsah ma'rifiyah tu'nā bi-tahlīl niḏām al-falsafah wa al-'irfān wa-fahmih lil-ishkālīyāt al-dīnīyah*, Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, Beirut, 2008.

¹³ Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'an*, p. xii.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. xii.

Bearing this in mind, Qur'ānic hermeneutics also developed linguistically based methodologies that are outlined below.

2.2.1 The Sciences of the Qur'ān

The term 'sciences of the Qur'ān' (*'ulūm al-Qur'ān*) covers topics that will be of use in this study in terms of analysing the Qur'ānic verses. For example, *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* explores the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, which translates literally as 'causes of revelation'. A better translation, however, might be the 'occasions of revelation', namely those occasions that inform us as to the events, incidents and circumstances to which the revelation was responding to.¹⁵ *Shā'n al-nuzūl* is also used to mean or to understand the wisdom or motives behind the revelation; this often includes longer passages or stories (for example, relating stories of previous Prophets), which were not revealed at the occurrence of specific incidents or events.¹⁶

Revelation may also include the knowledge of the verses that were revealed in Mecca or Medina. It also explains verses that are abrogated (*al-nāsikh wa al-mansūkh*) and the classification of the type of the verse in question be it *muḥkam* (clear) or *mutashābih* (allegorical).¹⁷

Qur'ānic hermeneutics also utilises linguistic considerations which include categories such as *'ām & khāṣ*; *muṭlaq & muqayad*; *ḥaqīqī* and *majāzī*.¹⁸ *'Ām* literally means general or universal, so in this case verse 3:185 is a general one speaking to all humanity. On the other hand, *khāṣ* is translated as a 'specific' case in which the verses are addressing particular people or specific situations; it could also mean 'limited' or 'conditioned', implying, therefore, the scope of application of the verse is limited.¹⁹

¹⁵ See the work of A Rippin, 'The Function of "Asbāb al-nuzūl" in Qur'ānic Exegesis', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 51, no. 1, 1988, pp. 1-20. Also see A Rippin, 'The Exegetical Genre "asbāb al-nuzūl": A Bibliographical and Terminological Survey', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London*, vol. 48, no. 1, pp. 1-15.

¹⁶ See F Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 143.

¹⁷ See A Von Denffer, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān: An introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1994. Also see L Kinberg, *Muḥkamāt and mutashābihāt (Koran 3/7): Implication of a Koranic pair of terms in medieval exegesis*, S.I, 1988.

¹⁸ For further detail see al-Qādhi, *An Introduction to the Sciences of the Qur'ān*, Al-Hidāyah Publishing and Distribution, Birmingham, 1999, p. 228. Also see Von Denffer, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*.

¹⁹ See the work Von Denffer, *'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*.

There are cases where the verse is *‘ām* in wording but gives a *khāṣ* meaning and in these cases it is important to consider *asbāb al-nuzūl* alongside *sha’n al-nuzūl*. The process by which it is decided which verse is general and which verse is specific depends almost entirely on the linguistic abilities of the *mufasir* (the exegete) and his own understanding as well as interpretation.

Muṭlaq refers to verses that are unconditional in their meaning and absolute in their scope. This differs from *‘ām* verses in that it only applies to one possible meaning rather than to all possibilities without limitation (such as ‘God is aware of all things’ is an *‘ām* verse). *Muqayad* is a qualified or conditioned verse.²⁰ *Ḥaqīqī* refers to words or verses that are used literally, according to their primary intent or original meaning. On the other hand, *majāzī* is used when the word or verse is used to convey a metaphor and not a literal meaning.²¹

Finally, Qur’ānic hermeneutical tradition also looks at the research into the interpretation or exegesis of the Qur’ān which also deploys the linguistic criteria stated above.

From the above discussion then, there may be said to be three main types of Qur’ānic exegesis. The first is the traditional approach; the second is theo-philosophical and the third is part of a more modern trend that inclines toward thematic oriented exegesis.²²

In the following sections, the three orientations will be critically examined, pointing out that there remain a number of difficulties that need to be addressed when attempting to read the Qur’ān from the existing exegesis.

2.2.2 Tradition Oriented Exegesis

Traditional exegesis (*tafsīr*; plur. *tafāsīr*) takes as its foundational premise that the Prophet prohibited any interpretation using *ra’y* (personal opinion) as supported by a

²⁰ For more details see al-Qādhi p. 229.

²¹ Ibid. p. 224.

²² These categorizations are made by Saeed in his book *Understanding the Qur’an*.

tradition (*ḥadīth*) that is attributed to him.²³ This is often referred to as *tafsīr bil ma'thūr*.²⁴ For example, Taqī al-Dīn Abū Al-‘Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya in his *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr* argues that the interpreter always has to give priority in interpreting the Qur’ān to the *sunna*, the companions, the immediate successors of the companions (*tābi‘īn*) and some would also include the immediate successors of the successors (*tābi‘īn al- tābi‘īn*). Therefore, the only valid form of interpretation is to use the Qur’ān to explain other parts of it, or to refer to tradition attributed to the Prophet or if there was no such information then the first and second generation of Muslims.²⁵

In the classical period, there was an overwhelming use of *ḥadīths* and the sayings of the companions of the Prophet, which makes these *tafsīr* tradition oriented. One of the earliest Sunnī exegeses is *Tafsīr Muqātil* by Muqātil bin Sulaymān (d.150/767). His exegesis does not go into any great details in the meaning of the verses, but it is one of the earliest *tafsīr*. A more detailed and widely-acknowledged *tafsīr* is by Moḥammed bin Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* titled *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān* (d. 310/922) which uses narrations and linguistic approaches to explain the Qur’ān.

The early Shī‘ite *tafsīr* are somewhat different in their exegetical nature. Arguably one of the earliest is by the Shī‘ite Ḥasan bin ‘Alī Al-‘Askarī (d. 260/873) but there is no record of the exegesis at hand; it is only a claim that the existing exegesis belongs to Al-‘Askarī.²⁶

Another even earlier Shī‘ite exegesis is one titled *Abī Ḥamzah al-Thamālī* by Abī al-Ḥamzah Thābit bin Dinār al-Thamālī (d. 148/765). What is common amongst these

²³ Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl al-tafsīr*, Al-Turāth al-islāmī, Cairo, 1988. Also see the work of A Saeed, *The Qur’an: an introduction*, Routledge, London, 2008; GR Hawting & AKA Shareef, *Approaches to the Qur’ān*, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 101-140.

²⁴ A good introduction for science of Qur’ān may be found in Ahmed Von Denffer referenced earlier. Also see M H Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa al-mufasssīrūn*, Vol. 1-3, Dār al-Kutub al-Ḥadīthah, Cairo, 1990.

²⁵ See for example the report by Ibn ‘Abbās: ‘the Messenger of God said: “He who interprets the Qur’an to his opinions (*ra’y*) should have his place prepared in the hell fire”’; another tradition attributed to the Prophet states ‘He who says something concerning the Qur’an according to his opinion (even if it) is correct has erred’. Cited in Saeed, *The Qur’an: an Introduction*, p. 179.

²⁶ See MM Bar-Asher, ‘The Quran Commentary Ascribed to Imam Hasan Al-Askari,’ in *Jerusalem Studies in Arabica and Islam*, vol. 24, 2000, pp. 358-79. Also see MM Bar-Asher, *Scripture and Exegesis in Early Imāmī-Shiism*, Brill, Boston, 1999.

exegeses is the emphasis of the right of *ahl al-bayt* (the family of the Prophet) to rulership and the injustices that, it is claimed, occurred to them after the death of the Prophet. Therefore, most of the explanations of the verses are interpreted according to the twelver Shī'ite *imāma* theory. The discussions revolve around the sayings of the *imāms* and the explanations of the verses are mainly a way of proving that they are infallible and are mentioned in the Qur'ān.²⁷

These early Shī'ite *tafsīr* have usually been seen to use far-fetched interpretations (or *ta'wīl*) sometimes of an otherwise unambiguous verse to support a sectarian argument.²⁸ It could be said that Abī Ja'far Moḥammed bin al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) was the first Shī'ite scholar with his exegesis *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* who moved away from explaining most verses in relation to the *imāma* theory and other Shī'ite doctrine.²⁹ His work nonetheless displays the philosophical influences of the medieval period.

Accordingly, the development of exegetical work that is encyclopaedic in nature arose due to the growing amount of time that had elapsed since the revelation. There was a genuine need to focus on the meanings of words and verses separately, particularly as Arabic dialects developed with time. There was, undeniably a genuine need for this approach. At the same time, however, this position consequently became the 'orthodox' way of looking at the Qur'ān.

2.2.2.1 Difficulties and Limitations

One of the difficulties posed by relying solely upon 'tradition' or *tafsīr bil ma'thūr* is that the Prophet did not leave a commentary on the Qur'ān; accordingly, there is a

²⁷ See the work of Abī Nadhar Moḥammed bin Mas'ūd bin 'Ayāsh al-Salami al-Samarqandī known as Al-'Ayāshī retrieved 31 March 2011, <<http://www.yasoob.com/books/html/m016/20/no2005.html>>; and Abi Al-Hasan 'Alī bin Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (born 307/919) retrieved 31 March 2011 <<http://www.yasoob.com/books/html/m016/20/no2007.html>>.

²⁸ For example verses like 2:55, 7:172, 2:208 etc. have been improperly interpreted in such a way that they are given a *ta'wīl* that is far from its apparent meaning. Some have even suggested that there has been the *tahrīf* (corruption) of some of the verses, for example, Al-Qummī. See Tafsīr Al-Qummī, Vol. 1, pp. 6-11 retrieved 2 January 2010 <<http://www.yasoob.com>>

²⁹ See for example Bar-Asher, Meir M 'Shī'ism and the Qur'ān' in JD McAuliffe (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Brill Online, 2012, retrieved 07 July 2012 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-the-quran/shiism-and-the-quran-COM_00181>

limited number of *ḥadīth* upon which one can rely. Further to this, the Companions had not developed particular methodical systems of interpretation and at times different Companions interpreted the meaning of a particular verse differently. Even more significantly, however, there seem to be conflicting narrations regarding some of the occasions of revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) for the same verse, making the reliability of the various accounts questionable.³⁰ Even more strikingly, Saeed holds that Muslim exegetes and jurists often relied more upon linguistic criteria when determining the applicability of verses than the socio-historical context of their revelation. He is of the view that the ‘question of social and historical context in which the ruling was given at the time of the revelation of the Qur’ān was seen as irrelevant or unimportant’.³¹ One explanation for this is the possible view that everything in the Qur’ān is universal, non-temporal and applicable to all times.³²

By the medieval period, with the development of theological schools, scholars such as al-Ghazālī recognised these challenges³³ and some like Qurṭubī accepted the use of independent thinking.³⁴ A further difficulty is the authority given to ‘tradition’ to the point that it has almost become the primary text, replacing the Qur’ān itself.³⁵ Saeed makes the critical observation that unlike revelation, interpretation itself is human endeavour. He goes on to state that

nothing sacred about the personal interpretation given to a verse even by a Companion of the Prophet, or by a Successor or by early imams. Their understanding, like ours, are limited by context and culture.³⁶

Further to this, Saeed points out rightly that we have no evidence that the Prophet ‘held special sessions to explain and elaborate upon the meaning of the Qur’ān’.³⁷

³⁰ See for example, the work of Ṭabarī narrating different *asbāb al-nuzūl*.

³¹ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 1.

³² This could also explain why when compiling the Qur’ān chronology was not one of the criteria.

³³ Al-Ghazālī believed that the Prophet did not attempt a commentary on the Qur’ān aside for some verses. For this reason, only in cases when one possesses a reliable account of a given tradition regarding a specific verse should that tradition be relied upon for interpretive purposes. Al-Ghazālī is also of the opinion that the differences that occur between *tāb īn* is an expression of their own opinion and therefore not binding for all Muslims. See Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-dīn*, Vol. 1, Dār al-Khayr, Damascus, 1990, p. 385.

³⁴ Cited in Saeed, *The Qur’an*, p. 181.

³⁵ Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur’an*, p.34

³⁶ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 4.

³⁷ *Ibid.* p. 44.

Having said that, earlier works like Ṭabarī remains useful for our enquiry in order to identify possible linguistic meanings of verses as well as knowing the occasion of revelation, even if several different ones have been recorded.

21.2.3 Theo-Philosophical Oriented Exegeses

The move from classical to medieval can be characterised by the *mufasir* employing several exegetical tools, including reason, as well as applying their own independent judgement. The dominant feature of such an exegesis is to prove the validity of a theo-philosophical interpretation of the Qur'ān.³⁸ Therefore, they consider not only the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth* and the views of the Companions, but also the views of later scholars, principles of jurisprudence and theo-philosophical writings.

This is a major departure from the previous work of the *mufasir*, which reviewed several possible meanings of the verse solely by using *ḥadīths* and linguistic tools. In the medieval period, however, the *mufasir's* *ijtihād* (independent thinking) regarding what the verse might have meant was accepted to some extent independently of the *ḥadīth* collections. The writings of Maḥmūd ibn 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī,³⁹ Fakhr al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn 'Umar al-Rāzī,⁴⁰ Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī⁴¹ and Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Suyūṭī⁴² are few instances. In some occasion, al-Qurṭubī argued for *ijtihād* as an essential way of interpreting the Qur'ān after considering the traditions, as well as exerting knowledge of the Islamic sciences.⁴³

Others, such as Ibn Rushd, made the case that certain Qur'ānic texts and *ḥadīth* may appear to be self-contradictory (even though, he argues, they do not). For this reason the text should be subjected to allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) in cases of apparent contradiction.⁴⁴ Therefore, seemingly anthropomorphic words such as 'God's throne' are taken metaphorically and not literally. The theo-philosophers emphasize

³⁸ See Saeed, *The Qur'an*, p. 207.

³⁹ Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashāf 'an ḥaqā'iq ghawāmiḍ al-tanzīl wa 'uyūn al-aqāwīl fī wujūh al-ta'wīl*, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1947.

⁴⁰ Rāzī, *Tafsīr al-kabīr: Mafātīh al-ghayb*, Intishārāt-i Asāfīr, Tehran, 1992.

⁴¹ Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Ammah lil-Kitāb, Cairo, 1977.

⁴² Suyūṭī, *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, Maktabat Lubnān Nāshirūn, Beirut, 2000.

⁴³ Cited in Saeed, *The Qur'an*, p. 181.

⁴⁴ See Ibn Rushd, *Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl*, trans. G. Hourani, Brill, Leiden, 1959, p. 39.

rationalist, allegorical, interpretive and metaphorical nature of the Qur'ānic language, particularly when addressing God.

2.2.3.1 Difficulties and Limitations

The acceptance of the use of reason, with the development of theo-philosophical schools had the consequence of reading the Qur'ān through *a priori* knowledge of the nature of God and His attributes, independent of revelation, which subsequently brought about the development of highly philosophical discussions in commentaries that intended to reply to opposing theo-philosophical schools, rather than understanding the Qur'ān independently of these convictions. This is not to say that they had the intention of imposing on to the Qur'ān their convictions, but possibly that they thought the Qur'ān supported their particular theo-philosophical arguments.

Debates on the meaning of the unity of God, the nature of the word of God, His attributes, predestination, free will, the nature of paradise/hell, nature of evil and status of human beings are found particularly among such groups as the Mu'tazilites Ash'arites, Sufis and Shī'ites. To support their theological convictions, these groups typically would appeal to Qur'ānic texts in their philosophical arguments.⁴⁵

As time went by, these discussions became increasingly abstract and occasionally verses were interpreted allegorically (*ta'wīl*) when it could have been equally possible to understand them without the use of *ta'wīl*, particularly in Sufi traditions.⁴⁶ Furthermore, exegetical works grew into encyclopaedic volumes, commenting on every single verse in the Qur'ān from beginning to end. As a result, an entire hermeneutical tradition developed in which verses were explained from one to the next, at times, in complete isolation from the Qur'ān as a whole and sometimes even from the chapter. Consequently, during the medieval period, this type of exegesis with its philosophical and theological polemics became atomistic, as noted by many

⁴⁵ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, pp. 66-67.

⁴⁶ For example verses 6:17; 57:13.

modern scholars, including Amīn Aḥsan Iṣlāḥī (1906-1997). Iṣlāḥī maintained that the single common aspect all types of exegeses had was that of atomisation.⁴⁷

The Qur’ān was also used as a law “manual” in an attempt to bring about a comprehensive canonical system.⁴⁸ This had the consequence of making legal inferences the primary intention of the Qur’ān and any non-legal inferences (which are the majority) of secondary importance. Saeed stresses that this ‘emphasis on the legal context ignores the fact that the Qur’ān actually says very little about strictly legal matters’.⁴⁹ Out of 6236 verses perhaps between 80 and 500 verses of the Qur’ān are thought to be legal, with the differing assessments based upon how one defines what constitutes a legal verse.⁵⁰ Subsequently, the Qur’ān was seen as a legal text. Once the legal schools were established by the fourth/tenth – fifth/eleven centuries, the idea of *taqlīd* (following what the founders of the legal schools said) became a key practice for Muslims.⁵¹ As a result, Muslim interpreters could not conceive of examining the Qur’ān in the absence of a legalistic or theo-philosophical lens.

Thus, most Muslims were distanced from their own most sacred text, partly because it was now mediated only through an overwhelming number of interpretive volumes and partly because the Muslim world was predominantly illiterate by the 17th/18th century. Furthermore, a clear disconnection occurred between the clergymen (*‘ulamā’*) and the needs of the people. In addition, this disconnection from the Qur’ān became accentuated by the experience of colonisation and the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly to Ali Shariati the Qur’ān was no longer the source of ideas, but as depository for proving the interpreter’s own ideas, noting that

[b]y preventing people from studying the Qur’an and thinking about it, religious scholars made it into a book so that only its form remained for the people. Its spirit, purpose and aim remain unknown. They turned it into phrases and verses of secret words without their meaning being understood.⁵²

⁴⁷ Cited in Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur’an*, pp. 85-6.

⁴⁸ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For more details see NJ Coulson, *A History of Islamic Law*, University Press, Edinburgh, 1964, p. 12.

⁵¹ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 16.

⁵² Cited in Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur’an*, pp. 3-5.

It would be fair to say, then, the study of Qur'ānic hermeneutics was either polemic or jurisprudential in nature, with the jurisprudential aim being solely to determine whether an action was permissible or not.

2.2.4 Modern Exegesis

Exegetical works of the modern period generally were heavily influenced by the socio-political and economic circumstances of that time such as Modernism, scientific advancement, colonialism and so on. It is significant to note that most contemporary issues and challenges seem to reflect the interpretation of verses.⁵³ This includes views on such subjects as the relationship between society and religion, the compatibility of science and revelation, the applicability of reason and faith, and scientific and sociological reflections on verses.⁵⁴

Among the many examples of modern interpretations of the Qur'ān one may include the works of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī in his *'irwat al-withqā*,⁵⁵ Mohammed 'Abduh and Rashid Riḍā in *Al-Manār*; Sayyid Quṭub in his Qur'ānic commentary *fi Zilāl al-Qur'ān*;⁵⁶ Mawdūdī in *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*⁵⁷ and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn 'Ashūr in his *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa al-tanwīri*.⁵⁸ There are also influential views of contemporary scholars that have not directly written an exegetical work but their views have been potent in reading the Qur'ān. These scholars include Ali Shariati's general works,⁵⁹ Mohammed B. Ṣadr⁶⁰ and Fazlur Rahman to name a few.⁶¹

⁵³ Askari notes that in modern times scholars have attempted to reconcile different elements with the Qur'ān. For example, Syed Ahmed Khan sought unity ideas about nature, Mohhamed Abduh reconciling reason and faith, Muhammed Iqbal the role of history and Ali Shariati society and revelation. See H Askari, *Society and State in Islam: An Introduction*, Islam and the Modern Age Society, New Delhi, 1978, p. 38.

⁵⁴ For more details, see Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufasssīrūn*, Vol.2, pp. 511-512.

⁵⁵ Referring to the verse 2:256 could be translated as 'The firm bond' or 'The indissoluble link'. See Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur'an*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ S Quṭb, *Fī zilāl al-Qur'ān*, Maktabat al-Turāth al-Islāmī, Cario, 1994.

⁵⁷ SA Mawdūdī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān*, Maktabah-'i Ta'mīr-i Insāniyat, Lahore, 1958. This work was aimed at those Muslims who were not well versed in the Qur'ān.

⁵⁸ MT Ibn 'Ashūr, *Tafsīr al-tahrīr wa-al-tanwīr*, 'Isā al-Bābī, 1964.

⁵⁹ A Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, Mizan Press, Berkeley, 1979.

⁶⁰ See his work MB Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya: Al-tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī wa al-Tafsīr al-tajzī'ī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Ta'aruf lil-Maṭbu'āt, 1980.

⁶¹ Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*.

The primary aim of these writers was to render the Qur'ān more accessible to the common people. They moved away from those types of theo-philosophical debates that did not play a part in Muslim day-to-day life and instead emphasised the application of the Qur'ānic message to the Muslims' day-to-day reality and indicating the relevance of various aspects of the Prophet's life.⁶² For example, 'Abduh is critical both of the overemphasis upon philosophical and theological discussions in the work of previous scholars as well as of the approach of reading the Qur'ān as purely a law book.⁶³ Significantly, increasing number of intellectuals call for a thematic reading of the Qur'ān.

Furthermore, increasingly contemporary scholars recognized that the individual bias of a given interpreter could influence his or her readings of the Qur'ān. No longer is the interpreter seen to be coming from a fully objective position. This view is echoed by writers such as Fazlur Rahman, Amina Wadud⁶⁴ and Yahya Mohammed. This is in marked contrast with earlier writings who considered the interpreter to be a neutral reader.

There is thus a good case to be made that the Qur'ānic studies in the 20th century witnessed a shift in Qur'ānic exegesis. There was a movement away from the earlier atomistic verse-by-verse genre towards an acceptance of a combination of other approaches, chief of which was a holistic reading of the Qur'ān that looked at verses and passages in the context of the wider themes expressed in the Qur'ān itself.

2.2.4.1 Difficulties and Limitations

One of the potential drawbacks in attempting to connect the Muslim peoples more directly to the Qur'ān's message is the risk of the simplification of that message. Unlike traditional scholars such as al-Ṭabarī who provided multiple possible interpretations for a given verse, modern exegetes such as Mawdūdī limit themselves

⁶² Almost all 19th and 20th century reformers aimed to make the Qur'ān more accessible to the common people during times of radical change and with the aim of coming to terms with modernity. For further discussion see Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur'an*, pp.11-18.

⁶³ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, pp. 11-12.

⁶⁴ A Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999.

to but a single possible reading. Ironically, classical scholars who did not show any awareness of how an interpreter's socio-cultural environment can affect his or her reading of the text, in fact would offer multiple interpretations for a given verse. In contrast, in recent times, although it has been widely acknowledged that the interpreter also plays a role in interpretation, interpreters tend to be far more dogmatic about what the meanings assigned to verses.

Limiting Qur'ānic verses to a single meaning poses the danger of leading readers to assume a narrow, singular reading that was not necessarily present and to think no genuine disagreements existed amongst the scholars of the Qur'ān.⁶⁵ This phenomenon is particularly evident on English websites such as <http://www.Quranexplorer.com/>.

This thesis is built around the view that the more one is aware of the effects of one's own prejudices, the more likely it is possible to determine the general intended meaning of any given verses from the Qur'ān. Furthermore, the awareness that the reader's mind is not a *tabula rasa* will make it possible to account for the differences of interpretations that have occurred throughout the centuries.

Another limitation associated with some modern exegetes is that unlike scholars from classical and medieval periods, modern scholars are not typically schooled in the classical traditions. This might not be a strong critique, however, depending on whether one considered the classical tradition of understanding the Qur'ān the only authority.

From the above short analysis one might be justified to argue that in order to have a holistic reading of the Qur'ān one needs a combination of methodologies. The following section outlines such a combination used in this thesis.

⁶⁵ See the work of IT al-Fārūqī, 'Towards a new Methodology for Qur'anic Exegesis', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1962, p. 37.

2.3 TOWARDS AN IZUTSIAN SEMANTIC ANALYSIS

Although defining the field of semantics is difficult, this field may be said to concern itself with the study of meaning in language and with a variety of theories pertaining to meaning.⁶⁶

This thesis adopts the definition of the late Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993) which views semantics as an ‘analytic study of the key-terms of a language with a view to arriving eventually at a conceptual grasp of the *weltanschauung* or world-view of the people who use that language as a tool’.⁶⁷ Izutsu defines *weltanschauung* as

a study of the nature and structure of the world-view of a nation...conducted by means of a methodological analysis of the major cultural concepts the nation has produced for itself and crystallized into the key-words of its language.⁶⁸

Semantic analysis, therefore, involves the search for possible meanings within language. At the basic level, a word may be split into a number of well-defined constituents, such as root(s) and their derived forms. The meaning of these elements is investigated and the word is then viewed in the context of semantically related words and its antithesis.

Such a process is not new to Qur’ānic hermeneutical traditions, as seen in the work of classical scholars such as Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Dāmaghānī (d.478/1085),⁶⁹ Abū al-Qāsim al-Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (d.502/1108),⁷⁰ Ibn al-Jawzī (d.597/1201),⁷¹ Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb al-Fayrūz’ābādī (d.817/1414)⁷² and

⁶⁶ There are two major branches of linguistics, which are concerned with words; etymology and semantics. Etymology, the far older discipline, is concerned with word origins, whereas semantics, the newer discipline studies the meanings of words. See S Ullmann, *Semantics: an Introduction to the Science of Meaning*, Barnes & Noble, New York, 1962, p. 1.

⁶⁷ T Izutsu, *God and man in the Qur'an: semantics of the Qur'anic weltanschauung*, Islamic Book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 2002, p. 3. Note that Izutsu is not the first to state that a given language can convey a specific worldview.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ H Dāmaghānī, *al-Wūjuh wa-al-naḏā'ir: li-alfāz Kitāb Allāh al-'Azīz*, Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyah, Beirut 2003.

⁷⁰ Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-faḏ al-Qur'ān*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, 1997.

⁷¹ Ibn Al-Jawzī, *Nazhat al-A'yun: Al-Nawāzīr fī 'ilm al-wujuh wa al-Naḏā'ir*, Mu'asasah al-Risālah, 1984.

⁷² Fīrūzābādī, *Baṣā'ir dhawī al-tamyīz fī laṭā'if al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, al-Maktabah al-'Ilmīyah, Beirut, 1980.

Muḥammad ibn Mukarram Ibn Manzur.⁷³ They also examine the roots of words, their derivatives and their usage in pre-Qur'ānic times.⁷⁴

Although, as noted above, the field of semantics has previously been applied to the Qur'ān, Izutsu's position that language conveys an entire worldview and not merely the individual meaning of isolated words, is new to Qur'ānic studies.⁷⁵ The contribution of Izutsu in Qur'ānic studies, then, is in seeing the Qur'ānic language as a conceptual *weltanschauung*.⁷⁶ This is searching the interconnected and interdependent concepts in an 'extremely complex and complicated network of conceptual associations'.⁷⁷

For this reason, this thesis is concerned not with isolated key words but with the nature of the conceptual system(s) contained in the Qur'ān. As a result, the effort to comprehend the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* and to determine whether the Qur'ān possesses an overtly prescribed political theory is a task that is far from easy.

2.3.1 Izutsian Semantic Methodology

Toshihiko Izutsu employs a variety of methods in his attempt to analyse the semantic structure of the ethical words in the Qur'ān. He explains that his approach is especially critical for scriptural readings because, translations, being only partial equivalents of the original meaning, are unreliable.⁷⁸

The cultural and historically-based biases of the interpreter, not the language itself, has created the barrier towards understanding what the original intention of the Qur'ānic passages might have been. Izutsu indicates that 'word-to-word' translations

⁷³ Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, Dār Al-Šādir, Beirut, 1956.

⁷⁴ See for example, M Muslim, *Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, 2000, p. 20. Also see Dhahabī, *al-Tafsīr wa-al-mufasssīrūn*.

⁷⁵ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Although this idea that language conveys a worldview is not new in linguistics, Izutsu's theory draws upon the work of Johann Leo Weisgerber, and before him of Ferdinand de Saussure. Cited in Ullmann, *Semantics*, p. 7, also see F Saussure, *Course in general linguistics*, Philosophical Library, New York, 1959. Izutsu himself points to this in his *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*, McGill University Press, Montreal, 1966, p. 7.

⁷⁷ Izutsu, *God and man*, p. 4.

⁷⁸ See his work Izutsu, *Ethico-religious Concepts in the Qur'ān*.

are not adequate by themselves for understanding any concepts in the Qur'ān.⁷⁹ Yet for him, it remains possible to understand Qur'ānic verses, but this must be achieved by employing a rigorous semantic methodology that focuses upon a word's semantic construction and is not based upon 'word-to-word' translation.⁸⁰

In light of Izutsu's observation, one can see that there is a great risk for misunderstanding, misconstruction, misrepresentation or sweeping conclusions when analysing the politico-religious terms present in the Qur'ān. This equally applies to the readers for whom the Muslim tradition and culture is alien, as well as to the Muslim thinkers who are influenced by the modern western tradition. Such thinkers may read the Qur'ān through a reactionary and ideological lens with an apologetic goal.

Izutsu claims that by investigating the semantic field of the word or concept one may get closer to the 'original' meaning.⁸¹ Such an approach, however, is extremely time consuming. For example, the concept of *jihād* is usually translated as 'holy war', however, using Izutsian methodology one needs to look at the root word, its derivatives, its' semantic associations with other words and its usage in 7th century Arabia to be able to understand the actual meaning of *jihād*. As Izutsu puts it, the task is to move towards 'word-thing' rather than 'word-to-word' translations.⁸²

Izutsu's methodology also carries the risk of breaking down when attempting to translate foreign words that have no equivalents. Fortunately, however, even though the semantic discrepancy between words may naturally increase when looking at words that have a 'unique mode of vision',⁸³ it is still possible to explain those unique modes of vision. In doing so, one escapes the problems of a simplistic 'word-to-word' equivalence in which many meanings can be overlooked by not using 'word-thing' definitions. Such a task is far from easy to be sure and has in fact never been

⁷⁹ Izutsu, *The Structure of the Ethical Terms in the Koran*, p. 9. Izutsu uses the term 'word-to-word' to refer to those instances in which a single word in one language has an equivalent in another language so that that any translation of one of the words to the other may be said to be a 'word-to-word' translation.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 8-9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* p.14.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

attempted before in connection to the concepts that will be identified in Chapter Three. Izutsu himself suggests that this very necessary procedure is a process of trial and error.

In Izutsu's understanding of semantics each word possesses primary and secondary meanings and basic and relational meanings. Words also have semantic fields and non-semantic associations which need to be considered when analysing possible meanings of any concepts. Below are definitions of these categories.

2.3.1.1 Primary and Secondary Meanings

Each word, according to Izutsu, possesses both a primary and a secondary meaning. Most of the time, particularly in translations, the secondary meaning can become confused with the primary. For example, *kufir* is usually translated as 'unbelief'. Izutsu strongly argues that this is not the primary meaning of the word although there is within the term *kufir* some connotation of the sense of unbelief.

2.3.1.2 Basic and Relational Meanings

Alongside primary and secondary meanings of words, concepts possess basic and relational meanings.⁸⁴ This is to say, each word has a basic core meaning that is inherent in the word itself regardless of any kind of *weltanschauung* system. However, the relational meaning 'is something connotative that comes to be attached and added to the former by the word's having taken a particular position in a particular field, standing in diverse relations to all other important words in that system'.⁸⁵

This is an important point to understand and constantly keep in mind with all Qur'ānic concepts. Hence, one could argue that all concepts in the Qur'ān possess a relational meaning and at times, the relational meaning becomes the primary meaning of the word. For example, the word *taqwā* has come to mean 'to shield oneself from harm', however Qur'ānic *taqwā* has acquired the meaning of 'to protect oneself from sin, to

⁸⁴ Izutsu, *God and man*, p. 11.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* p. 13.

keep one's guard' (thinking consciously of God), to be aware of God and being God conscious.⁸⁶ This suggests the concept of *taqwā* has undertaken a semantic shift.

All the same, such an exercise is somewhat theoretical as it is likely that perhaps one will never find a pure 'basic' meaning of a word in any system. Such an analysis presumes, as Izutsu points out, that words possess basic (core) meanings so that 'in most cases the assumption facilitates our analytic procedure and makes our understanding of word-meanings more systematic and scientifically exact'.⁸⁷

2.3.1.3 Semantic Field

According to Izutsu each concept contains a semantic field. A semantic field encompasses a variety of different components. It contains the words, derivatives, its forms, its semantic synonymous(s), its parallel and words that have been associated with each other but are not linguistically connected (such as belief and good deeds - *imān & 'amal al-ṣāliḥ*)

It is important to point out that the exercise of isolating and examining semantic fields is a necessary intellectual exercise in order to understand these concepts. However, in actuality, these concepts are interrelated and cannot be entirely separated.

According to Izutsu, not all semantic fields carry the same significance within the core of the Qur'ānic system. A hierarchy exists among the concepts with respect to their degree of importance. For example, the concepts of Oneness of God, the Resurrection, Judgement Day, and Prophecy exist at the top of the hierarchy, on the account of Izutsu, as they make up the core of the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*. Creating such a hierarchy, however, is not without a serious methodological problem, as pointed out by Fazlur Rahman. Rahman asks the critical question: How is it possible to determine which concepts make up the core of the Qur'ānic system? Clearly, concepts such as Oneness of God and the Judgement Day are easily seen as central to the Qur'ān. For the remaining concepts, however, Rahman claims their positions in

⁸⁶ See ES Ohlander, 'Fear of God (*taqwa*) in the Qur'an: Some Notes on Semantic Shift and Thematic Context', *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2005, pp. 137-152.

⁸⁷ Izutsu, *God and man*, p. 16.

the hierarchy of Izutsu are arbitrary.⁸⁸

There is considerable merit to Rahman's critique. It is worth noting that although he maintains that the specific hierarchy of Izutsu seems arbitrary, he does nonetheless agree with Izutsu that a hierarchy of values is present in the Qur'ān. So it may be the case that if a specific criterion was used, such as by observing the frequency of particular concepts within the Qur'ān, it might be possible to develop a hierarchy that is not arbitrary.⁸⁹

2.3.1.4 Non-semantic Fields

The semantic fields of concepts also connect to what Izutsu calls non-semantic fields. These are defined as concepts that contribute to the meaning of words without having any semantic connections.⁹⁰ Such concepts include the Oneness of God, Judgement Day, Responsibility and Accountability.

The Izutsian method therefore arranges Qur'ānic concepts 'in a meaningful pattern representing a system of concepts ordered and structured in accordance with a principle of conceptual organisation' this is a system - a field - within a larger system.⁹¹

2.3.2 The Complexity of Semantic Fields

So it would seem that Qur'ānic concepts are expressed within a cluster of related words possessing either a positive or negative fields. These clusters of words are identified on two bases: (1) by linguistic connectives through the root word (such as *ḥukm* and *ḥikma*) or through a semantic connection (such as *khilāfa* and *wāriṭhīn*) and (2) by the re-occurrence of one concept with another i.e. concepts are paralleled. For example, the word *iṣlāḥ* has as one of its derivatives *ṣāliḥāt* (plural) which

⁸⁸ Rahman's review of Izutsu is available F Rahman, Review, in T Izutsu, *God and Man*, 2nd edit., pp. vii-xii.

⁸⁹ See the section on 'Hierarchy of concepts' p.60.

⁹⁰ Izutsu, *God and man*, p. 15.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 12.

constantly occurs with *imān* (belief). Therefore, *ṣāliḥāt* contributes to the meaning of *imān* within the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*. That is to say that *imān* (or the *mu'min*) has the connotation of pro-active positive action (*ṣāliḥāt*). However these concepts do not share a common root; they are connected as part of a wider Qur'ānic system that outlines what it means to believe in One God.⁹²

Such a methodology very quickly becomes complicated when put into practice, increasing the risk of identifying some of the key-words in an arbitrary manner. For each key-concept can have multiple relationships with various words and concepts that are not of equal importance. A single key-word could function as key-concept in one semantic field but in another field function merely in a supportive position. Izutsu recognizes this problem and comments that

the complexity of the matter arises from the fact that each of the words appearing in a sub-system, whether focus-word or key-word, does not remain confined within the limits of the particular field, but normally has a multiple relationship to many other words that properly belong to other fields.⁹³

Most difficult for semanticists is the task of isolating key-concepts from the wider complex web of interconnected concepts.⁹⁴ Yet more difficult still is the process of identifying the interconnectedness of key words to each other. It may involve a repetitive process of trial and error and constant re-evaluation. For this reason, even this thesis must itself remain a work in progress. Izutsu himself concedes that an element of arbitrariness is present as part of the process of identifying related words.⁹⁵ Identifying connections between words may not be due to pure chance and may be more than the use of common sense, but it is not fully 'rigorous'.

This methodological problem may however be addressed. This thesis proposes that the process of identifying concepts in the Qur'ān is not fully arbitrary; concepts are in fact selected on an inductive method based on the number of times a concept is mentioned. If the concept is mentioned with a high degree of frequency, than such a concept or word may be said to be central to the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*.⁹⁶

⁹² Ibid. p. 37.

⁹³ Ibid. pp. 23-24; pp. 26-27.

⁹⁴ Izutsu, *God and man*, p. 17.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 22.

⁹⁶ See the section on 'Hierarchy of Concepts' p. 59.

2.3.3 Limitation of Izutsian Methodology

Nonetheless, Izutsu's method is not without its limitations. For instance, Rahman asserts that when Izutsu examines the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*, he ignores the Meccan moral social order, making no distinction between the Meccan social order and that of the Bedouins. Yet in order to fully understand the Qur'ānic moral social order Rahman argues that it is essential to be aware of the historical distinctions between the Meccan and Bedouin socio-economic situations.⁹⁷ Izutsu's method also ignores the chronology in which the Qur'ān was revealed in. A semantic analysis alone is not sufficient to provide a full Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*. To Rahman, the historical approach is superior to a purely semantic approach. In light of Rahman's critique, this thesis will make use of historical accounts (in the form of *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *sha'n al-nuzūl*).

Although Izutsu emphasises that the Qur'ān needs to be examined without any pre-conception based on developments in post-Qur'ānic literature (e.g. jurisprudence, theology and philosophy) he himself errs in this respect by reading certain verses as if they were legal verses (*fiqhī*) concerned with social relations.⁹⁸

This type of semantic research, which focuses exclusively on the Qur'ān, and employs secondary sources solely to clarify the term, word, or context of the verse, has both advantages and disadvantages. As an advantage, it is easier to place a verse within the wider context of more general Qur'ānic theme and not be influenced by a pre-existent understanding found in theo-philosophical literature. To be sure, pure objectivity is not possible and the interpreter is always influenced by something. In this case however, the influence of the theo-philosophical argument of the medieval scholars is much diminished.

As a disadvantage, this type of research, although it can be potentially more original, may lack references. It is important to maintain a balance between freedom from the bias of past scholarship and not being aware of post-Qur'ānic scholarship at all.

⁹⁷ F Rahman, Review, in T Izutsu, *God and Man*, pp. vii-xii.

⁹⁸ See Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts of the Qur'an*.

2.3.4 Departure From Izutsu

This thesis departs from Izutsu's study of the meaning of concepts in the Qur'ān by using a methodology that addresses not only ontological questions (as the case with Izutsu) but as part of the search for determining meaning, moving towards epistemological questions.

This thesis also departs from the work of Izutsu in another respect. It also provides a way of identifying the hierarchy of these concepts in combining a thematic approach as well.⁹⁹ The following section outlines the thematic approach and its strength.

⁹⁹ See the section on Hierarchy of Concepts p. 59.

2.4 TOWARDS A THEMATIC APPROACH

The notion that the Qur'ān should be interpreted in a holistic manner is not new. The thematic method, for instance emphasizes the unity of the Qur'ān, requiring that the interpreter identifies all the verses relating to a particular topic or theme in order to understand the overall meaning conveyed.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps the earliest examples of this type of analysis may be found in the works of Ibn Taymiyya¹⁰¹ and Ghazālī,¹⁰² although they also include other elements such as *ḥadīth*, in the case of Ibn Taymiyya and theo-philosophy in the case of Ghazālī as mentioned earlier.

All the same, as noted above, the thematic approach could be seen primarily as a modern phenomenon, with scholars such as Mohammed al-Ghazālī (1916-1996),¹⁰³ Mohammed B. al-Ṣadr (1934-1980)¹⁰⁴ and Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988)¹⁰⁵ being but a few examples who address such themes as women, war/peace, commerce, inheritance, ethics, poverty, mercy and so on.¹⁰⁶

2.4.1 Theme Based Exegesis

A case could be made that theme based exegesis has the advantages of being coherent and possessing some degree of objectivity.¹⁰⁷ Bearing in mind that absolute objectivity is likely unobtainable, the thematic approach nonetheless has the potential to achieve the comprehension of the entirety of the Qur'ānic message. According to Muṣṭafā Muslim, thematic exegesis can refer to several types of methods: (1) Examining what the Qur'ān has to say about one's own personal, social, or theological interest, and (2) Collecting separate verses related to each other by verbal root or theme and attempting to explain these verses by determining the Qur'ānic

¹⁰⁰ Saeed, *The Qur'an*, p. 212.

¹⁰¹ See his work Ibn Taymiyya, *Muqaddima fī uṣūl at-tafsīr*.

¹⁰² Ghazālī, *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān wa-dururuh*, Dār al-Kutub wa-al-Wathā'iq al-Qawmīyah, Cairo, 2011.

¹⁰³ M Ghazālī, *A Journey Through the Qur'an: Themes and Messages of the Holy Qur'an*, Dar Al Taqwa, London, 1998.

¹⁰⁴ MB Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya*.

¹⁰⁵ See his general works F Rahman, *Islam*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979; *Islam & Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982; *Islamic Methodology in History*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 1965; & M Ebrahim, *Revival and Reform in Islam: A Study of Islamic Fundamentalism*, One World, Oxford, 2000.

¹⁰⁶ See for example the classification of Saeed, *The Qur'an*, pp. 203-214.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* p. 213.

perspective.¹⁰⁸ This latter type of exegesis invariably results in applying other verses to explain the verses under analysis, a process termed as *tafsīr al-Qur'ān bil al-Qur'ān*, in an attempt to achieve a holistic reading.

An exegesis of this kind was not incorporated within the *'ulūm al-Qur'ān* in an overt way until the mid-19th century in al-Azhar, where it was included in a section in books on the science of *tafsīr*.¹⁰⁹ Thematic *tafsīr* is also present to some extent as part of books pertaining to jurisprudence, located under such sections as worship, purity, and transactions in which each section would have all the verses that related to the topic of *fiqh* according to their theme. As mentioned earlier, this kind of approach is limited by the interpreter's intention being solely to derive a ruling as opposed to determine the Qur'ānic worldview as a whole.

An examination of a Qur'ānic theme independently of *fiqh* would require that the interpreter selects a concept present in the Qur'ān and then gather all verses that refer to it, in the form of a theme or a word and its derivatives and from that understand the theme in general terms and determine as to whether the Qur'ān itself provides a specific definition of the concept.

This process of thematic interpretation has been described by Amina Wadud as that of 'holistic intra-Qur'ānic interpretation', being a process that requires the interpreter to construct priorities 'based on universals rather than particulars'.¹¹⁰

2.4.1.1 Advantages of Thematic Approach

One potential advantage of employing the thematic approach is that it makes it possible to engage with contemporary concerns when reading the Qur'ān. Fazlur Rahman criticises the way some have read Qur'ānic verses in isolation without demonstrating any 'insight into the cohesive outlook on the universe and life' present

¹⁰⁸ Muslim, *Mabāḥith fī al-Tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p.17.

¹¹⁰ A Wadud, 'Towards a Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Social Justice: Race, Class and Gender', *The Journal of Law and Religion*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1996, p. 44.

in the text. For Rahman, the methodology behind such an approach is entirely inadequate.¹¹¹

2.4.2.1 Example of Modern Works that Employ the Thematic Approach

Of the scholars who strongly favour a thematic approach, Fazlur Rahman is of particular interest. Maintaining that an atomistic approach cannot supply one with a meaning of the Qur'ān as a whole,¹¹² he insists further that

the Qur'an must be so studied that its concrete unity will emerge in its fullness, and [...] to select certain verses from the Qur'an to project a partial and subjective point of view may satisfy the subjective observer but it necessarily does violence to the Qur'an itself and results in extremely dangerous abstractions.¹¹³

Fazlur Rahman's 'double movement theory' aims both to advance a way to understand the Qur'ān as a whole and to serve as a means of utilising one part of the Qur'ān to explain another. According to Rahman, the Qur'ān must be first placed within its historical context when being interpreted. This includes examining the context of revelation both in terms of the Prophet's own life and the socio-political/socio-moral context in which he lived. With the aim of recovering the 'original' meaning of revelation, this is the first movement.¹¹⁴ In doing so, it is possible to derive universal principles and Qur'ānic objectives that would allow the reader to get to the Qur'ānic normative injunctions and develop coherent systematic Qur'ānic principles.¹¹⁵

The second movement, per Rahman, the interpreter needs to apply these general principles derived from a particular Qur'ānic context to his or her contemporary context or what Rahman calls our 'present concrete socio-historical context'.¹¹⁶ Thus, the reader is constantly moving from the first movement to the second and again back to the first.

¹¹¹ Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'ān*, p. 2.

¹¹² Ibid. p. xv.

¹¹³ Ibid. p. 15.

¹¹⁴ Rahman, *Islam and modernity*, pp. 5-7.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 7.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Rahman's method takes into account the relevance of the historical events surrounding revelation. At the same time, his 'double movement theory' is limited by the fact that it can only be applied to verses that are obviously related to a historical event, and one which is known to us today. Therefore his theory cannot be applied to the entire Qur'ān.

Fazlur Rahman's approach to the Qur'ān thus employs dialogue for the sake of interpretation (i.e. a 'dialogic of hermeneutics') that combines an examination of both revelation and history (social context).

Having said all this about Rahman's "double movement theory", the work of Moḥammed B. al-Ṣadr (1935-1980) particularly stands out as a more successful attempt than Rahman's in moving away from the *tajzi'ī* (atomistic) approach by applying his method to the concept of history in the Qur'ān.

2.4.2 Ṣadrian Thematic Approach

Ṣadr's thematic approach was articulated first in his lectures and was later collected as a book in *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya: Al-tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī wa al-Tafsīr al-tajzi'ī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm* by his students.¹¹⁷

As described by Ṣadr, most Qur'ānic exegesis proceeds from verse to verse and derives the meaning of Qur'ānic passages by analysing a given verse, phrase or word rather than exploring its general concepts or themes. Ṣadr calls this method *tajzi'ī* which may be compared to a book that is read as composed of separate parts unrelated to the book as a whole. To be sure, this method still considers the context of the word and the verse(s), but only as part of a linear, sequential reading that starts at the beginning of the Qur'ān and proceeds to the end.

¹¹⁷ See Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya: Al-tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī wa al-Tafsīr al-tajzi'ī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Ta'āruḥ lil-Maṭbu'āt, 1980. His book is also found online <www.almeskat.net>.

2.4.2.1 The Application of the Ṣadrian Approach

Ṣadr applied his thematic approach when examining the concept of history in the Qur'ān. Stating that history, like the natural sciences, is governed by laws, using the term '*sunan al-tārīkh*',¹¹⁸ which could denote, 'meaning, way, age, tradition, or method of doing something'.¹¹⁹ Ṣadr's concept of laws pertaining to history is derived from specific verses in the Qur'ān that could conceivably be interpreted to indicate that there are certain laws that govern the movement of history.

For Ṣadr, however, these laws do not apply to a mere sequence of linear events in the past, but instead only apply when they fulfil a certain set of criteria, all of which must be present at the same time. For the *sunan al-tārīkh* to apply, history must first of all be seen as developments relating to society as a whole, not to an individual. This is supported by the observation that the audience is addressed not in the singular but in the plural, for instance in verses. 3:137; 6:34; 12:109; 17:77; 22:120; 33:62; 35:43; 47: 10; 89:23.¹²⁰ Secondly, a society must necessarily be moving towards a purpose (evidenced in verses 2:214; 17:13; 45:28-9; 64:9). Lastly for *sunan al-tārīkh* to apply, the society needs to be moving in the direction of the future, not the past.¹²¹

For example, Ṣadr finds evidence of *sunan al-tārīkh* in verses that describe the societal connection between corruption and righteousness (such as in verses 17:16-17; 5:66; 7:96; 43:22). Once the law that has an equilibrium is broken, when corruption pervades society, the society (*umma* as he calls it) is doomed to rapid downfall and will perish, rendering a circular dialectical historical movement.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ṣadr, *Muqadamāt fī tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī lil Qur'ān*, p. 13 retrieved 15 August 2010
<http://rafed.net/booklib/view.php?type=c_fbook&b_id=168#3>

¹¹⁹ See for example Badawi, & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur'anic usage*, pp. 459-460.

¹²⁰ Ṣadr, *Muqadamāt fī tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī lil Qur'ān*, p. 16 retrieved 15 August 2010
<http://rafed.net/booklib/view.php?type=c_fbook&b_id=168#3>

¹²¹ *Ibid.* p. 33.

¹²² *Ibid.* pp. 15-37. For example verses: 3:140; 5:54; 7:34 and 185; 9:39; 10:49; 15:4-5; 16:61; 18: 58-9; 23:43.

2.4.3 Limitations and Potential Problems

Arguably, using the thematic approach one could risk the danger of losing the theme in a given chapter when comparing it to a similar theme in another chapter. However, the Qur'ān was revealed gradually which could suggest that it is necessary to totalise the verses into one holistic theme in order to realise the core meaning of the theme itself.

Another potential difficulty with the thematic approach, as Amina Wadud explains, is that the thematic exegesis requires that the interpreter thoroughly internalises within her or himself the spirit of the Qur'ān itself.¹²³

Being aware of this challenge, the author suggests that one possible approach is to be aware of the Qur'ānic worldview itself, which the author is.

¹²³ Wadud, 'Towards a Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Social Justice', p. 44.

2.5 BEYOND ŞADRIAN AND IZUTSIAN APPROACHES

By combining the semantic and thematic approaches, one immediately realises that some themes are mentioned more frequently than another, which poses the question as to whether this repetition is significant. If the repetition of themes and concepts is significant then would one be justified to argue that the less frequent a concept is mentioned the more contextual it is? If this is the case, then if one manages to gather all the concepts on the basis of their frequency of occurrence, does one end with a hierarchy of concepts and eventually of values?

This research suggests that the more frequently a given concept occurs, the more it is the centre of a paradigm in its universality, they are characterised as conceptual core. When a number of verses taken together become a theme and a number of themes together make an integrated whole, the result is no less consequential than a single verse. In the case of concepts that occur very frequently, the message they convey becomes both more universal (independent of time, place and culture) and carry greater weight, being binding to all Muslims under any circumstance.

In contrast, words that appear less frequently are categorised as Qur'ānic-terms. A Qur'ānic-term can for the most part be interpreted by means of its context because its infrequent mention suggests that the term is specific to a given culture. This means that any attempt to apply the verses to everyday practice would require that the same circumstances of that verse also be relevant today.¹²⁴

In this way, Şadr's approach goes one step further by not only considering a single concept but also how several concepts interact together, thus making it possible to create a comprehensive worldview found in the Qur'ān about such subjects as the individual and society. This process also makes use of the same kind of inductive analytical methodology Şadr himself favours.

¹²⁴ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 41.

2.5.1 Hierarchy of Concepts

If the argument above is substantial and the frequency of themes is significant, then would one be justified in speaking of a hierarchy of concepts in the Qur'ān?¹²⁵ The idea of a hierarchy is not new in contemporary Muslim scholarship. For instance, Fazlur Rahman suggests that concepts can be placed into a hierarchy,¹²⁶ postulating, for example, that justice possesses a greater value than any specific ruling given in the Qur'ān. An example of this may be found in the case of marriage as Rahman argues. With regard to marriage, God states specifically men will not be able to be just when marrying more than one wife and therefore, Rahman suggests justice has a higher value than the permissibility of marrying more than one.¹²⁷

Rahman, however does not define his determination of greater or lesser values a hierarchy but instead speaks of 'general principles'.¹²⁸ The hierarchy of Rahman is not between different values, but between principles and specific rulings. Within this scheme, one would presumably derive principles from specific rulings. But it is not clear how one would place said principles into a hierarchy, as Rahman does not supply any kind of method to do so.

The concept of a hierarchy is also referred to by Ismā'īl Fārūqī, who maintains that the Qur'ān includes 'only the principles of their identity, of their order of rank and hierarchy, of their implication of the real-existent realm in general'.¹²⁹ According to Fārūqī there are lower ethical values that deal with real-existent that are changeable, that is to say revelation in history. He states that

[w]henver the Holy Qurān makes mention of lower ethico-religious values, or of values belonging to other realms, or of real-existents, it must do so, not for their own sake but for the sake of those higher ethico-religious values which are its prime object.¹³⁰

What the Qur'ān gives us by presenting the real-existents is a yardstick that one is able to know the 'axiological finality' of lower values.¹³¹ Fārūqī states further that the

¹²⁵ Izutsu alludes to this idea, see reference 87.

¹²⁶ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, pp. 2-5.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 20.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Fārūqī, 'Towards a new Methodology', p. 39.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid. p. 40.

higher value 'lays a greater claim than the lower member of the hierarchy and where it conflicts with the lower, it legitimately demands the lower to be forsaken for the sake of the higher'.¹³²

Fārūqī's view that lower values reflect values that are real-existent and that higher values reflect what is ideal-existent is critical for understanding the phenomenon of the abrogation of verses.

A shortcoming with Fārūqī's analysis, however, is that it does not supply a method for determining the higher value of ideal-existent. Additionally, he makes it clear that interpreters should be analysing the Qur'ān for the purposes of determining religious values and not the nature and scope of knowledge. Yet the same challenge lies in how one is able to understand axiological inferences in the Qur'ān. In fact, questions of epistemology cannot be avoided.

The placing of values within a hierarchy is also proposed by Abdullah Saeed in his book *Interpreting the Qur'an*.¹³³ Saeed considers ethico-legal verses as a way of determining what constitutes 'right action' within a jurisprudential context. He claims that a careful reading that focuses upon the 'concept of right action provides an extensive list of values that can be classified and prioritized in order to arrive at some form of hierarchy'.¹³⁴ Saeed identifies five fundamental values that relate to ethico-legal verses and hence also relate to 'right action'. Listed in order of importance by Saeed they are: obligatory, fundamental, protectional, implementational and institutional.¹³⁵ Saeed determined the relative importance of these values by employing 'inductive corroboration' known to jurists,¹³⁶ in which the more frequent a value occurs, the greater its significance.¹³⁷

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, pp128-144.

¹³⁴ Ibid. p129.

¹³⁵ Saeed also suggests frequency of occurrence in relation to ethico-legal verses, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 139.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p133.

¹³⁷ For discussion on inductive corroboration see the work of WB Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: an Introduction to Sunnī uṣūl al-fiqh*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, p. 166.

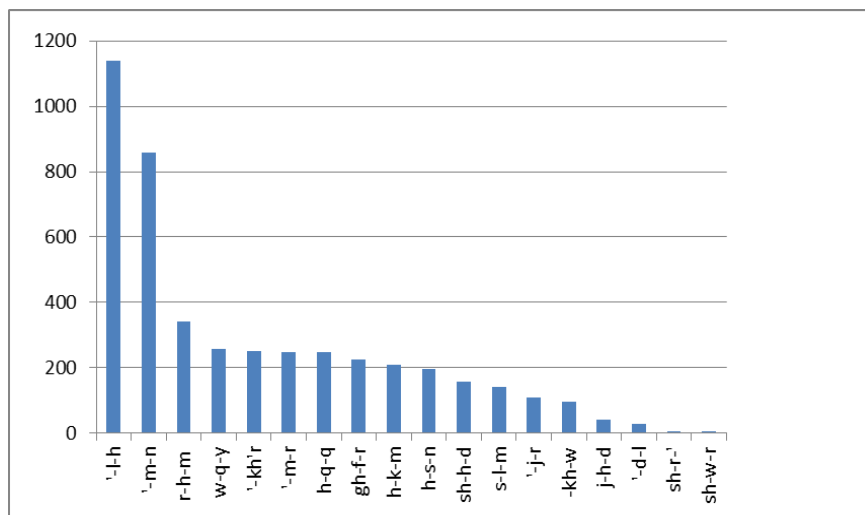
Although Saeed’s five categories of Qur’ānic values is useful in some ways, it has not been employed in this thesis for the reason that Saeed’s thought is still tied to some degree with that of jurisprudence. Even his five categories carry an echo of the well-known jurisprudential categories of obligatory, prohibited, reprehensible, recommended and permissible. Furthermore, it is possible to see the entire Qur’ān as obligatory or fundamental, hence, such categories have their limitations.

In contrast, the values this thesis considers are the actual concepts mentioned in the Qur’ān, such as *rahma*, *taqwā*, *ḥikma*, *’adl*, *ḥaqq*, *jihād* and so on. The concepts are assigned a place in a hierarchy on the basis of their frequency.

2.5.1.1 Demonstration of the methodology

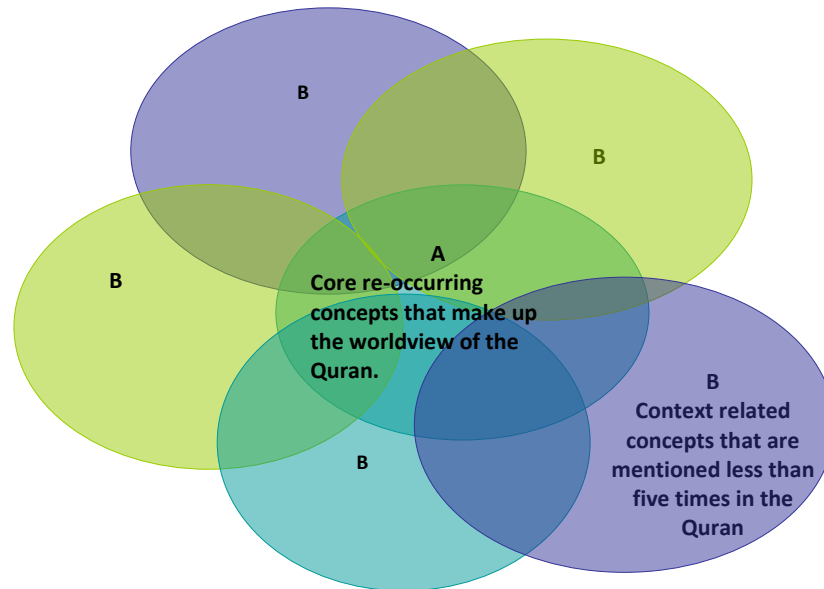
The diagram below illustrates a sample of concepts selected from their root-words presented according to amount of times they are present in the Qur’ān from most frequent to the least frequent.

Diagram 1: The Hierarchy of Concepts



The diagram below illustrates the way concepts are formed and interconnect:

Diagram 2: Web of Interconnectedness and Formation of Core Concepts



The overlapping circles that join together in the centre of **A** represent concepts found in the Qur’ān. They are said to be in the core because they are frequently mentioned. The different circles indicate separate concepts. For example, the root word *r-h-m* occurs 342 times in eleven different forms including *rahma rahīm*, *rahmān* and it occurs many times with the concept of *Allāh*, from the root word *‘i-l-h* occurring 1,139 times with five different forms; and *Allāh* occurs with *ghafūr* many times, from the root word *gh-f-r* occurring 224 times in eleven different forms. The closer the concepts are to the centre, the more the concepts overlap with each other and are universal. Observe also that **A** and **B** overlap and share connections. Where **A** must remain a universal concept within certain selected verses, **B** may have a particular meaning that may derive from a specific socio-political situation at the time of revelation. For these reasons, **B** is placed further away from the core, being contingent to the context of revelation. The circles that are all labelled **B** represents different terms in the Qur’ān that should be read as contextual in comparison to **A**.

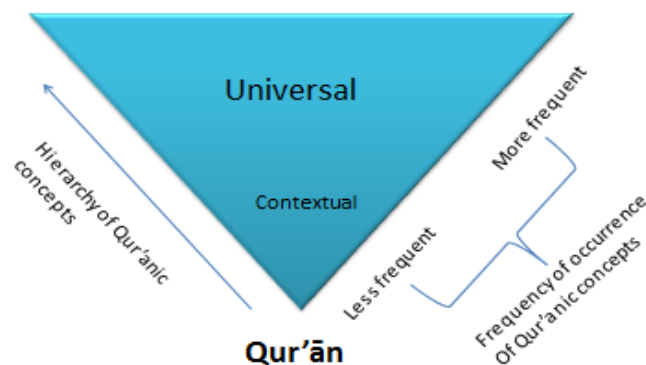
This is illustrated by the point labelled **B**. Note however that Diagram 2 is in no ways suggests that context-related *terms* are any less important so much as to suggest that such *terms* must be read within the context of the revelation and only its spirit or objective can be applicable.

It is easier to see how many interpreters have in fact confused **A** with **B**, rendering what is best seen as contextual as universal. This will be further illustrated in Chapter Four and Five relating to terms such as *shūrā* and *'ulī al-amr*.

The idea of “hierarchy of concepts” that is measured by the frequency of occurrence of concepts should not be seen as making the Qur’ān as a statistical analysis. The aim is not to reduce the understanding of the Qur’ān to a mere numbers. On the contrary, this is a mere indication that one needs to internalise all the values of the Qur’ān. Yet at the same time be able to understand the scope of the application of some of the verses.

To illustrate the contextual relation to the universal, the following diagram provides a visual appreciation suggesting that the less frequently a concept appears the more contextual it is and the more frequently it occurs the more universal the concept becomes.

Diagram 3: Contextual relation to the Universal



It might follow then, if the frequency of a concept is significant, what would *silence* in the Qur’ān indicate? To be consistent with the thesis’ methodology the silence of anything in the Qur’ān is also significant. If the high frequency of a concept indicates its universality (*kuliyāt*), then the intended omission would indicate free choice.

2.5.2 Axiology

An interpreter of the Qur'ān not only receives meaning but also generates it. In agreement with Yahya Mohammed's argument that one cannot escape from one's life experiences at either the personal or social level, experiences that form an essential part of who the person is. Any person who encounters a text or situation views that text and situation does so through the lens of his or her experiences.¹³⁸ The challenge to the interpreter is that the ultimate intended meaning of text cannot be said to have been reached. In Saeed's own words:

an ultimate and 'final' meaning cannot be achieved...Therefore, the safest way to approach those texts is at the level of human communication, at the same time acknowledging the approximate nature of that understanding.¹³⁹

Having said that, this does not mean that one cannot perceive the general meaning of a text, as it has real implications to those who follow that teaching.¹⁴⁰

2.5.3 Difficulties and Limitations

The task of examining frequency in the Qur'ān is complicated because one is not only considering the semantic frequency of a word, but of its wide conceptual theme which include words that do not share a common root. A further difficulty is found in the fact that the frequency of a thematic concept must remain an estimate because, as Saeed himself concedes, 'it is almost impossible to identify all possible associated terms relating to the value'.¹⁴¹ This kind of complexity makes any analysis more time consuming and potentially less accurate, particularly with regard to concepts that are located close to each other in the hierarchy.

¹³⁸ see Y Mohammed, *Mantiq fahm al-Naṣṣ*. This view is also shared by Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 149.

¹³⁹ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 92.

¹⁴⁰ See Y Muḥammad, *Mantiq fahm al-naṣṣ*. For instance, the meaning of creation, judgement day, day of resurrection and even the ideas of forgiveness, we understand their general meanings but its specifications the 'hows' is unknown to us. Possibly this is the difference between the concept of it and its conception.

¹⁴¹ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p.139.

Another serious limitation to this approach may be that the use of statistical analysis alone may have the consequence of draining the Qur'ān of its spiritual reflections. However, this is certainly not the intention of this kind of methodology, and indeed this research may be seen as a reaction against the simplification of reading the Qur'ān. Internalising the holistic message of the Qur'ān by constant connection to it is one way of avoiding the possibility of making the Qur'ān a mere statistical argumentation.

Additionally, some scholars, such as 'Ā'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān Bint al-Shāṭi' (1913-1998), Muhammed Aḥmed Khalafallāh (1916-1998), Muhammed Arkoun (1928-2010), and Nāṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (1943-2010), in examining the Qur'ān in history, developed the idea that the Qur'ān, like other books, can be subjected to literary criticism. They have argued this in relation to the contextuality of the Qur'ān itself.¹⁴² This author departs from their analysis in examining the Qur'ān as a literary text. The hierarchy of value proposed here does not emphasise the contextuality of the Qur'ān but rather provides a method for recognising possible contextual elements in some verses. Therefore the idea of the hierarchy of values is not that of historicisation of the Qur'ān, but an effort to understand its application in today's world.

¹⁴² See the works of Campanini & Higgitt, *The Qur'an*, pp. 42-64.

2.6 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated above, the utilization of both semantic and thematic approaches will make it possible to examine text, context, co-text, intercontextuality and the issues of interpretation more fully in the Qur'ān than by any other approach available.¹⁴³ Although none of the scholars presented in this chapter have provided a unique analysis, the methods they have used in their research have been shown here to be significant.

By combining the two methods, one can ensure that the words analysed within their semantic field are viewed in light of the Qur'ān as a whole. Such a method transcends a word's lexical definition and synthesizes a range of related meanings and their interconnections. In the course of investigating a worldview one moves from the study of the particular to the study of the whole, from words to concepts, from concepts to themes and from themes to paradigms. With such a combination of methods it becomes possible to sketch out large patterns, establish links between words, and approach the possible meanings of verses in their multi-layered complexity.

¹⁴³ For further discussion on context and intercontextuality see M Abdel Hallem, 'Context and Internal Relationships: Keys to Qur'anic Exegesis', in GR Hawting & AA Shareef, *Approaches to the Qur'ān*, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 71-98. Also see J Van Ess, 'Text and Context', in IA Bierman, *Text and Context in Islamic Societies*, Ithaca Press, Reading, 2004.

CHAPTER 3: THEORY VS HISTORY

The Impact of Historical Events upon the Development of Muslim Political Theology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

With the aim of defining ‘political theory’ from *within* the Muslim tradition, this chapter will trace the development of Muslim political concepts in Muslim history. The emphasis upon Muslim perspectives provides a necessary corrective to the Eurocentric manner in which the concepts of the ‘political’ and of ‘theory’ have been understood, as noted in the Introduction. The chapter looks at the historical development of these concepts as a discursive tradition by examining a sample of scholars reflecting the discursive transformation of the tradition itself and not isolated authors.¹ Emerging out of this somewhat lengthy and complex task is the surprising repetition of concepts that are connected in some way with the first Muslim *fitna* (civil war).² It is clear, therefore, that the development of Muslim political theology is strongly influenced by the political events occurring at the time. The reference to Muslim political theology is a reference to the historical development of Muslim political thought that does not necessarily mean Qur’ānic. In the course of its investigation, this chapter will in fact demonstrate that prior to experience with Western colonialism, particularly during the dismantlement of the Ottoman Empire, questions regarding the establishment of an “Islamic State” had never been articulated in a serious manner within the early Muslim political traditions.

¹ The idea Islam is a discursive tradition is articulated by T Asad, *The idea of an anthropology of Islam*, Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., 1986.

² The first Muslim civil war is dated from 35-40/656-661. It is also known as the big affliction (*al-fitnat al-kubrā*). The second civil war (although there are disagreement on the exact date, goes back to the war between Yazīd bin Mu’āwiya and Ḥussayn bin ‘Alī 63-65/683-685, the third civil war is thought to be the ‘Abbasid Revolution over the Ummayyads. See J van Ess, ‘Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought’, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2001, pp. 151-164. Linguistically *fitna* has come to mean ‘to disrupt a peace of community’ ‘to afflict’ something, usually testing someone’s endurance. See Badawi, M El-Said & M. A. Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur’anic usage*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, p. 692.

Accordingly this chapter shall also demonstrate how the very nature of questions asked related to politics was shaped by actual political turmoil and that those questions that had developed into concepts in turn determined the lens through which the scripture was read. However, it is not a historical account of the development of Muslim political thought in the way, for example, of Anthony Black,³ Montgomery Watt,⁴ Ann Lambton⁵ and Patricia Crone.⁶ It is an attempt to trace the emergence of Muslim political concepts.

In addition, it will take into account the difficulties posed for the historian in evaluating sources and their multiple perspectives showing the challenging periods of history.

This chapter suggests that the development of Muslim political theology was shaped profoundly by the first Muslim civil war and to a lesser extent by the succession crisis. Key questions that arose under these circumstances concerned the basis of legitimate rulership, the characteristics of a leader and the obsession with boundaries of belief that later developed into distinct doctrinal borders.

Even though the historicity of such events remains difficult to prove in full, it is still apparent that political theory developed in reaction to issues that are expressed in narratives about such events. Indeed political theology was affected to the point that textual support from the Qur'ān was garnered to bolster those views.

Next, the chapter will trace how this pattern continues by examining a sample of medieval scholars including Abū Al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (364-450/974-1058), Abū Ḥāmid Aḥmed al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111) and Taqī al-Dīn Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328). Questions that persisted throughout medieval times included the qualities of a legitimate leader, his characteristics and 'conditions' of the caliphate, as

³ A Black, *The history of Islamic political thought: from the Prophet to the Present*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 2004.

⁴ W M Watt, *Islamic political thought: the basic concepts*, Edinburgh U.P, Edinburgh, 1968. By the same author *Islamic political thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998.

⁵ A K S Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981.

⁶ P Crone, *Islam and government: a history of medieval Islamic political thought*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.

well as the purpose of the caliphate as an institution. In a departure from the earlier formative period in Muslim history, political concepts during the medieval age was marked by discussions of obedience and rebellionism. These are discussions that later would be found in the majority of *fiqh* books of all sects. At this point, most of the historical writings of the early period developed into an orthodoxy. The discussions, therefore, became highly jurisprudential as well as polemical with the goal of falsifying any claims made by other sects regarding the right to rule.⁷

Lastly, this chapter examines political theory as understood in contemporary times, which has arguably been shaped by the experiences of colonisation (and decolonisation), modernity and the imposition of the nation-state. The distinctive feature of this period is the move away from polemical argument towards a theory of compatibility with modernity, with Islam at its centre. Departing from the emphasis on questions relating to legitimacy of the early and medieval periods, contemporary Muslim thinkers instead explore the extent to which Islam is compatible with aspects of modernity, including but not limited to science, human rights and the nation-state. In addition, within contemporary Shī'ite thought in particular, a new kind of political theory develops which replaces the medieval ideas of *muntaḍira* (waiting for the reappearance of the Mehdī) with the guardianship of the jurist (*wilāya al-faqīh*) as a form of government that is religiously necessary.

3.1.1 Primary Sources and Historiographical Difficulties

Evaluating historical sources poses numerous difficulties, especially when (as is the case with this chapter), the sources significantly post-date the events they describe. Consequently, the thinking of historians and theologians that came after the event was shaped by these sources without serious critical examination. Further complication arises in the later sectarian formations that also rely on specific historical sources. Only later did periods of history become canonised into an ideal form. For example,

⁷ For details on the groups which developed see Ibn Tāhir al-Baghdādī, 'Abd al-Qāhir, *Al Farq bayna al Firaq*, Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadīda, Beirut, 1973. Also see Shahrastānī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm, *Kitāb al-Mīlal wa-al-Niḥal*, Mu'assasat al-Ḥalabī, Cairo, 1968.

accounts of the *khulafā' al-rāshidūn* era⁸ eventually only included the four companions⁹ and not Mu'āwiya or the other Umayyads.¹⁰ As orthodox perspectives arose and solidified further, their interpretation of what had happened as early as 10/632 were interpreted in light of beliefs that developed after 40/661, such as whether or not the Prophet designated a successor.¹¹ This is consistent with the proposed idea in this chapter that political events (history) have shaped political questions and hence shaped the way the scripture is read.

It is important to mention this here in order to clarify that the purpose of this chapter is not to search for *whose account is the truest* but to acknowledge the problematic nature of the sources available, especially as we have no original manuscripts at hand. Nonetheless, primary sources are important for establishing some kind of narrative of events. Fortunately, certain significant events, such as the murder of 'Uthmān, are well established as fact, although various accounts may differ in specifics. The key issue here is that when general historical accounts are not disputed the author will not seek to differ.

The most contested historical period relating to how and why two companions of the Prophet died at the hands of other Muslims took place between 10 and 40 (632-661). Historical records were initially written down to ensure that the Prophet's sayings were not being misused, given that many Muslims were citing sayings of the Prophet as evidence.¹² Some of the earliest Sunnī extant accounts, upon which other works inevitably rely are those of Ibn Ishāq (d.134/761) in his *Sīrat al-Nabī*;¹³ imām Mālik (d.179/796) in his *al-Muwatta'*;¹⁴ Moḥammad al-Bukhārī (194-256/810-870) in his

⁸ Literally means the 'righteous successors'; 'rightly guided successors'; 'one who follows the correct path or one who is sensible'. From here on it will be referred to as the *rāshidūn* period.

⁹ They include Abū Bakir Al-Ṣiddiq (ruled from 10/632 to 12/634), 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (12-23/634-644), 'Uthmān bin 'Affān (23-35/644-656) and 'Alī ibn abī Ṭālib (35-40/656-661).

¹⁰ The name came to denote the family of banū Umayya that Yazīd, Mu'āwiya and his father Abū Sufyān belonged to. See F M Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing*, Darwin Press, Princeton, 1998. Also see Van Ess 'Political Ideas in Early Muslim Religious Thought', p. 153.

¹¹ The historical records are in the form of *ḥadīth* collections or development of heterography in terms of the life of the Prophet.

¹² For information on the development of *ḥadīth* see Y Muḥammad, *Mushkilat al-Ḥadīth*, Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, Beirut, 2007.

¹³ Ibn Ishāq M, & Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasū al-Allāh*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1996.

¹⁴ This book is considered to be the first collections of the sayings that are attributed to the Prophet (*ḥadīth*). See Mālik ibn Anas, *al-Muwatta'*, Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, Cairo, 1951.

Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and *Kitāb Tārīkh al-Kabīr*;¹⁵ Muslim bin al-Ḥajjāj (d.261/875) in his *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*;¹⁶ Ibn Mājah (d.272/886) in his *Sunan Ibn Mājah*;¹⁷ Abū Dāwūd (d.274/888) in his *Sunan Ibn Dāwūd*;¹⁸ Al-Tirmidhī (d.278/892) in his *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*;¹⁹ and Moḥammed ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (223-310/838-923) in his *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* known as *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*.²⁰ These accounts consist of collections of the sayings of the Prophet, his companions (*ṣahāba*) and the successors of the companions (*tabi‘īn*). Some skip the first *fitna* or mention it only generally (for example see *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*).

The Shī‘ites have their own sources, including *ḥadīth* collections and polemical discussions regarding who has the right to rule.²¹ One of those sources is *Nahj al-Balāgha* attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib compiled by Al-Sharīf al-Rāḍī (d.405/1015) which contains ‘Alī’s sermons, letters, sayings and advice.²² However, there are some issues with its authenticity, particularly due to the time lapse between ‘Alī and al-Rāḍī. In addition, the Shī‘ite also have four main historiographical works that contain the sayings of the Prophet and the *imāms*: the work of al-Kulaynī (250-329/864-941) in his *Kitāb al-Kāfi*;²³ Shaykh al-Ṣaduq (305-381/917-991) in his work *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh*;²⁴ and two books by Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭūsī (385-460/995-1067) *Tahdhīb al-Aḥkām*²⁵ and *Al-Istibṣār*.²⁶ Both Sunnī and Shī‘ite sources are problematic; they present conflicting accounts, both were written long after the events took place, and some cases, have a clear ideological bias.

¹⁵ Bukhārī, Muḥammad ibn Ismā‘īl, and Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī: the translation of the meanings of Sahih al-Bukhari : Arabic-English*, Darussalam Pub. & Distr, Saudi Arabia, 1997. Also see *Kitāb Al-Tārīkh Al-Kabīr*, vol.1-4, Ḥaydarābād al-Dakkan: Maṭba‘at Jam‘iyat Dā’irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Uthmāniyah, 1941.

¹⁶ Muslim ibn Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, and Nawawī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, Beirut, 2000.

¹⁷ Ibn Mājah, Muḥammad ibn Yazīd, *Sunan ibn Majah*, vol.1-5, Dār al-kutub al-‘ilmīya, Beirut, 1998.

¹⁸ Abū Dā’ūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ash‘ath al-Sijistānī, *Sunan Abī Dāwūd*, Dār Iḥyā’ al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah, 1970.

¹⁹ Tirmidhī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Isā, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, Saudi Arabia, 1965.

²⁰ Ṭabarī, Muhammad ibn Jarīr, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī: tāriḥ al-rusul wa al-mulūk*, Dār ‘al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1960.

²¹ For further discussion see the section on the First *fitna* in this chapter p. 78.

²² Sharīf al-Rāḍī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, and Mohammad Askari Jafery, *Nahjul Balagha*, Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Elmhurst, 1984.

²³ Kulaynī, Muḥammad ibn Ya‘qūb, and Muḥammad Riḍā Ja‘farī, *Al-Kāfi*, Group of Muslim Brothers, Iran, 1978.

²⁴ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, Muḥammad ibn ‘Alī, and Bāsim Mūsawī, *Man lā yaḥḍuruḥu al-faqīh lil-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq*, al-Majma‘, Iran, 1988.

²⁵ Ṭūsī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, *Tahdhīb al-aḥkām*, Dār al-Aḍwā’, Beirut, 1992.

²⁶ Ṭūsī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan, and Ḥasan al-Mūsawī Kharsān, *al-Istibṣār fī mā ikhtalafa min al-akḥbār*, Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, Iraq, 1956.

From the dates above it becomes clear that the collection of *ḥadīth* began within the Sunnī tradition. The emphasis that Muslim scholars placed on determining whether a given *ḥadīth* was authentic (‘sound’ – *ṣaḥīḥ*) or ‘weak’ (*ḍa‘īf*) suggests a full awareness of the existence of fabricated *ḥadīths*.²⁷ Consequently, the examination of the sayings of the Prophet within a narrative chain developed into a type of ‘biographical studies’ (*‘ilm al-rijāl*) and later became a full science of *ḥadīth* (*‘ilm al-ḥadīth*).²⁸ The very existence of this science shows that historiographical records were acknowledged within Muslim scholarly tradition to be problematic. Even with such a science there were limitations because early sources were scarce and could have a questionable authenticity, which meant that particular claims and accounts could not be verified.²⁹ Given this situation, this chapter will speak of historical accounts in general terms and not in detail, in keeping with the purpose of tracing the development of political *concepts* rather than of verifying the historical *truth* of the claims.

²⁷ See Y Muḥammad, *Mushkilat al-ḥadīth*.

²⁸ It is also translated as “biographical evaluation”, “the study of the transmitters of hadith”, “study of the narrators”, also “science of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*”

²⁹ See the work of M H Kamali, *A textbook of Ḥadīth studies: authenticity, compilation, classification and criticism of Ḥadīth*, The Islamic Foundation, England, 2005.

3.2 EARLY POLITICAL THEOLOGY

It is disputed as to whether the Prophet explicitly designated a leader to succeed him. The Qur'ān never speaks of a successor.³⁰ The extant historical accounts consist of two contradictory chains of transmission (*ḥadīths*), each with a different claim as to what happened.³¹ Some Muslim thinkers have deduced from the reports that the Prophet did not leave any kind of instructions or will but made an implicit case for Abū Bakr's succession because within those narratives he was asked to lead the prayer when the Prophet was ill.³² This account is adopted by Majority Sunnī traditions. The Shī'ite tradition, in contrast, adopts those *ḥadīth* reports that state that the Prophet had actually designated a successor, Alī ibn abī Ṭālib, his son-in-law and cousin.³³ These two traditions became obsessed with arguments and counter arguments to supporting their conflicting accounts of what the Prophet had said. The theological debate on *imāma* amongst Shī'ites and Sunnīs reflects the disagreements on the reports regarding the last accounts of the Prophet. As a result the first concept to emerge within Muslim political thought concerned the nature of Muslim leadership and the idea of an *imām*.

Abū Bakr became the first successor after the Prophet's death. This decision arose out of negotiations by different tribes at Saqīfa,³⁴ with historical records suggesting that frictions emerged between the Anṣār and Muhājirūn.³⁵ Because written accounts of the event took place much later, one finds that there are major contradictions between narratives regarding important details. This event constituted the first genuine disagreement in Muslim history and as the Shī'ite emphasise this period as the start of their alliance with 'Alī, it is often seen as the beginning of the sectarian differences.³⁶ Nonetheless, there are no written accounts of any recorded war or blood feud in

³⁰ This idea has been argued by many including Q Khan, *Political concepts in the Quran*, Islamic Book Foundation, Lahore, 1982; also see the authors in C Kurzman, *Liberal Islam: a source book*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. W Madelung, *The succession to Muḥammad: a history of the early Caliphate*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.

³¹ M Ahmed, 'The Classical Muslim State', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1962, pp. 83-104. p. 86.

³² Ibid. Another noted evidence is that the Prophet was Married to Abū Bakr's daughter 'Ā'isha.

³³ Also see A Afsaruddin, *Excellence and precedence: medieval Islamic discourse on legitimate leadership*, Brill, Leiden, 2002, p. 150.

³⁴ A Goldschmidt, & L Davidson, *A concise history of the Middle East*, Westview Press, Boulder, 2006, p. 60.

³⁵ See Madelung, *The succession to Muḥammad*, pp. 28-56.

³⁶ See for example the works of S H Nasr, H Dabashi, & S V R Nasr, *Expectation of the millennium Shi'ism in history*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1989.

connection with this disagreement over leadership, in contrast with what would be the case with the first *fitna*. Such an absence of violent conflict might indicate that ‘Alī in fact accepted the arrangement that took place. To be sure, the Shī‘ite maintain that ‘Alī merely tolerated this situation for the sake of the Muslim unity as his *bay‘a* (oath of allegiance) to Abū Bakr came many months after the disagreement about who should lead.³⁷ However, the Shī‘ite argument about Alī’s tolerance would also mean that ‘Alī tolerated the years of rulership of Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān, yet not Mu‘āwīya or the Khārijīte. Considering both the character of ‘Alī and the weighty claim by the Shī‘ite that it was the Prophet’s decision (therefore also God’s decision) that ‘Alī should have been the successor this explanation seems less plausible. After all, when ‘Alī did rule, the sermon attributed to him suggests that it was not what he wanted.³⁸

Abū Bakr, for his part, ruled for only two years. Close to his death he appointed ‘Umar as his successor, requesting that the people give *bay‘a* to him.³⁹ ‘Umar on his part set up an advisory/consultative group (*shūrā*) made up of six companions⁴⁰ to advise him on various matters and to choose a leader following his death.⁴¹

‘Umar was assassinated by Abū Lu‘lu‘a, a Zoroastrian from Persia, and the next leader was chosen by the council ‘Umar had set up.⁴² ‘Uthman Ibn ‘Affān was consequently elected by the council. He ruled for 12 years before he was also assassinated by a Muslim for allegedly corrupt conduct; this was the first time a Muslim leader was killed by a fellow Muslim. In the resulting power vacuum, the

³⁷ *Bay‘a* is thought to be a non-Arabic word, its origin maybe Persian, of its roots four forms occur 14 times in the Qur’an: *Bāya‘a* occurs six times, it comes to mean to pledge allegiance, to swear fealty, declare oneself a loyal subject to a ruler (for example in verse 48:10). See EM Badawi & MA Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English dictionary of Qur’anic usage*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, p. 122.

³⁸ See *Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermons 92, 137, and 205. Also see *Tārīkh Ṭabarī*, vol.3, p. 457.

³⁹ See for example the work of A Afsaruddin, *The first Muslims: history and memory*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2008.

⁴⁰ They are Sa‘d Ibn Abī Waqqās, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn ‘Awf, Zubayr ibn al-Awwām, Ṭalḥa ibn ‘Ubayd Allāh, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān.

⁴¹ Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*. vol. 3, pp. 294-295.

⁴² C F Robinson, & M A Cook, *The New Cambridge History of Islam: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010. Also see S A Arjomand, ‘Legitimacy and political organisation: caliphs, kings and regimes’, in Irwin, Robert *Islamic cultures and societies to the end of the eighteenth century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010, pp. 225-273.

Muslims turned to ‘Alī.⁴³ With the above short account of four rulers (Abū Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī) what is outlined is the four different ways in which governorship was passed down suggesting the circumstantial political structures in place.⁴⁴

Given that each of these four companions of the Prophet acquired power differently strongly suggests an absence of any definite political blueprint that could be binding. More likely and in line with the silence of the Qur’ān, the early Muslim community fell back into their traditional way of selecting a leader. Stated differently, it was only within the power vacuum after the death of the Prophet that the tradition of *bay‘a* and choosing the eldest and the closest to the Prophet emerged. In fact, the very existence of a power vacuum following the Prophet’s death points further to the absence of any kind of clearly prescribed political theory. As Askari explains:

From the very first day after the death of the Prophet, the issue of the succession to the Prophet into factions that later took clear forms of division first between the disciples, then between the houses of Umayyads and Hashimites, and as most political factions took the shape of theological divisions and expressions of sects and sub-sects.⁴⁵

Not only did the political situation enter theological discussions in the form of Sunnī and Shī‘ite schisms as well as involving smaller groups but they also coloured the absolute declaration of Islamic creed (*‘aqida*) itself.⁴⁶

The best way to illustrate and summarise the different accounts that developed is found in the table below. The accounts ranged between the Prophet clearly designated ‘Alī as a successor; the Prophet had preferred Abū Bakr, governorship is necessary by reason or tradition; and finally the actions of the early companions are binding in terms of governorship. There are, of course, challenges with the last assertion as the companions actions was diverse. In all cases the concept of succession and *imām*

⁴³ W M Watt, *The majesty that was Islam: the Islamic world, 661-1100*, Sidgwick & Jackson, London, 1974, pp. 35-37. Also see M A Shaban, *Islamic History a new Interpretation AD 750-1055*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1976.

⁴⁴ F M Donner ‘Muhammad and the Caliphate: Political History of the Islamic Empire up to the Mongol Conquest’, in J L Esposito (ed.) *The Oxford history of Islam*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 1-62.

⁴⁵ H Askari, *Society and State in Islam: An Introduction*, Islam and the Modern Age Society, New Delhi, 1978, p. 75.

⁴⁶ For further information see the work of Yāsīn, ‘Abd al-Jawād *Al-Sulṭah fī al-Islām: al-‘aql al-fiqhī al-salafī bayna al-naṣṣ wa-al-tārīkh*, Al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 1998.

came to be central to the Muslim political theology.

Diagram 4: Differences between Sects in Perceiving Succession of the Prophet

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Some Sunnī		X	X Abū Bakr		X	X
Some Shī'ite (Ismā'īlis)	X					
Khāraji'ite		X				
Mu'tazilite				X		
Zaydis			X 'Alī			
Ibn Taymiyya					X	X

A: The Prophet clearly designated 'Alī as a successor.

B: The Prophet did not designate 'Alī as a successor.

C: The Prophet had preferred Abū Bakr/'Alī.

D: The Prophet did not designate anyone. Governorship is necessary by reason.

E: The Prophet did not designate anyone but governorship is necessary by tradition.

F: The Prophet did not designate anyone but the companions actions are binding.

It was the civil war that would particularly lead to questions of boundaries of belief and who has the right to rule and consequently leading to the start of Muslim political theology. A brief summary of the historical development of these concepts are discussed in the succeeding section.

3.2.1 The First *Fitna* and the Beginning of Muslim Political Theology

As shown above, the events surrounding the period between the death of ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān (48/661) and the assassination of ‘Alī ibn abū Ṭālib (35/656) are inconclusive. As Watt points out, it is the most obscure and ‘controversial period in the whole of Islamic history’.⁴⁷ The sheer amount of disagreement and confusion about the designation of a leader offers strong evidence that the Prophet did not leave any clear indication of a particular form of government. As important as the succession crisis was for the development of a Muslim political theory, the rising against ‘Uthmān until the death of ‘Alī was also of particular importance.

At its heart, the dispute that arose during the time of ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān posed some basic questions about rulership, including: (1) what constitutes good governorship, (2) how a leader should rule and (3) whose example should the ruler follow and how should that example be followed. These important questions would shape how Muslim theological language was crafted, how Qur’ānic verses would be interpreted and ultimately, and in later centuries, how Muslim political theory would develop.

By most accounts, the first *fitna* is thought to have taken place when ‘Uthmān was besieged in his house by apparent rebels dissatisfied that their leader had been appointing members from his family as governors in key provinces, including Mu‘āwiya in Damascus.⁴⁸

Charged with misrule and with being a ‘caliph of nepotism’ the rebels assassinated him around 35/656.⁴⁹ Although the identities of ‘Uthmān’s killers were unknown, it is thought that they based their accusation upon issues of justice. It is at this point that the first *fitna* is thought to have started. With the unexpected death of ‘Uthmān, Muslims (including the rebels) turned towards ‘Alī for guidance, as he was a member of the *shūrā* council and amongst the very few companions of the Prophet remaining. After the Muslims gave their oath of alliance, and ‘Alī accepted the responsibility (the details are disputed here) he asked Mu‘āwiya to leave his office in Damascus hoping

⁴⁷ W M Watt, *The formative period of Islamic thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1973, p. 9.

⁴⁸ Mu‘āwiya was the nephew of ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān.

⁴⁹ A Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, Cairo, 1961.

to calm down the rebels. Mu‘āwiya, however, refused to give his oath on the basis that ‘Alī must bring justice to the killers of his uncle.⁵⁰ It is at this point that different narrations of history contradict, with many attempting to fill in the gaps. The Shī‘ite account claims that Mu‘āwiya untruthfully charged ‘Alī with either collaborating in the killing of ‘Uthmān or knowing the killers but not bringing them to justice. According to the Shī‘ite account, ‘Alī asked his two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥussayn to defend ‘Uthmān. In any case, it is agreed that, Mu‘āwiya managed to convince both ‘Ā’isha bint Abū Bakr (the wife of the Prophet), two companions of the Prophet, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr to go to war with ‘Alī. In 35/656 the Battle of the Camel took place in which, for the first time in Muslim history, not only were Muslims at war with each other, companions of the Prophet were also involved. It remains unclear who killed ‘Uthmān and whether ‘Alī knew the killers, but he did win the battle, yet his sermon indicates he remained bitter regarding the killings, which he had felt were unnecessary.⁵¹

After the battle of the Camel, ‘Alī again asked Mu‘āwiya for his oath and requested that he leaves his office, but Mu‘āwiya refused and mobilised an army from the Levant. This led to the battle of Ṣiffīn in 36/657, which took place over a week of fighting. It is reported that as ‘Alī was winning the battle, one of Mu‘āwiya’s advisors ‘Amr bin al-‘Āṣ suggested that their soldiers should hold the Qur’ān on the spearheads and call for it to judge (*lā ḥukma ilā li-lāh*)⁵² between the two parties, thus creating doubt in ‘Alī’s army. The doubt was based on upholding the sacredness of the scripture and hence the possibility of reconciliation. This came to be known as *raf‘ al-maṣāḥif*. As predicted, there was a serious disagreement amongst the followers of ‘Alī. Some rejected the idea of arbitration, maintaining that Mu‘āwiya and his camp were using this as a military strategy because they were losing. Others were in favour of it, feeling that God’s word should not be ignored. At this point historical accounts again are in conflict. It is believed that around these heated debates, a new group emerged which departed (*kharajū*) from ‘Alī’s authority (and the Army); they

⁵⁰ Calling for justice, what later became to be known as *qamīṣ ‘Uthmān* (the shirt of ‘Uthmān).

⁵¹ See his sermons and letters in *Nahj al-Balāgha* (sermons 8, 31, 171 and 173), also see his letters to Mu‘āwiya. I M Lapidus, *A history of Islamic societies*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002, p. 47.

⁵² Using a Qur’ānic verse Q 6:57.

came to be known as Khawārij (Khārijī'ites).⁵³ To the Khārijī'ites, 'Alī committed a grave sin (*dhanb kabīr*) in accepting the arbitration and not fighting for justice.⁵⁴ It is from here that the idea of *ḥukm* came about, as expressed in the political theology of the Muslims.⁵⁵ The questions were centred on the meaning(s) of *ḥukm*, its application and its consequences.

The arbitration seems to have been a 'set-up' and neither camp won the war, leaving a great division in 'Alī's army. As a result, renewed fighting took place at the Battle of Nahrawān, which pitted the group later known as the Khārijī'ites against 'Alī. As noted above, this group felt that 'Alī was no longer fit to rule because he had sinned greatly in accepting the arbitration and even felt he had transgressed the boundaries of Islam and thus was deserving of death (quoting verses 5:44, 45, 49). Although the Khārijī'ites lost the Battle of Nahrawān, the first Muslim *fitna* is believed to have ended in 40/661 with the assassination of 'Alī. It is narrated that 'Alī was praying when he was killed by 'Abd al-Raḥmān bin Muljim.⁵⁶ To this day, however, little is known about who exactly 'Uthmān's killers were and who exactly rejected the arbitration.⁵⁷ Although the ideas about rulership that arose out of these political events were not initially stated as doctrine, they later would become the basis of the central schisms throughout Muslim history. Serious discussions about what determined a legitimate ruler took place in the form of leadership/rule (*imāma*), governance (*ḥukm*) and obedience to rulers (*tā'a*) incorporating both religious and political aspects.⁵⁸

The struggles with Mu'āwiya and the resulting war brought about fresh debates on such fundamental issues as: (1) what constitutes a leader, (2) to whom the leadership of the Muslim community did or should belong, (3) who is a Muslim (and

⁵³ As the Khawārij also consolidated into a specific doctrinal group, they did not call themselves Khārijī'ite, but rather Muḥakkima see T Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, Books for Libraries, New York, 1980, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Amīn, *Ḍuḥā al-Islām*, vol. iii, p. 5.

⁵⁵ See Chapter Four for full analysis of the concept of *ḥukm*. It suffices here to define it as rule, order, or governance that also theologically relates to God because of the context in which this concept came about.

⁵⁶ al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Muhammad Husayn, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. and S H Nasr, Free Islamic Literatures, Houston, 1980, p. 192.

⁵⁷ In contrast to both 'Alī's assassin Ibn Munjim and 'Umar's assassin Abū Lu'lu'a.

⁵⁸ See Chapter Three p. 132 for full analysis of the concept of *imāma* in the Qur'ān. Again, it suffices here to define it generally as 'leader'.

consequently who is a *kāfir*) and (4) when it was permissible to rebel against an unjust leader.⁵⁹

After the assassination of ‘Alī, Muslim leadership was passed down in a manner similar to hereditary monarchy until the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For this reason most Islamists focus solely upon the four leaders of the *rāshidūn* period, whom they felt predominantly were examples of non-heretical rulership. Thus, as Mortimer correctly asserts, the ‘political rulers of Islam lost their religious aura. It came to be considered that only the first four caliphs after Mohammad had been truly orthodox’.⁶⁰

It is important to note, as emphasized by Joseph van Ess, that terminology used to refer to the so-called *rāshidūn* period was only adopted into a canonical form much later.⁶¹ The promulgation of this concept was due to the efforts of Ibn Ḥanbal towards the end of his life, who among others aimed to address the shock associated with the great schisms that developed after the first *fitna*.⁶²

It is quite likely that these bloody events, combined with the fact that various groups were narrating different (and conflicting) Prophetic traditions, led to a desire to trace back to what the Prophet might have said employing some kind of consistent method. It was at this time that the birth of *ḥadīth* literature also began. And out of these key questions, the question of what belief might mean led to the birth of Muslim theology itself (*‘ilm al-kalām*).

These questions, therefore, were not the result of theological thinking *per se* but rather were issues that emerged within the framework of political events involving the use of both scripture (as seen with the Khārijī’ites) and the *sunna* (tradition) of the Prophet.

Therefore, the early bloody wars and the rise of the Khārijī’ites shaped the kind of questions Muslim thinkers asked and led to a strong emphasis placed on obedience

⁵⁹ Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, p. 3.

⁶⁰ E Mortimer, *Faith and power: the politics of Islam*, Random House, New York, 1982, p. 36.

⁶¹ See van Ess, ‘Political Ideas in Early Muslim Religious thought’, p. 153.

⁶² See van Ess, *‘ilm al-Kalām wa al-Mujtama’ fī al-qarnayn al-thānī wa al-thālith lil-hijrah*, translated by Ṣāliḥ, Sālimah, Freiburg: Al-Kamel Verlag, vol. 1 2008. [Only volume 1 is translated].

and leadership. Moreover, the historical accounts of the first *fitna* that framed discussions about obedience and leadership, were written after the *fitna*, and consequently have been coloured with theo-political lenses in reading into these historical events. Furthermore, these ideas later became doctrinal and articulated in a language that is called principles of belief (*'uṣūl al-dīn*) contained within every denomination. Anyone who does not adhere to these principles is seen to be rejecting faith itself.⁶³

Within this context, four main groups arose with competing claims. It is important to note that, in the early days, these groups had not yet developed into coherent theological divisions. They have come to be known as the Khārijī'ites, the Murji'ites, the Mu'tazilites and the Shī'ites. Each group will be analysed to show that their discussions had real consequences on the psyche of the Muslim in the years to come. This chapter will also show how the original historical context of political events that facilitated the theological discussions were detached and no longer in the consciousness of Muslim thinkers, as they framed their theological arguments at a more abstract level.⁶⁴

3.2.1.1 Khārijī'ite political theology and the questions of 'boundaries'

The Khārijī'ites were possibly the first to pose the question regarding who has the right to rule.⁶⁵ By opposing both 'Uthmān and eventually 'Alī, they used religious arguments to support their claim. According to Lambton, the Khārijī'ites could have been the first to make the distinction between understanding the *imām* as religious leader and as a political one.⁶⁶ As was discussed in the previous section, the group that came to be known as the Khārijī'ites originated from specific political events, not from abstract theological discussions.⁶⁷

⁶³ W Madelung, 'Early Sunnī Doctrine concerning Faith as Reflected in the "Kitāb al-Īmān" of Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (d. 224/839)', *Studia Islamica*, vol. 32, 1970, pp. 233-254.

⁶⁴ See Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, pp.1-2. Also see W Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1985.

⁶⁵ See the article by J T Kenney, 'The Emergence of the Khawarij Religion and the social order in early Islam, in Saeed, A. (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2011, p155.

⁶⁶ Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam*, p. 23.

⁶⁷ Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, p. 1.

Basic to the doctrine of the Khārijī'ites was that a person who commits a grave sin and does not repent ceases to be a Muslim and is thereafter a *kāfir*, a status bearing serious jurisprudential consequences.⁶⁸ Later on, the Khārijī'ites were the first group to apply the notion of unbelief (*kufr*) to Muslims themselves, creating a new and narrow definition of the 'boundaries' of belief (*imān*). In addition, for the Khārijī'ites, faith had to be necessarily accompanied by righteous deeds.

The second principle arose from their idea of boundaries, the notion of 'enjoining the good and forbidding the evil', if necessary by force, as one of the fundamental duties of a believer. This made the early Khārijī'ites fanatical and intolerant to the point that they even denounced some of the Prophet's companions such as 'Uthmān, 'Alī, 'Ā'isha, Ṭalḥa and Zubayr as *kufār* (sing. *kāfir*), basing their denunciation up on verses about judgement (verses such as 5:44, 45, 49).⁶⁹ They believed it was their right to kill whoever they defined as an unbeliever so that only the true believers would be practicing the true Islam. Such narrow mindedness on their part contributed to their being in an ongoing state of war with the rest of the Muslim community.

Although the Khārijī'ites were only of political and religious importance in the first two centuries, their impact was felt strongly in their raids and killings.⁷⁰ Their ideas on how Muslims should be ruled made an even greater impression. They postulated that the only criterion for rulership should be righteousness (or piety - *taqwā*) and nothing else, irrespective of colour, race, ethnicity and even gender. It is important to notice that Khārijī'ites were the only school to accept women in the leadership position of *imām*. They also believed that governorship was unnecessary and it would be possible to have a community of believers without any leaders, thus encompassing a vision that could equally include the notions of egalitarian society⁷¹ and 'anarchism'.⁷² They supported their view that a ruler was not necessary as long as the community of believers adhered to God's law on the basis that the Qur'ān is silent on

⁶⁸ Roughly translated as unbelief.

⁶⁹ With few off shoots that are much more moderate called the Ibāḍiyya.

⁷⁰ See for example, Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, pp. 6-15 for different branches of Khārijī'ite also see pp. 17-23. Also see W M Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology: An Extended Survey*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1985.

⁷¹ See for example, L Marlow, *Hierarchy and egalitarianism in Islamic thought*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.

⁷² See for example P Crone, 'Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists', *Past and Present*, vol. 167, 2000, pp. 3-28.

this matter and that the Prophet did not designate a successor.⁷³ Another important concept they promulgated was that one absolutely must apply God's law - *ḥukm allāh* - or otherwise he/she will be a *kāfir*.

In addition to this, the Khārijī'ites held that a fundamental criterion for rulership was concerned with enforcing justice.⁷⁴ As will be discussed below, the Shī'ites held that the ruler should have been 'Alī (and consequently the *ahl al-bayt*) and the Sunnīs held that the ruler should be of the same tribe as the Prophet, and thus be of Qurayshī descent. For both of these groups, the ruler could only be male. Both sects would henceforth base their claims on *ḥadīths*, although the Shī'ites would argue that the Quraysh portion of the *ḥadīth* was in reference to 'Alī and his progeny and not merely to tribal leadership.

The main challenge to the early Khārijī'ites is their emphasis on the 'sincerity, truthfulness and faith of the companions and their commitment'.⁷⁵ By the end of the second generation of Muslims, the companions were not categorised but instead seen under one umbrella that of a *ṣaḥābī* (companion). Saeed points out that

[h]ad the young Muslim community opted to divide the Companions into good and bad, believers and unbelievers, honest and dishonest, and knowledgeable and ignorant, the bridge between the prophetic period and the new generation would have been placed in jeopardy.⁷⁶

To reject the transmitted accounts of some of the companions based a supposed lack of integrity would in effect mean that the *ḥadīth* itself would also be questionable; as a result any religious knowledge passed through *ḥadīth* would also be considered questionable.⁷⁷

In response to this serious theological problem, a level of sanctity was given to the companions as a whole. As a result, later generations adopted the view that the

⁷³ See for example, E A Salem, *Political theory and institutions of the Khawārij*, Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1956.

⁷⁴ See the work of K Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001.

⁷⁵ A Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, Routledge, 2006, p. 51.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ This is what the Shī'ite stress that the companions were not all the same category of 'righteousness'.

companions as a group reflected the truthfulness, honesty, sincerity and knowledge in religious matters of the Prophet himself.⁷⁸

With belief and piety as the only conditions for governorship, it followed that the Khārijī'ites would develop an entire theology centering on belief and unbelief which became an obsession with how to determine what did and did not constitute 'belief'. Their position became so extreme that they felt justified in waging war against whoever disagreed with them, considering them as having committed a grave sin.⁷⁹ Furthermore, their uncompromising attitude in battles was even more extreme with the position of kill or be killed, which may have included killing women and children.⁸⁰ In all likelihood, the majority of Muslims rejected this notion of *takfīr* especially its narrow definition of a believer as well the judgement of *takfīr* passed on to 'Alī and 'Uthmān. An opposing position in fact emerged that asserted that it is not for humans to make these kinds of judgements, as true belief is only knowable by God. This group that took this as their view came to be known as the Murji'ites.

3.2.1.2 Murji'ites notion of 'boundaries' and justice

The Murji'a or Murji'ites emerged as a group towards the end of the first century, taking the name from their concept of *irjā'*, that is, to postpone the verdict or 'suspending judgement' about whether 'Uthmān or 'Alī was a sinner, and later applied to any Muslim.⁸¹ This group, which represented the majority of Muslims, became part of the general theological orthodoxy called the Ash'arites.⁸² Parvez Manzoor argues that what came to characterise the early Muslim attitude towards politics and governance in general was quietist and marked by retreat rather than

⁷⁸ Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 51.

⁷⁹ Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, pp. 20-21.

⁸⁰ See Shahrastānī, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Karīm, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, Dār Dānya lil-Ṭibā'a wa al-Nashar wa al-Tawzī', Damascus, 1990, pp. 50-59. The over-obsession of the concept of *kufṛ* rose not for people who were not Muslims but was pronounced on Muslims themselves.

⁸¹ Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, p. 83. See also Shahrastānī and Baghdādī.

⁸² Ash'arite developed as a response to Mu'tazilite arguments on God's justice and knowledge. The founder of this school was Abū al-Ḥasan Al-Ash'arī (260-324/873-935).

participation.⁸³ Lambton also observes that for the Murji'ites, power is legitimised by the fact of its possession.⁸⁴

In particular, the Murji'ites arose in response to the Khārijī'ites who exercised the concept of *takfīr* indiscriminately. According to van Ess, *irjā'* was in its initial stage 'a plea for political moderation; only later was it generalized into the purely theological doctrine of abstaining from making statements about other Muslims' belief'.⁸⁵ Moreover, Izutsu agrees that the concept of *irjā'* (and hence the early Murji'ite view) was more political than 'purely theological'.⁸⁶

Departing greatly from the Khārijī'ite position, they argued that it was not the presence of grave sin that determined whether one was a believer or a non-believer, but rather what lay within the person's heart. According to this view, belief was independent of righteous action to the point that it would be possible to be a believer without committing any righteous deeds. Holding that no one can really know what lies in another person's heart, they concluded that no one can determine whether someone is or is not a believer. They also maintained that actions are predestined by God, which would allow them to finesse the problem of determining whether it was 'Alī or Mu'āwiya who was in the right. Early Murji'ites accordingly were of the opinion that one needed to defer any judgment regarding any of the companions until judgment day, maintaining that it was necessary to cultivate instead a practice of 'postponement of judgement on sinners, the postponement of judgement on 'Alī with respect of merit, the postponement of judgement of works with respect to faith'.⁸⁷

Out of these initial discussions came serious disputes about what constituted belief, what was the nature of revelation, the nature of God's justice and even the nature of God's attributes. With the coming of the Mu'tazilites, these disputes led to theological discussions about doctrine that extended away from the political arena into the *'ilm*

⁸³ M Parvez 'The Future of Muslim politics Critique of the 'fundamentalist' theory of the Islamic State' Cited in Saeed, A (ed.) *Islamic political thought and Governance*, vol. iv, 2011, p. 304.

⁸⁴ Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam*, p. 35.

⁸⁵ J van Ess, 'Political Ideas in Early Islamic Religious Thought', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2001, p. 154.

⁸⁶ See Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, p. 83.

⁸⁷ See H Q Murad, 'Jabr and Qadar in Early Islam A reappraisal of their political and religious implications', in A Saeed, (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2011, p. 189.

al-kalām with dialectical discussions against the Murji'ites especially on the subject of free will.⁸⁸

3.2.1.3 The Mu'tazilī notion of 'boundaries' and 'in-betweeness'

The debate as to whether good deeds were integral to *imān*, or were independent of it, as proposed by the Khārijī'ites, raised an even more fundamental question as to whether human actions result from free will or are predestined by God. In terms of political theology, this question was important because it was followed by the consequent question: should the blame be on 'Alī or Mu'āwiya? These questions were central to the thinking of the Mu'tazilite, a theological group that may have not risen as fully distinct until the third civil war with the rise of the 'Abbāsids (ruled from 132-655/750-1258), but whose articles of faith included discussions that were rooted in the first *fitna*.⁸⁹

According to the Mu'tazilites, a Muslim should hold five fundamental beliefs: 1) belief in one God, 2) belief in justice is knowable and objective; 3) encouraging what is good and forbidding what is evil (*amr bil ma'rūf wa al-nahī 'an al-munkar*); 4) belief in a possibility of a situation between belief and un-belief (*al-manzila bayna al-manzilatayn*); and 5) the belief in the judgement day.⁹⁰ Of these five categories the fourth is of the greatest importance pertaining to the influence of political events upon the development of theology. Similar in some ways to the Murji'a position of suspending judgement, this Mu'tazilite category was seen as something of compromise between the state of *kufr* and *imān*.⁹¹ This is to say that rather than giving the verdict on any of the companions (or indeed any Muslim) as *kāfir* because of what had happened, there is another category that exists in between those two verdicts.

⁸⁸ See Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*, pp. 104-114.

⁸⁹ The term comes from a call to bring back the governorship to the family of the Prophet in the line of 'Abbās ibn 'Abd al-Muṭalib as the true successors as opposed to the Umayyads' claims. Moḥammed bin 'Alī (a great grandson of 'Abbās) began to campaign for their right to rule and called for support from the *mawālī* (a name given to non-Arabs by the Umayyids) as well as the Shi'ite. See, for example, van Ess, 'Political Ideas in Early Muslim Religious thought', p. 153. Also see B. Lewis, 'Abbasids', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, pp. 15-23.

⁹⁰ See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-nihal*, pp. 21-35.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

The ‘boundaries’ as articulated by the Mu‘tazilites were arguably also an attempt to broaden the narrow definition of belief set by the Khārijī’ites. Although they believed that the Prophet did not designate a successor, they considered that rulership was an obligation by reason.⁹² In support, Murad, like Watt,⁹³ also makes a similar observation regarding the early discussions and questions asked on predestination (*jabr & qadar*) and free will which emerged from political events.⁹⁴ They, support the proposition that historical events shaped political questions that in turn shaped the way scripture was understood. Perhaps the group that equally was formulated by these political events was the Shī‘ites.

3.2.1.4 The Shī‘ite notion of justice and leadership

In contrast, the Shī‘ites argued that the Prophet indeed indicated that ‘Alī should be the successor as a leader of the Muslims and not Abū Bakr.⁹⁵ Subsequently, Shī‘ites views would include the idea that leadership is bestowed first by the Prophet (and in effect by God) to the first *imām* (‘Alī) then by the first *imām* to the next. Although some branches among the Shī‘ites dispute how many *imāms* there were, the majority are Twelvers, who believe in twelve *imāms*, including a final living *imām* (Mohammed Ibn Al-Ḥassan - also known as Al-Mehdī) who is to arise in the state of the so-called ‘great occultation’ (*al-ghayba al-kubrā*).⁹⁶ For the Twelver Shī‘ites, inspiration derived by God has been employed for determining all *imāms* including the twelfth *imām*. And until he reappears, true justice is not possible. For a very long time, therefore, the Shī‘ites have been awaiting the twelfth *imām*, hence the name ‘waiters’ (*muntazira*).⁹⁷

⁹² See section on Obligation p. 107.

⁹³ Watt, *The formative period of Islamic thought*, p. 83.

⁹⁴ See Murad, ‘Jabr and Qadar in Early Islam’, p. 182.

⁹⁵ See Madelung, *The succession to Muhammad: a history of early Islam*. The evidence cited for this is the Prophet’s speech in Ghadir Khum. Also see the works of K Y Blankinship, ‘Imārah, Khilāfah, and Imāmah: the Origins of the Succession to the Prophet Mohammed’ in Clarke, Lynda (ed.) *Shī‘ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions*, Global Publications, Binghamton, 2001, pp. 19-43.

⁹⁶ This view is taken by the majority Twelver Shī‘ite but not all. There are also sub-groups that developed different historical narrations and theology such as Ismā‘ilis, ‘Alawis and Zaydīs.

⁹⁷ See also see V S M Angeles, ‘The Development of the Shi’a concept of the Imamate’, in A Saeed, (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2011, p. 305. The Shī‘ite doctrine developing into 12 *imāms* see the work of Kohlberg, E. From Imamiyya to Ithna-'Ashariyya, in Saeed, A. (ed) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2011, p. 319. For the Shī‘ite account of *imāma* see,

Evidently, early Shī'ite political theologies were mainly focused upon polemic debate and upon proving the right of 'Alī and his family to be the appointed ones.⁹⁸ What followed together with the seemingly political writing was the development of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *uṣūl al-fiqh* (principles of jurisprudence), science of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr* but with the same sectarian lenses interpreting verses in line with their theory of *imāma*.

At this point, it is crucial to note that the process by which the Shī'ites became a theological group fully distinct from the majority of the Muslim community was a very slow and incremental one, consolidating in the periods of lesser and greater occultation (260-329/874-940).⁹⁹ In support, many of the traditions on *fiqh* and '*aqīda*, taken from the fifth and sixth *imāms*. Allegedly, since the greater occultation of Mohammed Ibn al-Ḥassan the political theology of the Twelver Shī'ites in its active form can be characterised as having withdrawn 'emotionally and physically from overt participation' in their contemporary politics focussing on waiting for the Mehdī as a saviour.¹⁰⁰

By the end of the third century, the views of the Sunnīs and Shī'ites had crystallised, with firmly established polemical arguments on the necessity of an *imām* regarding the issue of governorship. For the Shī'ites, the concept of *imāma* developed as an independent doctrine alongside justice. The Shī'ite article of belief consisted of the concepts of the oneness of God, necessary belief in objectivity of justice, Prophethood, *imāma* and day of judgement & resurrection.¹⁰¹ The meaning of *imāma* became all inclusive, holistic, divinely inspired and later writings included infallibility.¹⁰²

for example, the work of Muhammed b. Ya'qūb al-Kulaynī (d.329/940) in his work *kitāb al-Ḥujah*. Also see Al-Ḥasan b. Yūsif b. 'Alī al-Muṭahar Al-Ḥillī (d.648/1250) in his work *Kashf al-Murād fī sharḥ tajrid al-I'tiqād fī wujub nasb al-Imām* and the work of Abū Ja'far Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597-672/1200-1273) in *fuṣūl al-'Aqā'id* as well as his work *Risālah fī al-Imāmah*.

⁹⁸ For more detail see the work of Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*.

⁹⁹ See A Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁰ van Ess 'Political Ideas in Early Muslim Religious Thought'.

¹⁰¹ See for example the work of T H Modarressi *Crisis and Consolidation in the Formative Period of Shi'ite Islam: Abū Ja'far ibn Qiba al-Rāzī and his Contribution to Imāmite Shī'ite Thought*, Darwin Press, Princeton, 1993.

¹⁰² Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, pp. 63-85.

For the Murji'a and later the Ash'arites the *imām* rules the Muslims and a state of anarchy in the absence of an authority is not permitted. From this premise, the Shī'ites maintain that *imāma* is an obligation (*farḍ*) as shown by the designation of 'Alī as the Prophet's successor.¹⁰³ This makes the line of *imām* infallible with the sole responsibility of protecting the *sharī'a* and is therefore the only legitimate interpreter of scripture. Note however that the idea of infallibility of the *imām* was established only after the third and fourth century *hijra* (approximately sometime after the occultation). For example, one of the major teachers of Shaykh al-Mufīd, Ibn al-Junayd did not believe in the *imām* as infallible.¹⁰⁴

As a result, for a long time Shī'ite political theology consisted of waiting for the *imām* al-Mahdī to bring about the idea of an ideal rulership as the manifestation of this utopia that would only be possible with the presence of al-Mahdī. Nonetheless, this ideal did not stop the Shī'ites from engaging in politics where the opportunity arose, examples being the Būyids and the Safavids. However, the Iranian revolution in 1979 signified a turning point for the idea of rulership as per the role of the *faqīh* as the direct appointee of al-Mahdī, a subject that will be returned later in this thesis's analysis of modern Muslim political thought.

3.2.2 Summary: The Impact of Historical Events Upon the Development of Muslim Political Theory

As discussed above, two broad opposing camps arose in the early days: rebellionism and political pacifism. Although it was only later that the two camps developed clear ideologies, their emergence can be traced back to the first *fitna* period. It was the development of the Khawārijī movement and the reactions towards their conception

¹⁰³ For detailed discussion on the polemic arguments see Afsaruddin, *Excellence and precedencel*. For a shorter version see her article A Afsaruddin, 'In Praise of the Caliphs: Re-Creating History from the Manāqib Literature, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, 1999, pp. 329-350.

¹⁰⁴ See for example the works of Bahbahānī, Muḥammad Bāqir ibn Muḥammad Akmal *Al-Fawā'id al-ḥā'iriyah*, Majma' al-Fikr al-Islāmī, Qum, 1995, p. 38. Al-Behbahani documented that some early Shī'a scholars (especially from the Qum school) were adamant that the status of the *imām* should not be raised higher than the state of the prophet as it would lead to excessive belief (*ghulluw*). Also see Hodgson, Marshall G. S. 1955. "How Did the Early Shī'a become Sectarian?" *Journal of the American Oriental Society*. 75 (1): 1-13. Also see the chapter by Etan Kohlberg in S A Arjomand, (ed.) *Authority and political culture in Shi'ism*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988.

of political leadership (and violence) that led to the consolidation of most early Sunnī political views. As Rahman observes, the majority of traditional Sunnī jurists developed ‘political pacifism’.¹⁰⁵ This doctrine of submissiveness to the *de facto* authority gained further impact as the idea that any rule is better than lawlessness and chaos became predominant.

According to Lapidus the early *rāshidūn* model period expressed the ideals in the same way as the Prophet practised them in his religious and political authority. This model clearly became flawed after the question of legitimacy that arose following the assassination of ‘Uthmān and the consequent rise of the Khārij’ites. The Umayyad dynasty consequently took the role of solidifying their legitimacy to rule as opposed to the Khārij’ite claim or the party of ‘Alī. These developments, according to Lapidus, created the split between the religious scholars (the *‘ulamā*) and the temporal authority, a situation that had not been present during the years of early rulership.¹⁰⁶

Lapidus has further stated the plausible view that the idea of a restoration of the golden age of the *ṣaḥāba* was a direct result of this split. Note also given that the Sunnī political theology developed as an alternative to both the Khārij’ite and Shī’ite *imāma* theory, therefore there is an added polemical layer that one might be justified to argue that the a Sunnī political theology has not fully developed in its own right. Therein, any discussion of early and medieval political concepts is rendered even more complex. A key example of this will be discussed in the following sections, where the works of al-Māwardī, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya were as much polemic works as developments of a Sunnī political theology.

Suffice it to say, the events that occurred during the first *fitna* shaped the key views and questions about such doctrinal matters as the nature of justice, *amr bil ma’rūf*, *imāma*, legitimate ruler, obedience, *ḥukm* and *bay’a* that would developed into matters of political theology.

¹⁰⁵ F Rahman, *Islamic methodology in history*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 1965, pp. 88-89.

¹⁰⁶ I M Lapidus, ‘The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1975, pp. 363-385. By the same author ‘The Golden Age: The Political Concepts of Islam’, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 524, 1992, pp. 13-25. Also see I M Lapidus, ‘State and Religion in Islamic Societies’, *Past and Present*, vol. 151, 1996, pp. 3-27.

It is also important to note that the development and the emphasis on historiographical collections also came about around this time. As van Ess observes ‘historiography, theology and political thought, appeared at the same time and so early that they became incorporated into the search for identity which preoccupied the early community’.¹⁰⁷

It is also apparent that one cannot separate the development of political concepts from the series of historical events that inspired them. Furthermore, the contradictory accounts of said events make it even more difficult to trace the history of those concepts. Fortunately, as discussed above, this chapter focuses upon pointing out the emergence and development of these concepts rather than sifting through the competing truth claims of accounts of historical events.

Further complexity is introduced into the search for a Muslim political theory in that historical events later become divided into distinct periods, each with its own characterization, such as the golden age of the *rāshidūn*. When this occurs, this interpretation of history in turns becomes an ideal theoretical lens by which history as a whole is to be interpreted.

Similarly, Lambton explains that the question ‘who is the caliph’ arose out of the first civil war, whereas the questions of ‘who is a Muslim’ and ‘what constitutes political responsibility’ came with the rise of the Khārijī‘ites. Lastly, the question of ‘what is the nature of the state’ arose in connection with the fall of the Umayyads and the rise of the ‘Abbāsids.¹⁰⁸

3.3 MEDIEVAL SUNNĪ POLITICAL THEOLOGY

By the time the ‘Abbāsids were in power there developed a tradition of including a section on *imāma* within the *kalāmī* discussions in response to claims of opposing

¹⁰⁷ See van Ess, ‘Political Ideas in Early Muslim Religious Thought’, p. 154.

¹⁰⁸ Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam*, p. 16.

groups such as the Shī'ites, Khārijī'ites, Ash'arites and the Mu'tazilites.¹⁰⁹ It is thought that the first person willing to engage in polemical argument with both the Shī'ite and the Mu'tazilite was Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (270-330/883-942) in his work *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-radd 'alā ahl al-zaygh wa al-bida'*.¹¹⁰ A more comprehensive discussion on the *imāma* however is said to be by Bāqillānī (d.403/1013) in his work *al-Tamhīd fī al-rad 'alā al-mulḥida al-mu'aṭṭila wa al-rāfida wa al-khawārij wa al-mu'tazila*.¹¹¹

Although Bāqillānī is considered to be the first to have systematised Ash'arite thought, it was Baghdādī who in his *kitāb uṣūl al-dīn* first developed the *imāma* argument in a coherent and organized manner.¹¹² The headings of his chapters can be clearly seen as a summary of political theory from both the classical and medieval periods:

- The necessity of *imāma*
- The circumstances of appointment
- The means by which the *imām* comes to office
- The number of *imāms* at any given time
- Race and tribe of *imām*
- The qualification required for an *imām*
- The infallibility of the *imām*¹¹³

It is these topics that are addressed by scholars such as Māwardī, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya. For this and other reasons, these scholars will be examined as case studies to determine which political concepts were reinforced during the medieval period.

¹⁰⁹ See the work of M Q Zaman, 'The Caliphs, the Ulama, and the Law: Defining the Role and Function of the Caliph in the Early Abbāsīd Period', *Islamic Law and Society*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1997, pp. 1-36.

¹¹⁰ See for example his work Ash'arī, 'Alī ibn Ismā'īl Abū al-Ḥasan, *Kitāb al-Luma' fī al-radd 'alā ahl al-zaygh wa al-bida'* *The Theology of al-Ash'arī*, Impr. Catholique, Beyrouth, 1953.

¹¹¹ Bāqillānī, Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib, *Al-Tamhīd fī al-radd 'alā al-mulḥida al-mu'aṭṭila wa al-rāfida wa al-kawārij wa al-mu'tazila*, Dār al-fikr al-'Arabī, Cairo, 1947. Also see Y Ibish, *The political doctrine of al-Baqilani*, American University of Beirut, Beirut, 1996.

¹¹² al-Baghdādī, Abū Maṣṣūr 'Abd al-Qāhir ibn Ṭāhir al-Tamīmī, *Kitāb uṣūl al-dīn*, *Istānbūl*, Madrasat al-Ilāhīyāt bi-Dār al-Funūn al-Tūrkiyah, 1928.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Māwardī has been considered to be the earliest Muslim political thinker. Although his general work did not develop a posthumous following as much as al-Ghazālī or Ibn Taymiyya, in modern times contemporary scholars have considered him the originator of caliphate theory.¹¹⁴

Ghazālī's influence upon the Muslim world cannot be underestimated, but on the basis of his outlook on spirituality not for his political views. This latter point is significant as one traces the emergence of political concepts, in particular with Ghazālī's emphasis upon *sharī'a*. In addition, the discussions of Ghazālī as well as of Ibn Taymiyya, reflect the polemic nature of political theology of the Muslim world. Ibn Taymiyya's writings have been even more pertinent in the Muslim world, to his followers and their critics alike, even though it is entirely possible that his writings have been misunderstood and taken out of context by both parties.¹¹⁵

3.3.1 Al-Māwardī (364-450/974-1058)

Abū Al-Ḥasan 'Alī bin Muḥammed bin Ḥabīb al-Māwardī is characterized as the earliest Muslim political theorist on account of his book *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniya* (Ordinance of Government). Arguably, this was the first writing of its kind that exhibited a distinctly Muslim form of political thought.¹¹⁶ A jurist from the Shāfi'ī legal school, al-Māwardī was later appointed as chief judge (*qāḍī al-quḍāt*) of Baghdād by 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Qā'im (1031-1075). At this time the 'Abbāsīds were facing numerous challenges, including an uprising calling for independence from a group of Shī'ites from Iran and Iraq of the Būyid family.¹¹⁷ Another threat came from a group based in Egypt called the Fāṭimids. The Fāṭimids were a non-Twelve Shī'ite

¹¹⁴ See the work of HAR Gibb, *Studies on the civilization of Islam*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1962. AK Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory : the jurists*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981. P Crone, *Islam and government: a history of medieval Islamic political thought*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003.

¹¹⁵ Astonishingly, as will be detailed below, the main arguments presented by these opposing groups are quite similar and work primarily to consolidate a Sunnī political theology opposed to the Mu'tazilite, the Khāraji'ite and the Shī'ite claims of governorship.

¹¹⁶ See for example the work of A Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, 2004; and Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*.

¹¹⁷ Also known as Buwayids (945-1055) known as Shī'a from Iran and Iraq. See C Cahen 'Buwayhids or Būyids', *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Brill Online, 2012. Accessed 22 May 2012 <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-2/buwayhids-or-buyids-SIM_1569>

group called the Severners, but best known as Ismā‘īlis. At the time, the Caliphs were puppets in the hands of soldiers with little power of their own. These weaknesses led to turmoil in Baghdād and further instabilities.¹¹⁸

Appointed as a diplomat in negotiations with the Būyid emirs, it is thought al-Māwardī was said to be commissioned by the ‘Abbāsīd caliph to write his book to clarify what constituted legitimate governorship as a way of demonstrating that the ‘right’ to governorship belonged to the ‘Abbāsīds and not to the Būyids or the Fāṭimids.¹¹⁹ It is possible that al-Qā’im commissioned the book in the hope of weakening support for the Būyids and the Fāṭimids as well and preventing further fragmentation of the caliphate itself. Accordingly, the book was most likely written during the decline of the ‘Abbāsīds dynasty. It is thus better seen not as concerned with the development of a comprehensive political theory, but rather with saving the dynasty.¹²⁰ This suggests, according to Lambton, that Māwardī’s aim was to strengthen the position of the sultan against the erosion and the ‘usurpation of his position’.¹²¹

Indeed Māwardī’s *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* is more of a description of the function of administration than a political theory. For example, he sketches out: (1) the role and responsibilities of the caliph, (2) the appointment of the *imām*, (3) the responsibilities of ministers, (4) the appointment of provincial governors, army commanders and judges, prayer leaders and the hierarchy of these positions, (5) the syndics of the nobility and (6) the administration of alms, land taxes, water supply, land grants and concessions and market supervision.¹²² In fact *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya* could very well be seen as a detailed administrative manual for government, more of description of the function of government than a normative proposition or conceptual principles derived from Qur’ānic concepts.

¹¹⁸ See Q D Khan, *Al-Mawardi's Theory of the State*, Islamic Book Foundation, Lahore, 1983. Also see H Mikhail, *Politics and Revelation: Māwardī and after*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1995.

¹¹⁹ See E A Hamid, ‘Al-Mawardi's theory of state some ignored dimensions’, in Saeed, A. (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2011, p. 221.

¹²⁰ N Ayubi, *Political Islam, Religion and Politics in the Arab World*, Routledge, London, 1991, p. 2. Also see E I J Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: an Introductory Volume*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1968.

¹²¹ Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, p. 89.

¹²² M Māwardī, *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*, Dar Al-Kutub Al-‘Ilmiyyah, Beirut, 1985.

Furthermore, as one reads his work carefully, Māwardī's jurisprudential background becomes apparent as he provides a detailed account of administrative duties as a jurist.¹²³ According to Hanna Mikhail, Māwardī is the first legal jurist (*faqīh*) to attempt to 'spell out systematically the requirements of the *shari'a* in regard to government'.¹²⁴ A good case could be made here that the 'Abbāsids utilized religious ideology (Mu'tazilites) as the basis of their legitimisation of their rule against the Murji'ites.¹²⁵

In all likelihood, Māwardī could have been the first thinker to shift discussions regarding the notion of the *imāma*/caliphate from being doctrinal in nature to being jurisprudential, although it is unclear as to whether he did so intentionally. A major consequence that could have potentially emerged out of his work was that the Shī'ite claim of *imāma* would no longer be a matter of doctrine but would become one of jurisprudence, therefore challenging the core beliefs of Shī'ites indirectly. In support, Ovamir Anjum maintains that Māwardī shifted from the field of theology to jurisprudence in his arguments supporting the caliphate discussion over Shī'ite *imāma* theory. Quite possibly, by removing normative political thinking from the discussion, he was in a better position to sustain the Sunnī argument.¹²⁶ Thus one should not fail to stress how polemic in nature Māwardī's work is. Anjum asserts that Māwardī appears to be defending the Sunnī Orthodoxy against the Shī'ite Būyids, not however through theological polemics but rather by strengthening the centrality of the 'Abbāsids' caliph.¹²⁷ Māwardī of course has been criticised for his attempt to legitimise usurpation, which would support the view that he aimed to save the 'Abbāsids rather than provide a political theory.

According to al-Māwardī, it is absolutely vital to obey those in authority, a position he supports by quoting verse 4:59 of the Qur'ān as the basis of obeying the caliph. True to the descriptive nature of his work, al-Māwardī offers a greatly detailed account regarding the characteristics of the ruler both in terms of his physical appearance and

¹²³ Ibid. p. 3.

¹²⁴ Mikhail, *Politics and revelation: Māwardī and after*, p. XXX1.

¹²⁵ Ibid. p.16.

¹²⁶ O Anjum, *Reason and Politics in Medieval Islamic Thought the Taymiyyan Moment*. Thesis (Ph. D.)--University of Wisconsin--Madison, 2008. Accessed June 2011

<<http://books.google.com/books?id=N4YIAQAAMAAJ>> p. 110.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

his lineage. Al-Māwardī also details how the ruler should be appointed, how obedience to the ruler is obligatory as well the rights and prerogative of the caliph.¹²⁸ For all his detail regarding the ruler, al-Māwardī pays but little attention to the rights of the people being governed.

According to Māwardī, the role of the caliph is to safeguard and implement *sharī‘a* as well as to collect taxes and provide for the organisation of the general populace (*ra‘iyya*). Although al-Māwardī acknowledges that the Qur’ān has nothing to say about the institution of the caliphate, he nevertheless points out the importance of the practice of the companions and their followers as well as the consensus of the jurists (*ijmā‘ al-‘ulamā*). Consequently, like the Ash‘arites before him, he maintains that it is according to tradition that the caliphate is both necessary and obligatory.

Al-Māwardī was of the opinion that a new caliph should be selected by nominations decided by *ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd* (literally translates as ‘people who tie and loosen’ meaning people in the position of authority).¹²⁹ Unfortunately, al-Māwardī does not specify who these people are and exactly how they are to provide the nomination. Indeed the actual practice throughout history was that the caliphate was passed down in a hereditary manner. Furthermore, Māwardī has little to say about rebellions against a despotic ruler or tyrant; instead he quotes a tradition attributed to the Prophet by Abū Hurayra with the Prophet saying that:

after me there will be appointed rulers over you, and both the good as well as bad deeds will go by them; but you must obey the orders from them that is based upon righteousness; for if they rule with fairness the good of it will occur to them and to you both, if they rule with inequality you will get the benefit of it and they, the evil consequences thereof.¹³⁰

By referring to this *ḥadīth*, he seems to be promoting a quietist tradition in being patient with the tyrant rulers by emphasising the eschatological aspect of belief.

As we have seen, concepts related to Muslim political theory as previously noted have

¹²⁸ Māwardī, ‘Alī ibn Muḥammad, *The Ordinances of Government: a Translation of Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya w’ al-Wilāyāt al-Dīniyya*, trans. Wafaa Hassan Wahba, Center for Muslim Contribution to Civilization Reading, 1996 .

¹²⁹ See Zaman, Muhammad Qasim, ‘Ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, THREE*, Brill Online , 2012, accessed on 22 May 2012
<http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/encyclopaedia-of-islam-3/ahl-al-hal-wa-l-aqd-COM_0027>

¹³⁰ Māwardī, *Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyya*.

become even more prominent. These include: (1) *sharī'a*, (2) obedience to people in authority *ulī al-amr* and *ṭā'a*, (3) the obligation of caliphate, (4) the characteristics of a leader, (5) and the prerequisites of leadership.

3.3.2 Al-Ghazālī (450-505/1058-1111)

Abū Ḥamid Mohammed bin Mohammed bin Aḥmed al-Ghazālī is known as one of the greatest philosophers and theologians the Muslim world has produced. After studying jurisprudence and the related fields of theology and philosophy, al-Ghazālī was appointed as a teacher in Baghdād in one of the Nizām al-Mulk colleges and became both well-known and highly respected.¹³¹

Al-Ghazālī however is probably best remembered for the spiritual crisis that he underwent during the prime of his life when living in Baghdād. This crisis was sparked by the question of how one could attain certainty of knowledge, and therefore which path would lead one to that certainty. Eventually Ghazālī lost the ability to speak as a result of his crisis and in 487/1095 he ceased his work in Baghdād. His major writings include *Munqiz min al-Dalāl* (Deliverance from Error), *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (Reviving Religious Knowledge) and *Iqtisad fī al-I'tiqād* (Median of Belief). Also of some importance is his *Kitāb Faḏā'ih Al-Bāṭiniyya wa faḏā'il al-Mustazhiriya* (The Infamies of the *Bāṭiniyya* and Virtues of the *Mustazhiriya*, usually abbreviated as *Kitab al-Mustazhir*) which was commissioned by the 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Mustazhir (487/1094).¹³² Ghazālī's goals in this book are twofold: (1) to refute the Ismā'īlis *imāma* theory which at this point persisted in Egypt and (2) to establish beyond a doubt the legitimacy of the 'Abbāsīd caliph Al-Mustazhir, as suggested by the book's title.

Ghazālī's work above can be viewed predominantly as a polemic against the Ismā'īlis. He argues that al-Mustazhir's caliphate is in accordance with *sharī'a* and therefore obedience to him is obligatory (*farḍ*). Ghazālī deduces that the existence of

¹³¹ See for example, Ghazālī, and W M Watt *The Faith and Practice of al-Ghazālī*, G. Allen and Unwin, London, 1953.

¹³² al-Ghazālī mentions this in his *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-dīn*, vol. 1, Dār al-Khayr, Damascus, 1990.

a caliph as the head of the community is an obligation based on *sharī'a*.¹³³ Viewed in this way, for al-Ghazālī, the removal of a caliph would result in the suspension of the *sharī'a* itself.¹³⁴ It appears that Ghazālī had the challenge of dealing with a seemingly weak 'Abbāsīd caliph in Baghdād during a time in which the Fāṭimids in Egypt allegedly allied with the Crusaders in an unsuccessful bid for power.

Ghazālī demonstrates that the legitimate right to rule proceeds from the *imām* on the basis of three conditions: (1) the consensus of the community (*ijmā'*), (2) a unanimous agreement for the necessity of an *imām*— this stands even if there is a debate on the method (al-Ghazālī is referring to the historical events of the companions after the death of the prophet), and (3) the necessity of an authority being implemented by one person to prevent disunity and disorder.¹³⁵ He categorically argues that there is no revealed text by God which states how the *imām* obtains authority, concluding that opinion by consensus (*ijmā'*) is the proper procedure. Since, however *ijmā'* on the part of the entire Muslim community is not possible, he states that the *bay'a* (oath of alliance) of one person possessing ample power –*shawka*– is sufficient.¹³⁶ This means that in the absence of universal consensus, all that is needed is that a single person would give their oath of alliance and choose the *imām*. Note here that the concept of an *imām* here is not the same as understood by the Shī'ites. This person is selected on the basis of his *shawka* (unsurpassed military power).

According to Rosenthal, Ghazālī's work testifies to an emphasis upon political realism.¹³⁷ This is especially the case given that there are no references to the Crusaders in his work.¹³⁸ One could even claim that Ghazālī's primary aim was to refute the Ismā'īlis' claim of divine *imāma*, leading Ghazālī to speak of a caliph selected by human beings. In all likelihood in writing *kitāb al-Mustazharī*, al-Ghazālī was thus not so much concerned with establishing political theory as determined to further his polemic regarding power. After all, the only way to refute the Shī'ite doctrine of *imāma* is to show that it has no basis in scripture and to demonstrate that there is a clear system that exists to apply the *sharī'a* itself.

¹³³ al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Mustazhir*, p169. Also see pp. 171-2.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb al-Mustazhir*, pp. 171-2.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p. 176. Also see Zaman 'Ahl al-ḥall wa-l-'aqd', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, THREE.

¹³⁷ Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam*, p. 38.

¹³⁸ Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, p. 109.

It is also very likely, as argued by Carole Hillenbrand, that Ghazālī was motivated by ‘Sunni zeal’.¹³⁹ Hillenbrand observes further that Ghazālī’s ideas are ‘motivated by an overriding desire for stability and unity within the Sunnī world’.¹⁴⁰ Such a need for stability and unity was evident given that Ghazālī lived during a period of crisis. The crisis was twofold. It was political due to weakness of the ‘Abbāsids power, the general fragmentation of the caliphate, and the rise of the Turks in the East. It was theological due to the Ismā‘īli claims of legitimacy. At least in part Ghazālī’s argument could have been a pragmatic proposition to prevent further corruption. For example, in his *ihyā’* he advises keeping away from oppressive *amirs* and rulers.¹⁴¹

Ghazālī’s second most important book is *kitāb al-Iqtisād fī al-i‘tiqād*. For Ghazālī, *imāma* is a matter of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and not rational or theological speculation. In particular he sees the question of *imāma* not as part of the article of faith (‘*aqīda*) but as a matter of jurisprudence. For example, in *kitāb al-iqtisād* he states that the issue of *imāma* should be discussed as part of jurisprudence and not of ‘*aqīda*. When he himself includes a discussion of *imāma* in the ‘*aqīda* section, explains that he only does so to conform with the tradition of the scholars who preceded him.¹⁴² If the issue of *imāma* is not an article of faith, as Ghazālī maintains, this means that Muslims are obliged neither to believe nor to follow him. They are not even obligated to have an *imām*, a point that cannot be overemphasized. Furthermore, it is also important to stress that Ghazālī holds that the institution of *imāma* is not a rational necessity as the Mu‘tazilite would argue, but a legal necessity.¹⁴³

The book of *iqtisād* makes the following three main points: (1) It was the aim of the Prophet to establish a good ordering of religion; (2) this good order is to be established by an *imām* who is obeyed; and (3) for this reason the appointment of an *imām* is a necessity.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ C Hillenbrand, ‘Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazālī’s Views on Government’, *Iran*, vol. 26, 1988, p. 85.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* p. 86.

¹⁴¹ Al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā’*, vol. 2 pp. 179-80.

¹⁴² Al-Ghazālī, *Al-Iqtisād fī al-I‘tiqād*, pp. 104-5.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p. 105.

Nevertheless *kitāb al-Iqtisād* is more concerned with articles of faith than with being a treatise on government; in fact, the word *khalīfa* does not even occur once in his work.¹⁴⁵ In his later works, such as *Ihyā'*, written in the period of his spiritual journey and retreat from public life (489-495/1096-1102) Ghazālī argues that in the case of an unjust ruler who has a military force and one whom it would be difficult to remove without violence and *fitna*, obedience is necessary.¹⁴⁶ Ghazālī is of this opinion because he still adheres to his first assertion that caliphate is a legal *fard*, most likely because the alternative would have been the Shī'ite claim of *imāma* or the Khārijī'ites' claim that governorship is unnecessary. As a jurist he remains convinced of the centrality of Sunnī understanding of *imāma* in safeguarding the *sharī'a*.

As a result, Ghazālī makes two important points: First, he stresses that the *imām* he is referring to is not of the type that the 'Abbāsīd rulers were. Rather he assumes the *imām* to be of good character and intending to do good like the revered *rāshidūn*. Second, even should the ruler be greedy of power, as rulers tend to be, the condition of holding and implementing *sharī'a* would at least ensure minimum rights for the people. Here one can clearly see that Ghazālī's emphasises *sharī'a* as being the sole purpose of an *imām*, based on the premise that *sharī'a* is good through and through and exists to build a good community.

To sum up, in all likelihood, as Hillenbrand maintains, Ghazālī adopted a quietist approach in his later life in reaction to the political upheaval of his time in which he stresses the temporal nature of this life and the importance of the afterlife.¹⁴⁷

3.3.3 Ibn Taymiyya (661-728/1263-1328)

Taqī al-Dīn Abū Al-'Abbās Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyya is considered one of the most influential Muslim thinkers. Regrettably, contemporary research on Ibn Taymiyya appears more concerned with finding within his writings the beginnings of contemporary fundamental Muslim political movements rather than examining him

¹⁴⁵ This is what Hillenbrand argues; see her work 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?'

¹⁴⁶ Ghazālī, *Ihyā'*, vol. 2, p. 179.

¹⁴⁷ Hillenbrand, 'Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik?', p. 93.

on his own terms. This thesis shows that Taymiyya's theory of legitimacy arose out of the actual historical circumstances in which the political arena was deeply fragmented. Within Taymiyya's work one also can see further development of such concepts as *tā'a* (obedience), *sharī'a* and *imāma*.

Ibn Taymiyya was born in the Memluk Empire, which was composed of present-day Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. To the East, all Muslim lands were occupied by the Mongols. Indeed Ibn Taymiyya was about six years old living in Harrān, when the Mongols entered Baghdād forcing him to flee with his family to Damascus. Like al-Māwardī and al-Ghazālī, he lived in a time of turmoil, chaos, disunity and fragmentation. Although by the time the Mongols had embraced Islam Ibn Taymiyya was an adult, he insisted they were Muslims in name only and set out to fight them. At this time the empire was divided into small rulers and continually engaged in fighting. In terms of his character Ibn Taymiyya was famed for his ascetic abstinence from worldly things, as well as for his sharp mind and harsh tongue.¹⁴⁸ He also practiced a strong self-discipline which put him in good stead through his many imprisonments. His strong sense of faith is evident in his remarks as follows:

what can my enemies do to me? My Garden is in my heart; wherever I go, it goes with me. My imprisonment is solitary (worship of God)! My death is martyrdom! My banishment is a journey (across God's earth).¹⁴⁹

In terms of his political situation, Ibn Taymiyya faced four imminent threats that shaped him: (1) the Mongol threat, (2) the internal disintegration of the empire, (3) the advance of the Crusaders (as mentioned earlier a matter Ghazālī remains silent about) and (4) theological challenges originating from philosophers, some Sufī orders and the Shī'ites. The unstable combination of despotic rulers and fragile political regimes engaged in conflicts over territory persisted throughout Ibn Taymiyya's time. Anjum rightly observes that

[t]he rise of the fatimids in North Africa (297/910) and the Buyids having taken over at Baghdad (334/947) and their open support to Shi'ism spurred the Sunni Kalam scholars to not only consolidate and defend Sunni orthodoxy but also provide theoretical basis for the Sunni Caliphate.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ See D P Little, 'Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?', *Studia Islamica*, vol. 41, 1975, pp. 93-111.

¹⁴⁹ Ibn Taymīyah, *The Religious and Moral Doctrine of Jihaad*, taken from the book: *al-Sīyāsah al-sharīyah fī iṣlāḥ al-rā'ī wa al-ra'īyah*, Maktabah al-Ansaar, Birmingham, 2001, p. 15. Also cited in Little, 'Did Ibn Taymiyya Have a Screw Loose?', p. 106.

¹⁵⁰ Anjum, *Reason and Politics in Medieval Islamic thought*, PhD thesis, p. 92.

His political ideas can be found in his three main works, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyah fī naqḍ kalām al-Shī‘ah wa al-Qadarīya*; *al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyah*; and *al-Ḥisbah fī al-Islām*. As the first title indicates, Ibn Taymiyya’s work is a polemic against Shī‘ites and particularly against Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī’s work *Minhāj al-Karāmah fī Ma‘rifat al-Imāmah*. As with Māwardī and Ghazālī, Ibn Taymiyya shows clearly just how reactionary the development of his political theology had been. His work does not merely serve as a counter argument to the *imāma* theory but also attests to the fragmentation of Muslim political society.

In his writings detailing his political theology, he emphasizes the concepts of *sharī‘a* and *umma*. His similarities and differences with the other groups and the other two scholars may be best seen in connection with medieval debates about the caliphate, obligation, *sharī‘a* and *umma*.

3.4 COMPARING AND CONTRASTING MEDIEVAL THOUGHT: CALIPHATE/IMĀMATE THEORY

With the exception of the Khārij’ites¹⁵¹ and some Mu‘tazila from Baghdād,¹⁵² all Muslim groups maintained that it was necessary to have an *imām*. Most Mu‘tazilites considered *imāma* necessary by arguments based on reason, whereas most Ash‘arites and Shī‘ites considered it necessary by arguments based on tradition (or *naṣ*) or based on the notion of obligation, albeit that *imāma* would mean something different for each group. Questions of what the institution entails, how it is to be manifested and who is the *imām* is the basis of the polemical arguments both between as well as within these groups.

¹⁵¹ The Khawārij mention that if there was widespread of peace and justice, then there is no need for an imam –meaning a political authority. See Al-Shihristānī, *milal wa al-nihal*. Also see for example Salem, *Political theory and institutions of the Khawārij*.

¹⁵² For example, Baghdādī Mu‘tazila like Al-Aṣamm (d.225) and Hishām al-Fuwati see Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*.

It is plausible to see how in responding to the Shī'ites, the Ash'arites developed the theory of *imāma* and more specifically Ibn Taymiyya's community-centred vision as Anjum puts it. According to Anjum the community-centred vision was that the caliph-*imām* was not the interpreter but rather the fulfiller of a necessary function of keeping the administration.¹⁵³ He further argues that the development of the state:

no longer tied to the will of the Community, drew its legitimacy from the sole fact that it presumably guarded the Community external and internal threats and prevented social order...They were generally violent, illegitimate, unintegrated into the society they governed, often wasted in succession or border disputes, and often incapable of securing peace and order within the society or even defending their borders.¹⁵⁴

Although the difference between Shī'ite and Sunnī thought stems from disagreements concerning historical events that took place shortly after the death of the Prophet, the essence of the disagreement pertains to the idea and role of political leadership.

Some of the Shī'ite argument is based upon reason and tradition as well, their argument goes as follows: Although God has required humans to rule justly, God knows that humans are fallible and being merciful, He will provide the best leader after the Prophet who would be able to be just and take on the heavy responsibility.¹⁵⁵ The Shī'ite view of *imāma* is seen to be within the ambit of Prophethood, in fact a sort of extension of the latter. Prophets and Messengers introduce the message of God, and *imāms* maintain it, interpret and preserve the message of God after the passing of Prophethood; this ties in with the concept of a *ḥujjah* on which the Shī'ites centre their thoughts on *imāma*. That is, the *imām* is the 'proof of God' on Earth, the living example of Prophetic teaching and the maintainer and preserver of religion. It is for this reason as well as the evidence noting Prophet Mohammed to have had voiced his successor, the Shī'ites consider *imāma* as an article of faith rather than just a legal matter to the point that the *imāma* became central to Shī'ism theologically and was no longer read within the political events of the formative years. Thus, Shī'ite theology and political thought focused upon the teachings and figure of the *imām* and his characteristics and functions.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Anjum, *Reason and Politics in Medieval Islamic Thought*, p. 313.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ H Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shī'ī and Sunnī Muslims to the 20th Century*, Macmillan, London, 1982, pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁶ Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought*, p. 41.

As opposed to the Shī‘ites who made the belief in *imāma* a matter of creed, both Ibn Taymiyya and Ghazālī agree that there is no definition of a state in the Qur’ān. They go further in making it clear that there are no political principles in ‘*aqīda* that bring about a political boundary.¹⁵⁷

This is significant in a religious sense. For, in other words, Ibn Taymiyya argues that the *sunna* was silent about a specific form of rulership, which to him explains how the early companions of the Prophet adopted different ways of political organisation. There are, in Ibn Taymiyya’s thought, profound subtleties in his seeing the *imāma* of the *salaf al-ṣālih* (righteous forefathers/the pious forefathers, usually referring to the first three generations of Muslims)¹⁵⁸ as obligatory by both reason and tradition but at the same time making a distinction with regards to the role of the *imām* as the leader of a community (religious) and as a political authority (*mulk*). The latter is a necessary evil, whereas the former is praised because of its role in encouraging the good and forbidding the evil. This could explain why some, such as Qamaruddin Khan, have read Ibn Taymiyya’s work as similar to the Khārijī’ites with respect to the way it considers the *imāma* as a possibly unnecessary political authority.¹⁵⁹

It appears, however, that Qamaruddin Khan’s reading of Ibn Taymiyya overlooks the fact that Ibn Taymiyya sees the actions of the *salaf as* binding and that one necessarily needs to follow the *sunna* of the Prophet. It is binding because they are closer to the Prophet; this is what Ibn Taymiyya means by tradition. Furthermore, arguably, one possible explanation, is the need to make sure the integrity and trustworthiness of the companions and their followers are not questioned and are safe from the accusations of the Shī‘ites and the Khārijī’ites. This has serious consequences for issues of authenticity and authoritativeness, especially where the *ḥadīth* is concerned.

In addition, the reason why scholars like Qamaruddin Khan regard Ibn Taymiyya as having a similar concept of an *imām* to the Khārijī’ites is Ibn Taymiyya’s zeal in

¹⁵⁷ See for example Ibn Taymiyya, *Al-minhāj*, vol. 1 pp. 17, 23 also see Ghazālī, *Faḍā’ih al-Batiniya*, p. 64.

¹⁵⁸ That is the companions (*ṣaḥāba*), the successors of the companions (*tābi‘īn*) and the successors of the successors (*tābi‘īn al-tābi‘īn*).

¹⁵⁹ See for example Q D Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah*, Islamic Book Foundation, Lahore, 1983.

encouraging the good and forbidding the evil. As discussed earlier, the Khārijī'ites had this principle as part of their *'aqīda*. Like the Khārijī'ites, Ibn Taymiyya believed that the fundamental aim of the *umma* was to encourage the good and forbid the evil (*al nahī 'an al-munkar wa al-amr bil ma'rūf*), which is the chief purpose of faith. Therefore, it is the duty of the *umma* and not the *imām* to reinforce *sharī'a*. However, if there were an *imām* then he would have to enforce *sharī'a*. Thus, Ibn Taymiyya is not interested in state *per se* but in the supremacy of the faith, which he argues could only be realised fully by the government authority.¹⁶⁰

Ibn Taymiyya differs from both Ghazālī and Māwardī by having a more sophisticated argument. Although he counters the Shī'ite claim of *imāma*, he seems to also recognise the absence of any prescribed *naṣ* in the Qur'ān, and to see the role of the Prophet as that of a guide and reminder and not a sovereign (*mālik*). He thus argues that the Prophet did not establish a state in Medina but a social order. Therefore the acceptance of the caliphate is not doctrinal but a practical necessity (this is what is meant when he tries to prove both tradition and reason as *farḍ*). That is to say, it is a means to an end; if the end is reached, one (theoretically) does not need the caliphate. Again, this is why Khan argues that Ibn Taymiyya has similar ideas to those of the Khārijī'ites.

As pointed out earlier with Māwardī and Ghazālī (and arguably even the scholars before them) the question posed by the first civil war remains at the present time due to the consolidation of the groups which developed, post-*fitna*, into comprehensive theological arguments.

It is difficult not to think that the definition of *imām* and caliph was understood differently by these scholars. Ibn Taymiyya, when talking about the *imām*, sees it as a necessary notion, but when he talks about caliphate in his own time, he possibly sees it as a means to an end. His aim was to consider the rulership of Abū Bakir and 'Umar, whose governance was that of an *imām* grounded in ethics and having temporal power.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, vol.3, p. 270 also see *al-Siyāsa al-Shar'iya*, p. 179.

3.4.1 Obligation (*Fard*) of *Imāma*/Caliphate: Confusion of Terms

It is difficult not to postulate that when reading the sources, the concept of *imāma* and caliphate have been inadequately defined, particularly by the Sunnī scholars. This confusion reaches its height in modern assertion and articulations. The debate on *imāma* and rulership that arose as early as the development of the Khārijī'ites was also based on whether it is an obligation to have an *imām*. This idea of obligation fell into the domain of both articles of faith and jurisprudence (*'aqīda* and *fiqh*). The articles of faith were defined by theology proposed by the Shī'ites as their *imāma* theory; later contemporary movements such as Ḥizb al-Tahrīr held it to be necessarily obligatory.¹⁶¹ As the discussion develops from (or reacts to) the Shī'ites belief in the infallible *imām* being an article of faith, the discussion about the question of obligation again becomes polemical.

Furthermore, it is difficult to differentiate between the idea of the caliphate/*imāma* being an obligation or a necessity. Presumably an obligation would require a Muslim to bring about such an institution, whereas the argument that *imāma* is necessary does not place the burden of fulfilment on the community but rather allows it to actuate itself 'organically'.

Moreover, the concept of caliphate in early assertions were focused on issues of succession; only later did the concept of caliphate take on an institutional meaning.¹⁶² This also meant that the early conception of caliphate merged the meaning of *imāma* with the *rāshidūn* era, thus combining the two; that is to say that they succeeded the Prophet and that they were the leaders (*imām*) of the Muslim community. The caliphate/*imāma* has usually been discussed within the Sunnī jurists as an obligation (*fard*) that is contingent upon sufficiency (*fard kifāya*) referring to an obligation that can be fulfilled (or the responsibility of fulfilment) by some and not all Muslims, as long as it is fulfilled. For example, this could apply to people in authority *ahl al-ḥal wa al-'aqd*.¹⁶³ This could also mean that there is a need for governorship that acts to

¹⁶¹ See for example the work of T D Nabhānī, *The Islamic State*. London: al-Khilafah Publications, 1998.

¹⁶² See Chapter Three p. 133.

¹⁶³ This principle can be found in all *fiqh* books.

safeguard the *sharī'a*. Later, however, groups like Hizb al-Tahrīr defined the obligation as *farḍ al-'ayn* (an obligation upon every Muslim to work to bring about governance that consequently made the 'caliphate' as an institution by itself).¹⁶⁴ In this sense, the Khārijī'ites differed considerably from the rest in arguing only for the necessity of an *imām* if needed to elevate the community to a higher level of belief.

The response to the discourse about obligation within Sunnī political theology varied amongst the Mu'tazilites, the Ash'arites and the Khārijī'ites.¹⁶⁵ Even amongst the various Ash'arites the response was different. Some, like Māwardī (for reasons discussed above), equated *imāma* with caliphate and made the argument that it is an obligation.

Ibn Taymiyya has a more sophisticated answer to the question of obligation of *imāma*. He asserts that the caliphate is an instrument to serve the faith.¹⁶⁶ According to him, both reason and tradition would testify to this. Tradition, because of the *rāshidūn* era, shows that one cannot have a community without a leader. One may argue that he sees the state authority in practical terms, wondering to what extent it is able to fulfil one's spiritual and temporal need, which would then give the political authority the legitimacy to rule.¹⁶⁷

3.4.2 *Sharī'a*

The *farḍ* argument is rooted in the implementation and necessity of *sharī'a*. Although from the outset the schools differ on who should have the responsibility of protecting (and to some extent enforcing) the *sharī'a* and how they should do so, nevertheless they all agree that the *sharī'a* needs to be protected, interpreted and applied in society.¹⁶⁸ In the debate regarding who has the responsibility of protecting the *sharī'a*,

¹⁶⁴ See the works of T D Nabhānī, *Islams system: Niḍām ul-Islām*, Hizb ut-Tahrir, 2004. Another example of *farḍ al-'ayn* is prayer.

¹⁶⁵ See for example the work of P Crone, 'Ninth-Century Muslim Anarchists', *Past and Present*, vol. 167, 2000, pp. 3-28.

¹⁶⁶ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsah*, p. 179.

¹⁶⁷ See for example Ibn Taymiyya's two important books: *al-siyāsah alshar'īya fī iṣlāh al-ra'īya*, (1992) found in <<http://www.aruc.org/fullbib.aspx?id=669812>>. Also see *al-Ḥisba fī al-Islam*.

¹⁶⁸ Arguably the ruler after the *rāshidūn* period became devoid of any normative authority which the companions of the Prophet held which led to the split between *sharī'a* interpreted and safeguarded by

the Shī'ite argue that this is the infallible *imām* (later articulation also proposed in the absence of an *imām* that it is possibly the jurist). Māwardī, on the other hand, proposes the caliph as discussed above and Ghazālī holds it should be the *'ulamā*. In contrast, Ibn Taymiyya thinks it is the *umma*; this is why the centre of his argument is the encouraging the good and forbidding the evil).¹⁶⁹ These differences in emphasis also highlight the concept of who has more authority, the *'ulamā*, the *imām* or the *umma*.

3.4.3 The Role of The *Umma* and Consensus

Another concept that emerges in the discussion of medieval political theology is the role of the *umma* (the community) and the idea of *ijmā'* (consensus that came from *uṣūl al-fiqh*). The emphasis on *umma* as a process of decision making by scholars like Ibn Taymiyya is not arbitrary. Both concepts (*umma* and *ijmā'*) are conceptual tools in the polemical arguments to counter the divine *imāma* theory. Ibn Taymiyya asserted that it is the *umma* that safeguards the *sharī'a* (if it is not the infallible *imām*) as they would not agree on falsehood.¹⁷⁰

According to Anjum, the Muslim vision of political theory is a community-centred vision of rulership based on *shūrā* as opposed to a caliphate-centred idea that developed in its peak during the *miḥna* period (the inquisition period).¹⁷¹ He points to both the cynicism towards the Mu'tazilite rationalism caused by the *miḥna* and the elitism of the *'ulamā* and their theological discussions as reasons for the disappearance of the community (or the centrality of the community vision) from the political sphere. This in turn accounts for the detachment of the ideal from the development of the caliphate discourse.¹⁷² He further argues that Ibn Taymiyya aimed to bring about what he believed to be the community-centred vision.

the *'ulama* and the ruler as doing politics. See for example Ibn al-Jawziyya in his work *al-shifā' fi mawā'id al-mulūk wa al-khulafā'*, in which Ibn Jawziyya is advising the leaders. He talks of the implications of oppression, what makes a good leader, looks at the life story of the *khulafa* (successors) and gives words of advice from the *salafs* on how to perfect ones character.

¹⁶⁹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Minhāj*, vol. 3, p. 270.

¹⁷⁰ Ibn Taymiyya draws from a tradition attributed to the Prophet that my 'umma will not agree on an error' in Tirmizi, *Kitāb al-fitan*, Hadīth number 1522.

¹⁷¹ Anjum, *Reason and Politics in Medieval Islamic Thought*, p. 102.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* p. 189.

Therefore, according to Anjum, the contribution of Ibn Taymiyya is his emphasis upon this command as well as his bringing it to the political sphere as the defining mission of the *umma*.

3.4.4 Polemics

Ibn Taymiyya, like al-Ghazālī, set out to counter the Shīʿite assertion. Unlike al-Ghazālī, however, Ibn Taymiyya argues there is nothing in the tradition regarding the way the caliphate has developed. The only instances of righteous rulership found within tradition pertain to the four pious companions. This refers to the tradition attributed to the Prophet that after his death there would be 30 years of just rulership.¹⁷³ Having said that, he recognises the need for a social order and therefore a state arises out of necessity:

The good of mankind cannot be realised except in a social order, because everyone is dependent on others, and society requires indispensably someone to direct it.¹⁷⁴

Therefore, Ibn Taymiyya endeavours to provide some sort of solution for the silence of the Qurʾān and the Prophetic tradition, as well as a counter argument against the Shīʿites. What makes Ibn Taymiyya stand out is his assertion that God helps a just government even if it is not Muslim and does not help a tyrannical government even if it is Muslim, which underlines his understanding of the importance of justice.¹⁷⁵

In summary then, Ibn Taymiyya aims to refute the divine theory of *imāma* just like his predecessors (Bāqillānī, Baghdādī, Māwardī and Ghazālī), which supports the assertion this chapter is making, namely that classical and medieval Sunnī political theory is basically a polemical argument against the Shīʿite and the Khārijīʿites claims.

What is at stake here is that if the Sunnī political theology denounces the caliphate theory in effect they are denouncing religious authority – as per the obligation theory.

¹⁷³ See Kitāb al-Aḥkām, *ḥadīth* 1763. The same *ḥadīth* is also narrated in Musnad al-Anṣār, *ḥadīth* 23001.

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Taymiyya, *al-Siyāsa al-sharʿiyya*, pp. 172-73.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p. 173.

This consequently would mean the legitimacy of the companions of the Prophet after his death, as well as what the community (the majority of the Sunnī tradition) has embraced to be legitimate authority. To challenge the legitimacy or the obligation theory, one would implicitly agree with the Khārijī'ite claims of an egalitarian community-centred vision. This complex situation could explain the quietest tradition that developed amongst the Murji'ites (who later became the Ash'arites) which chose to say nothing on the question of legitimate authority and to pass no judgment (as discussed above) as to who had justification to rule.¹⁷⁶

3.4.5 Summary

The idea that rulers are corrupt was carried further during the inquisition period (*mihna*) in which scholars like Aḥmed bin Ḥanbel¹⁷⁷ were jailed and tortured for holding beliefs contrary to the 'Abbāsīd caliph (al-Ma'mūn 169-217/786-833).¹⁷⁸ It was during this period that the schools of both theology and jurisprudence consolidated into traditionalist (people of *ḥadīth*) and rationalist (such as the Mu'tazilite) and it is to these schools that modern Sunnī political scholars belong.¹⁷⁹

Hence, the scholars of this period that write about political theology are not primarily political thinkers but are instead theologians and/or jurists concerned with understanding revelation and are reacting to their specific environment. This, as was discussed in the previous sections, stimulated questions of boundaries of faith, God's law and notions of justice, in most cases expressed violently. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of scholars felt, to some extent, that a close relationship

¹⁷⁶ See Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa al-niḥal*, pp. 60-62. Also see Izutsu, *The Concept of Belief in Islamic Theology*.

¹⁷⁷ See L Holtzman, Livnat. " Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal ." *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3rd edition, Brill Online, accessed 22 May 2012.

¹⁷⁸ See for example the work of I M Lapidus, 'The Separation of State and Religion in the Development of Early Islamic Society', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1975, pp. 363-385. Also see H Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: the Islamic Near East from the Sixth to the Eleventh Century*, Longman, London, 1986, pp. 148-150.

¹⁷⁹ See for example, W Madelung, *Religious Schools and Sects in Medieval Islam*, Variorum Reprints, London, 1985.

with the political elite is corrupting to the soul; this can be seen as early as the Umayyad period.¹⁸⁰

It is most likely that the rise of the *Sufi* tradition was another reaction to what appeared to be a rise of despotic and corrupt rulers in the Umayyad period. However, this idea needs to be investigated further in order to be substantiated.

The point about context is that the ideas of these thinkers are interpreted as trans-historical. The Sunnī consolidation of caliphate theory by end of the First World War suggests that the context of these writers have been neglected. In fact, it was utopianised and ideologised to the extent that the Sunnī thought of political theory is equated with the idea of caliphate, which in turn is confused with the concepts of *imām* and *khilāfa* referred to in the Qur’ān.¹⁸¹

The discussion of political concepts in this chapter is complicated by the fusion of politico-historical events with theo-jurisprudence that developed after complex historical events. Also contributing to the complexity was the development of different groups each with their own particular interpretation of these events. Therefore, the complex theological polemics applied scripture primarily through the lens of these polemic motives. Anjum argues that *kalām* theologians did not turn to the Qur’ān and the tradition of the Prophet to find answers for their question on authority but ‘almost invariably began with the discursive parameters set by the historical development of the institution, scanning the Qur’anic or hadith literature only to support their contentions’.¹⁸²

Moreover, Anjum makes similar conclusion as this chapter is making, that:

[t]he rise of Shi‘ite dynasties that ruled over a Sunni majority and their open support for Shi‘ī political theology spurred Sunni *kalām* scholars to consolidate and defend Sunni orthodoxy and to provide a theoretical basis for the Sunni caliphate. The challenge for Sunni theologians now was to theorize the caliphate while attempting to defend the historical legitimacy of the early caliphate against attacks by the Shi‘a and

¹⁸⁰ For example, during the military rule of al-Hajjāj ibn Yūsuf in 40-95/661-714 as a governor of Iraq, he was reported to have killed many men, including Sa‘īd bin Jubayr -a *tābi‘ī*. For more details see Ṭabarī. *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, vol. 4, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Cairo, 1960, pp. 23-4.

¹⁸¹ See Chapter Three p. 132.

¹⁸² Anjum, *Reason and Politics in Medieval Islamic Thought*, p. 326.

the Khārījīs on the one hand and the Sunni compromise that required a limited caliphate on the other.¹⁸³

The concepts are crystallised further in their emergence since the first *fitna*, which includes: *imāma*, *khilāfa*, *‘adl* (justice) *shūrā*, *ulī al-amr* (relating also to *ṭā‘a*), *ḥukm*, *amr bil ma‘rūf* and *sharī‘a*. This trend has not changed even in modern times as we shall see.

¹⁸³ His published thesis O Anjum, *Politics, law and community in Islamic thought: the Taymiyyan moment*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012, p. 108.

3.5 MODERN SUNNĪ POLITICAL THOUGHT

The trend calling for restoring the *rāshidūn* period appears in contemporary Muslim intellectual thought in the works of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897) in his work *al-‘irwat al-Withqā*; Muhammed ‘Abduh (1849-1905) in his works *fi al-Shūrā wa al-Istibdād*, *sunan allāh fi al-Umam* and *Uṣūl al-Islām*; Muhammed Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935) in his works *al-Khilāfah aw al-Imāmah al-‘uḍmā*; and Hasan al-Bannā (1906-1949) in his work *Mushkilātīnā al-Dākhiliya fi daw’ al-Niḍām al-Islāmī lihay’at al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn al-‘āmah*.

This section is not a survey of all the modern Muslim thinkers as much as a demonstration that the search for the political ideal in Muslim thought remains a reaction toward the political events of the writer’s time. Without understanding the writer’s own circumstances, their ideas have been largely decontextualised and generalised. Contextualizing these ideas helps us to understand their circumstances as well as the lens through which they read scripture. The works below are just a few examples.

Although the above writers crystallised in their writings the idea that there is a need for an ‘Islamic state’, some, like Afghānī, ‘Abduh and to some extent Riḍā argued for the compatibility of ‘western’ systems (such as democracy, voting and freedom of thought) with Islamic ideals or purposes (*maqāṣid*); others, on the other hand, like Mawdūdī, Nabhānī and Bannā, called for an exclusive Islamic system.

On the Shī‘ite intellectual side, scholars such as Rūḥ Allāh al-Khomeinī (1902-1989) in his work *Distūr al-Jumhūriya al-Islāmiya* moved away from *intizār* (waiting) to accepting a form of deputyship of jurists. Scholars like Mohammed Bāqir al-Ṣadr (1935-1980), founder of the Islamic Da‘wa Party, in his works *Al-Islam Yaqud al-Hayā* (Islam Directive to Life), *Al-Madrasah al-Islamiyyah* (Islamic School) and *Risalatuna* (Our Mission) believed in role of the *umma*; and Ali Shariati (1933-1977) *al-Niḍām al-Ijtimā‘ī* have been influential in resisting colonization and providing propositions for Shī‘ite political theology. It is worth mentioning here that this might

have been the first time the Shī'ite and Sunnī models of politics manage to bridge the split between them despite the schism.¹⁸⁴

It was not only the experience of colonialism, decolonisation, the official breakup of the pan-Islamic caliphate and fragmentation,¹⁸⁵ that allowed for a wave of scholars to call for the return of the caliphate, but many of these scholars, such as Moḥammed Rashīd Riḍā, Ḥasan Al-Bannā, Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī and Abū al-A'ālā al-Mawdūdī, had a living memory of the Ottoman rule. This period also saw a rise in ideas of Arab unity and nationalism, socialism and secular ideals.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, this period could be characterized as a response to modernity in general and to the modern nation-state in particular.

This section reviews the ideas of four Sunnī scholars: Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838-1897); Mohammed 'Abduh (1849-1905); Mohammed Rashīd Riḍā (1865-1935); and Ḥasan al-Bannā (1907-1949) to show the continuing trend of the core arguments in the classical and medieval ideas on caliphate theory, including concepts such as *shūrā* and *bay'a*, which held that the past became an utopian ideal to be achieved.

¹⁸⁴ See El-Affendi 'Umma, State and Movement: events that shaped the modern debate' in K Ḥarūb (ed.) *Political Islam: Context versus Ideology*, Saqi, London, 2010, p. 22.

¹⁸⁵ As well as backwardness of Muslim societies in technology and general sciences, despotic political institutions, low level economic development and subordination in the Muslim world.

¹⁸⁶ M Moaddel, 'Conditions for Ideological Production: The Origins of Islamic Modernism in India, Egypt, and Iran', *Theory and Society*, vol. 30, no. 5, 2001, p. 693.

3.5.1 Late 19th and Early 20th Century Political Concepts

Modern Sunnī activism is usually said to have begun with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, who succeeded in influencing both Sunnī and Shīʿite intellectual thought. What is interesting about Afghānī's life is his mysterious past that includes his ethnicity and his position in the schism. Yet, what were known about Afghānī was his restless personality, sharp intelligence and violent temperament.¹⁸⁷ According to Badawī, al-Afghānī was like Socrates in that he 'wrote little but inspired a great deal'.¹⁸⁸ Although initially Afghānī managed to present himself as a Sunnī born in Afghanistan, only later the suspicion was that he might be Iranian.¹⁸⁹ Badawī explains that the reason he hid this was because his ideas would not have been accepted amongst the Sunnī scholarship if they had known he had a Shīʿite background.¹⁹⁰

Although he did not witness the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire, Afghānī addressed the real issues that Muslims were facing. His main concern was colonialism, foreign domination and the Muslim intellectual 'backwardness' that was prevalent in his time. He was possibly amongst the very first western-educated Muslims who moved the debate of politics from theology into intellectual public debate in his magazine *'Irwat al-Withqā*. Afghānī appears to have had three main targets: (1) to reinforce the idea of Muslim unity against Western domination, (2) to reform the despotic Muslim rulers and finally (3) to reform the orthodox 'ulamā in taking on board rational sciences.¹⁹¹ According to him, Islam declined because:

[o]f the weakening of the solidarity among Muslims and the division of the Islamic territories into different kingdoms, each being ruled by a despot who was interested in fulfilling only his own desires.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ M Z Badawi *The Reformers of Egypt*, Croom Helm, London, 1978, p. 1. Also see E Kedourie, *Afghani and 'Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*, Cass, London, 1966; N R Keddie, *Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī: A Political Biography*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1972; A Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

¹⁸⁸ Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, p. xiii.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* p. vii.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Moaddel, 'Conditions for Ideological Production', p. 695.

¹⁹² Afghānī, *Al-'urwa al-wuthqā*, pp. 46-60. Also Cited in Moaddel, p. 695.

Therefore, Afghānī argued that the Muslim peoples should reunite and learn from other nations.¹⁹³ In his time, Muslims faced modernity not in a slow gradual way but in a fast rapid form with little time to adjust. It is against this backdrop that thinkers like Afghānī emerged.¹⁹⁴

Afghānī, as a reformer, was deeply concerned with the compatibility of Islam and Western ideals to such an extent that he came to equate *shūrā* with parliamentary democracy, *bay‘a* with elections/voting, *ijmā‘* with public opinion and the constitution of Medina with constitutional rule.¹⁹⁵ To achieve this compatibility, therefore, it was vital to do so through internal reform. This means that Afghānī’s main concern was the position of Islam itself in the modern world.¹⁹⁶ The most important means to achieving this end, he argued, was to abandon blind following (*taqlīd*) and engage in freethinking (*Ijtihād*). Most likely, unintentionally, the reform movement of Afghānī and of those before him like Kawākibī, articulated Islam to as a “civilisation” of religion and not a faith that incorporates eschatological aspects, but that of material “progress”. Ultimately Islam was defined and measured on the ideals (and standards) of Enlightenment.¹⁹⁷ Subsequently, this had the result of politicising Islam to an extent that now it is seen as a civilizational religion more than a faith.¹⁹⁸

It is also difficult to differentiate between ‘Abduh’s and Afghānī’s thoughts, beyond the fact that Afghānī influenced ‘Abduh. The intertwined relationship between ‘Abduh and Riḍā is even more complex. Clearly, the revival and reform that Afghānī called for aimed to bring back the golden age, but even more importantly made concepts such as *shūrā* compatible with Western concepts.

Against the early orientalist who understood the classical caliphate in the form of a puppet, ‘Abduh asserted that the caliph was only the political leader of the community and not its Pope.¹⁹⁹ The caliph did not have the executive right to interpret the will of

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Badawi, *The Reformers of Egypt*, p. ix.

¹⁹⁵ Cited in Badawi, p. x.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ Moaddel, ‘Conditions for Ideological Production’, p. 693.

¹⁹⁸ This is to say that religion is there to guide and not create a civilization although a civilization may rise but it is not the predominant aim of faith.

¹⁹⁹ Badawi, p. 18.

God. According to Badawī, ‘Abduh’s fame comes through his incorporation of western institutions into the body politic of Islam to try to prove the compatibility of Islam with Modernity.²⁰⁰ This compatibility is based not only upon technological advancement but also upon much deeper challenges. ‘Abduh asserts:

We complain of lack of ambition, laziness, disunity...[t]echnology cannot offer us remedies to such complaints. What we need to learn, therefore, is something beyond such a discipline, that is the discipline which touches upon the soul and this is the science of human life.²⁰¹

From this standpoint, ‘Abduh emphasised a particular kind of education that touches the soul. More importantly, the connection to the historical utopian past of the golden age is vital.

The call for the practice of the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* over-simplifies the historical complexity mentioned in this chapter that led to some groups holding a simplistic naive understanding of early Muslim history and thus radicalising in the mid 20th century. There seems no real departure from the old themes discussed in earlier sections with the possible intensification of these concepts into a utopian past. One can identify the steady acceptance of the modern nation-state structures. Thus, one of the consequences of the compatibility attempt (or reformism) was to accept the modern nation-state apparatus with its potential nationalism and territorial borders between different Muslim states, which was different from the classical and medieval caliphate system.²⁰² The themes of *shūrā*, *bay‘a* and *ijmā‘* remained evident in the late 19th early 20th century regarding Muslim political thought.²⁰³

For example, according to Riḍā, *ijmā‘* of the first epoch companions of the Prophet is binding upon all whereas the political decisions of the first four caliphs should not be considered binding/obligatory but rather as an opinion and an indicator as to what Muslim government should be like. The concept of *ulī al-amr* also appears in modern writings. Although some have interpreted it as addressing people of knowledge, as Riḍā does, and others read it as addressing people in authority, thus giving it a

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.19.

²⁰¹ M R Riḍā, *Tārīkh al-Ustāz al-Imām al-Shaykh Mohammed ‘Abduh*, vol. ii, pp. 352-53. I have adopted Badawī’s translation p. 32.

²⁰² See the work of H ‘Ināyat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1982, p. 69. Also see the work of W Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity’s Moral Predicament*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

²⁰³ See for example, *Al-Manār*, iv, p. 210.

political angle, as does Taqī al-Dīn al-Nabhānī (1907-1977) in his *Mafāhīm Hizb al-Taḥrīr* and *Niḍām al-Islām*, or Mawdūdī in his *Political Theory of Islam*.

What made the departure even sharper was the decision by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk to dismantle the Ottoman Empire, which consequently led to a very intense debate about the caliphate. This later came to be known as the *khilāfa movement*, which instigated several conferences, for example, in Bombay in 1919 and 1920 and in Jerusalem in 1931. However, it seems that the movement had little success in reaching any kind of consensus on the practical steps needed to bring back the caliphate.²⁰⁴ Arguably, one unintended result of the discussion to bring back the caliphate by utopianising the *rāshidūn* era was a shift in the semantic meaning of the term *imām/caliphate*. Initially the *imām* was seen as a spiritual and temporal leader for public order, but this changed with the idea of caliphate as an instrumental systemic one. That is to say, the *caliphate* is now seen as a system and institution as a whole rather than as in the discussions that occurred in classical and medieval period, as this chapter shows.²⁰⁵

3.5.2 Post-Ottoman Empire: Emergence of Contemporary Sunnī Caliphate Theory

A series of writers emerged in order to respond to the fall of the Ottoman Empire. One example is Riḍā who probably wrote his book *khilāfa aw imāma* in response to three events. The first event was the separation of the sultanate from the main Ottoman Empire, a decision made by the National Assembly in Turkey in 1922 as proposed by Atatürk. The second was the setting up of a republic in the then Ottoman state which separated religion from state. The third event was the shift of the caliphate into a symbol that no longer had any political power.²⁰⁶

Having witnessed the Ottoman caliphate's abolishment and the growing fragmentation, Riḍā, for example, thought it best to explain the question that was often asked in his time, that is 'what is the place of caliphate'?

²⁰⁴ Cf. M N Qureshi, *Pan-Islam in British Indian politics: a Study of the Khilafat Movement, 1918-1924*, Brill, Leiden, 1999, pp. 120-22. Also see El-Affendi, 'Umma, State and Movement', p. 27.

²⁰⁵ This idea needs further research to substantiate the semantic shift.

²⁰⁶ 'Abd al-Ilāh, Balqazīz, *The State in Contemporary Islamic Thought: a Historical Survey of the Major Muslim Political Thinkers of the Modern Era*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2009, p. 77.

Like the classical and medieval scholars discussed in this chapter, he tackles this question as a theologian and as a jurist. Moreover, like his predecessors, he argues that the ideal period of the caliphate was the *rāshidūn* period (when the tradition of the Prophet was followed as it should have). In addition, like the Ash‘arites, he mentions the theory of obligation.²⁰⁷ He further elaborates that Islam, being the middle way, provides a just law and a consultative (*shūrā*)²⁰⁸ state, chosen by election (*bay‘a*). Therefore, if the person in authority is responsible for unifying the community in justice this means everyone will be equal under the law and thus under God, including both the ruler and the ruled.²⁰⁹

Riḍā’s writings could clearly be seen as an attempt to reconcile the modern conception of government (that is elections, democracy, notions of accountability and justice) with the *rāshidūn* period. This is not to say that the *rāshidūn* period had a different set of principles but that the attempt to create a ‘compatibility of concepts’ by decontextualising the early Muslim experience as well as by ignoring the first Muslim *fitna* could be argued to be a ‘modern’ attempt to adjust to the identity crisis magnified by the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Riḍā attempted to account for the *fitna* by arguing that it was instigated by ‘Abdullah ibn Saba’, who conspired in and planned the killing of ‘Uthmān.²¹⁰ Therefore, the resulting wars and assassination of ‘Alī must be viewed primarily as a consequence of this conspiracy. He alludes to the idea that the real *fitna* was a foreign one.²¹¹ Associating the *fitna* of foreign occupation and reinforcing the perception of unity of Muslims, Rashīd Riḍā points out that the reason for the decline of the Muslims lay in their hunger for power and worldly things.

In the end, Riḍā claims that questions concerning the caliphate should be left to the Muslim peoples yet at the same time he sees the institution of caliphate as both

²⁰⁷ M R Riḍā, *al-Khilāfah aw al-imāmah al-‘uzmā: mabāḥith shar‘īyah siyāsīyah ijtimā‘īyah islāhīyah*, Maṭba‘at al-Manār, Egypt, 1922.

²⁰⁸ In contemporary times *shūrā* has taken much attention in arguing for an Islamic State that is compatible with modern nation-state apparatus. See for example the work of AK, Khalīl, *al-Islām bayna al-dawlah al-dīnīyah wa al-dawlah al-madanīyah*, Sīnā lil-Nashr, Cairo, 1995.

²⁰⁹ See *al-Manār*, vol. xxiv p. 352.

²¹⁰ Who was believed to be a Jew pretending to be a Muslim.

²¹¹ See *al-Manār*, vol. xxiv p. 353.

temporal and religious as did his teacher, Mohammed ‘Abduh. As many scholars before them who agreed on the necessity of the caliphate/*imāma*, so did these scholars, with the addition that they accepted the possibility of having separate Muslim political entities. Again, like his predecessors, Riḍā answered the question of who should establish the caliphate by pointing towards *‘ahl al ḥal wa al ‘aqd.*²¹² Riḍā, like many before him, gives a circular argument on how a leader should be elected or known by the *umma*. The *umma* should elect the leader, the leader is known by the *umma* and so on. This is one of the fundamental challenges that Sunnī political theology has not yet managed to solve: how does the caliph get nominated and how does he arrive at power in a way that is not hereditary, even when the idea of *ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd*, the discussion does not make it entirely clear who they are.

Overall, Riḍā engages his audience with issues that concerned Egyptian society as well as Muslim society in the early 20th Century, using minimal theological jargon to do so. Moreover, according to Badawī, Riḍā was less concerned with ‘legitimization and regularization of the institutions...and [concerned] more with outlining the ideal political organization’.²¹³ What is interesting in his discussion is his assertion that the Ottoman caliphate was not a legitimate one because it did not correspond to the Qurayshī principle as discussed in the medieval section. Riḍā was not the first to make this point, Kawākibī made a similar point before him, consequently calling for Arab rule. However, he might have said this for political reasons with the rise of Arab nationalism and the discontent with the Ottomans especially after the First World War.

Another example is the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-ikhwān al-muslimīn*) thought founded in 1941 by Ḥasan al-Bannā (1907-1949), a school teacher, who was also reacting against the extreme westernisation of Egyptian society, which convinced him of the ideas concerning revival.²¹⁴ He managed to combine instruments of modern institutionalization by being more systematic in his approach to ideas of revival, which meant he upheld the religious values that the modern organization was hoping to achieve. This makes the *ikhwānī* movement amongst the first examples of a

²¹² The literal translation is ‘the people who can loosen and tie’ meaning people who have authority. See *al-Manār*, vol. xiv p. 9.

²¹³ Badawī, *The Reformers of Egypt*, p. 66.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 68.

mass modern political Muslim movement. The concept of an “Islamic state” became central to its ideology aiming to bring back the caliphate system. Al-Bannā, like his predecessors, reinforced the concept of a political entity in the form of caliphate whose role is to implement and safeguard the *sharī‘a*.

Looking at the characteristics of modern Muslim political thought, which differs from the classical and medieval period, there are arguably two issues. One is the obsession with discussions of compatibility between Islam and western form of political ideologies such as democracy, which underlie many reformist movements and the second is the rise of public intellectuals rather than jurists or theologians discussing issues of governance. Thus, the writings of contemporary scholars manage to have a wider public appeal, further enhanced by technological advancement such as printing and newspapers, radio and TV. Examples include magazines such as *‘irwat al-Wuthqā* and *al-Manār* and tape recordings as used by Khomeini. This made the discussion much simpler with less theological jargon and less historical connection to the old schismatic debates about the caliphate/*imāma*.

This raises the question as to the difference between the idea of an “Islamic state” and a caliphate theory. One possible observation from the outline above is that the classical theory that emphasises Quryashī descent has changed since the Ottoman rule; although Riḍā thought it important, not many considered this condition to be essential. It is also possible to argue that the call for an “Islamic state” is more modern in its acceptance of the apparatus of state structure (and the nation-state) with Islamic elements, while also incorporating some Muslim law.²¹⁵ The concepts that emerge again are caliphate, *sharī‘a*, *ḥukm*, *ulī al-amr*, *shūrā* and the idealisation of the *rāshidūn* period as a golden age.

3.6 MODERN SHĪ‘ITE POLITICAL THOUGHT

Generally, for Shī‘ites, the question of the caliphate relates inseparably to the question of succession, as it did for the majority of the classical and medieval Sunnī Ash‘arite

²¹⁵ See Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*.

scholars who replied to the Shī'ites claims of succession, as discussed earlier in the chapter.²¹⁶ Therefore, the writing of the Sunnī jurist on this subject during the classical and medieval period is a polemical reply. In contemporary times, the debate about the caliphate has made it an institution in itself, as much a symbol of Muslim glory as a system, just like the idea of the *imāma* system for Shī'ites.²¹⁷

However, modern Shī'ite political thought is interesting for two reasons; first it departs from the classical and medievalist scholarship concerned with waiting for the Mahdī. The second, arguably, is its relative success in the Twentieth Century in comparison to its Sunnī counterpart with the Iranian revolution in 1979. This political event is notable in that arose from the idea of *wilāyat al-faqīh* that had been proposed earlier but was made into a reality by Ayatullah Khomeini.

3.6.1 *Wilāyat Al-Faqīh*

Wilāyat al-Faqīh is often translated as 'guardianship'; in this case it refers to the guardianship of the jurist in the absence of the *imām*.²¹⁸ The debate amongst the Shī'ite is whether this guardianship is general or limited, that is whether it includes all aspects of Muslim life or just the necessary jurisprudential guardianship which only relates to religion and not politics.²¹⁹ Aḥmed Al-Narāqī (1771-1829) is often cited as the first Shī'ite scholar to change the Shī'ite quietist tradition in his proposition by postulating the concept of the *wilāyat al-faqīh* (deputy of the *imām*) in his book '*Awā'id al-Ayām*'²²⁰ and later put in practice by Khomeini in his book *Al-Hukumah Al-*

²¹⁶ Also see W G Millward, 'Aspects of Modernism in Shī'a Islam', *Studia Islamica*, vol. 37, 1973, pp. 111-128.

²¹⁷ See R Brunner & W Ende *The Twelver Shia in Modern Times: Religious Culture & Political History*, Brill, 2001. Also see J Eliash, 'The Ithnā'asharī-Shī'ī Juristic Theory of Political and Legal Authority', *Studia Islamica*, 1969, pp. 17-30. As well as MM Shabistari 'Religion, Reason, and The New Theology', in L Clarke (ed.) *Shī'ite Heritage: Essays on Classical and Modern Traditions*, Global Publications, Binghamton, 2001, pp. 243-260.

²¹⁸ See the work of M Kadivar 'Theories of fiqh in Shī'ī fiqh' in P Luft, & C Turner (ed.) *Shi'ism: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, Routledge, London, 2008, vol. III, pp. 267-282.

²¹⁹ For further reading see S H Nasr, H Dabashi & S V R Nasr, *Expectation of the millennium Shi'ism in history*, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1989. It is also often referred to as 'general guardianship' (*al walāya al 'amma*) used in the past is better than the term 'unconditional guardianship' (*al walāya al muṭlaqa*) which has become more common.

²²⁰ For his entire work see <<http://www.naraqī.com>> also see S H Nasr, *et al* (ed.) *Expectation of the Millennium: Shi'ism in History*, State University of New York Press, Albany.

Islamiyah (The Islamic Government).²²¹ However, before him the idea of a jurist holding deputyship or guardianship on behalf of the *imām* was possibly also alluded to by al-Muḥaddith Faydh al-Kāshānī (d.1090/1679). In his book *Mafātiḥ al-sharī'a*, a legitimate government has three kinds of guardianship (*wilāya*): the guardianship of the Prophet, the infallible *imām*, and finally the guardianship of the jurist.²²² Although this was an idea proposed after al-Kāshānī, it was al-Waḥīd al-Bahbahānī (d.1206/1791) who dedicated a section on the question of the guardianship of the jurist in *al-Fawā'id al-Ḥā'iriya*. Again it is unclear as to whether this work is political or religious.

In any case, Khomeini's work was first delivered as a series of seminars to students of theology in a seminary in Najaf (Iraq) arguing for clerical rule in the absence of the *imām*.²²³ *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* theory argues that the infallible *imām*, in his absence, designates a deputy *imām* who is responsible for the *umma* and its affairs. The deputy *imām* should be the most knowledgeable, pious and wise scholar. It is obvious from this explanation that al-Narāqī was attempting to break away from the Shī'ite tradition of quietism in which one had the attitude of waiting rather than taking action. This does not, however, provide a coherent political theory. In practice, Iran's theocratic state has been a mix of its culture and religion. There is a regular voting system in place, a parliament and a constitution. Yet no one can go against the deputy *imām*. This is where other Shī'ite thinkers have disagreed with this theory.²²⁴

It is interesting that when *wilāyat al-faqīh* as outlined, it is similar to the Sunnī idea of political theory. In fact, Badawī observes that the 'restricted concept of the *imāmat* prevalent among the Shī'ite may be more logical than the halfway house position of the Sunnis'.²²⁵ He goes on to assert that the problematic nature of the Sunnī classical theory of caliphate is its 'lack of specific description of these powers of the Umma

²²¹ See the full text of Na'ini and Khomeini's books in <www.alwelayah.net>. Also see A Vaezi, *Shia political thought*, Islamic Centre of England, London, 2004.

²²² Al-Kashani, F. *Mafatihul Sharai*, vol.2, p. 50.

²²³ See R Khomeini, 'Program for the Establishment of an Islamic Government', in P Luft & C Turner (ed.) *Shi'ism: Critical Concepts in Islamic Studies*, Routledge, London, 2008, pp. 17-38. Also see S Akhavi, 'Islam, politics and society the thought of ayatullah khomeini' in Saed A (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. iv, 2011, p. 329.

²²⁴ A very good discussion on this is seen in Abbas Amanat article A Amanat 'From Ijtihād to Wilāyat-I Faqīh: The Evolution of the Shi'ite Legal Authority to Political Power', *Shari'a : Islamic Law in the Contemporary Context*, 2007, pp. 120-136.

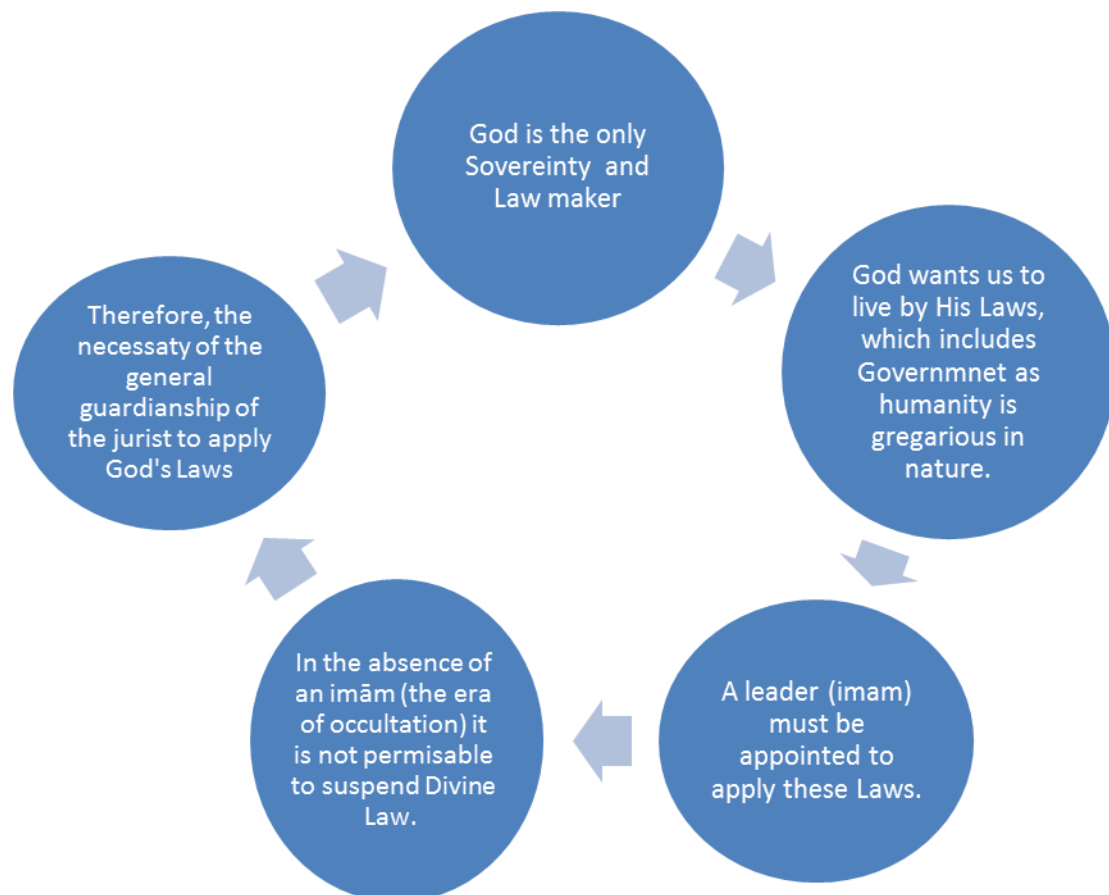
²²⁵ Badawī, *The Reformers of Egypt*, p. 65.

relating to the choice of the Caliph'.²²⁶ Terms such as *ahl al-ḥal wa al-'aqd*, *ulī al-āmr* (those in authority), *ahl al-shūrā* and *ahl al-Ijmā'* (jurists whose consensus is binding according to Sunnī legal theory) have no clear definitions by which they could be identified nor do they have clear mechanisms.

3.6.2 Summary

It is interesting to observe the similarities between the modern Sunnī political theology and the consequent Shī'ite development of *willāyat al-faqīh*. Diagram 5 and 6 below shows these similarities.

Diagram 5: The Circular Argument



The diagram shows the modern Shī'ite political argumentation for an 'Islamic state'.

The Shī'ite view:

- Humans are social in nature.

²²⁶ Ibid.

- Rule belongs only to God the Sovereign the Law maker.
- God wants us to live according to his Laws, which includes political government that is necessary part of society.
- It is therefore necessary to implement a leader to implement the divine law - in the form of an infallible *imām*.
- In the absence of an *imām* (the era of occultation) it is not permissible to suspend the Divine Law.
- Hence the necessity of the general guardianship of the jurist.²²⁷

The same argumentation is also true of the Sunnī caliphate theory in the following diagram:

Diagram 6: The Sunnī -Shī'ite Similarities



The Sunnī view:

- Humans are social in nature.
- Rule belongs only to God the Sovereign the Law maker.

²²⁷ Evidence for this is also taken from the Qur'ān 3:103-4; 4:59, and *Nahj al-Balāgha* Sermon 3.

- God wants us to live according to his Laws, which includes political government that is necessary part of society.
- It is therefore necessary to have a leader to implement the divine law like the Prophet.
- In the absence of Prophecy it is not permissible to suspend the Divine Law.
- Hence the necessity of an “Islamic state”.

With the exception of an *imām* as a necessary leader, both modern Shī‘ite and Sunnī political theory propose similar premises in arguing for the necessary establishment of an “Islamic state”.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The early Muslim concerns of state and power were not about an “Islamic state” but about who has the right to rule. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the three conceptual periods could be summarised as follows:

- i) The early period was concerned with legitimacy and boundaries of belief which led to concepts of ‘*adl* (justice) encompassed in article of faith and hence in the theology of Khārijī’ites, Murji‘ites, Shī‘ites and the Mu‘tazila.
- ii) The medieval period went through the crisis of political fragmentation, chaos and decline, which in its attempt emphasised the caliphate/*imāma* concepts as well as the turning back to the *salaf al-ṣāliḥ* in looking for the ideal model. Concepts such as *sharī‘a*, *umma*, *ulī al-amr*, *bay‘a* and *shūrā* became the Sunnī political theology as a polemic argument against the Shī‘ites assertion of *imāma*. These debates usually took place at a theological level, addressing questions of the necessity of the *imāma* and the obligation of the caliphate; the circumstances of appointment; the means by which the *imām* comes to office; the number of *imāms* at any given time; race and tribe of the *imām*; the qualification required for an *imām*; and the infallibility of the *imām*.
- iii) In contemporary times, the key characteristic of the debate is its obsession

with ‘compatibility’ and modernism, again referring back to the golden age of the companions and in doing so interpreting particular concepts in modern western political language (or arguing for a distinctive ‘Islamic’ political theory). It is during this period that a vivid articulation of ‘Islamic state’ emerges as a reaction to both western imperialism and the end of the Ottoman Empire. What marks this period is the detachment from the polemics of the *imāma*/caliphate debate and a bridge between Sunnīs and Shī‘ites arguing for establishing a state that is called ‘Islamic’.

What is astonishing, as we have seen, is that the competing schisms do not depart much from each other’s main arguments, but rather help to consolidate a political theology that opposes each other: that is the Mu‘tazilite, the Khāraji’ite and the Shī‘ite claims of governorship. Furthermore, all the writers we have discussed lived in times of crisis, and they attempted to articulate a political theology in response to these crises.

It is the belief of this author that the essence of their disagreement is not based on the end vision of a Muslim society but is rather a polemic one, by emphasising the necessity of the institution of the caliphate, which came about in the classical and medieval Sunnī thought and which was merely a reply to the Shī‘ite proclamation of the necessity of the institution of *imāma*. Furthermore, what makes the polemic debates bitter is not so much the belief of the Shī‘ite of the infallibility of the *imām* (as the early Shī‘ite did not believe in the infallibility) but the practical consequence of allegedly going against their belief that the Prophet designated ‘Alī as a successor and hence indicating that the majority of the Muslims are disobeying God. What made this discussion even more complicated were the implications for the status of the, belief of the closest companions of the Prophet such as Abū Bakr and ‘Umar.

In addition, as discussed above, what made the discussion on the political concepts complex in this chapter was its fusion of politico-historical events with the ideas related to theology and jurisprudence, which developed after complex historical events.

The intensity of the argument in which the works like Māwardī, al-Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya have been written serves as an indication of how the issues of the relationship between political rule and the ideals of justice and religious commitments have been unresolved since the death of the Prophet. Earlier polemical works still exist concerning who has the right to rule. Therefore, when one reads the term *bay‘a*, the sovereignty of the caliph and the role of the *umma*, it is difficult to read them without reference to the polemical discussions by the Shī‘ites about the *imāma* - a discussion which has been developed to refer to the principles of divine designation.²²⁸

The concepts that will be discussed in Chapters Four and Five are: *khilāfa*, *imāma*, *‘adl* (justice); *shūrā*, *ulī al-amr* (relating also to *ṭā‘a*), *ḥukm*, *amr bil ma‘rūf, umma* and *sharī‘a*. The concept of *bay‘a* will not be examined as a Qur’ānic concept as it originates from the Arabian tradition.

When categorising these concepts, it becomes clear that they must be thematically and semantically clustered together. Such clustering is also organised on the basis of frequency of occurrence in the Qur’ān, thus rendering these concepts a hierarchy. Less attention is given to *shūrā* and *ulī al-amr*, as they are mentioned only a few times.

In Chapter Four the following Qur’ānic concepts will be analysed:

- i) *Khilāfa, Imām and shūrā*.

In Chapter Five the following concepts will be analysed:

- ii) *ḥukm; ulī al-amr, ṭā‘a, sharī‘a, and ‘adl*.

The concept of *umma* and *Amr bil ma‘rūf wa nahī ‘an al-munkar* will be discussed in Chapter Six when looking at notions of self and community in outlining possible understanding of the individual and society.

As stated in the previous chapter, this study seeks to address how the different conceptualisation of *ḥukm*, *khilāfa*, and *shūrā* relate to each other within the wider Qur’ānic worldview, by pointing out the several meanings that exist in the Qur’ān.

²²⁸ See H Mikhail, *Politics and revelation: Māwardī and after*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1995, p. 21.

Thus, this study has a synchronic focus and examines the interrelationship between lexical concepts in the Qur'ān. Alongside this hermeneutical endeavour, this research is also informed by insights from major works found within commentaries as well as works belonging to the lexicographical genre.

CHAPTER 4: THEORY OF STATE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Most contemporary Muslim thinkers have taken it for granted that there is an *Islamic* political system and by default, a theory of politics which has actually been prescribed in the Qur'ān.¹ The western intellectual tradition which analyses Muslim political theory has understandably been unconcerned with analysing the Qur'ānic verses, but has rather focused upon analysing the politico-historical developments of Muslim affairs.² Western analysis also examines the Islamist claim that there is indeed a political theory. For this reason, Western writings have as a whole been historical analyses of the Muslim intellectual tradition itself.³ As Chapter Three demonstrated, the idea of the caliphate/*imāma* linked the Qur'ānic *khalīfa* with the historical caliphate system intensified since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. Thinkers such as Rashīd Riḍā and Ḥasan al-Bannā, as discussed earlier, considered the caliphate system as an “Islamic political” entity; in doing so they brought forth the idea of an “Islamic state”.

Those who read the verses in the Qur'ān as having a clear political theory in the form of an Islamic state, such as Haroon Khan Sherwani, see the oath of allegiance (*bay'at*), *shūrā*, and the historical caliphate system amongst others as clearly indicating a set of formalised instructions on how to establish an Islamic state.⁴ In agreement with other thinkers, Sharwani outlines the Qur'ānic political theology as follows:

¹ See Introduction

² Such as the work of Watt, Black, and Lambton as mentioned in the introduction.

³ For example HAR Gibb, *Studies on the civilization of Islam*, Beacon Press, Boston, 1962. AK Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam: an introduction to the study of Islamic political theory: the jurists*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981. P Crone, *Islam and government: a history of medieval Islamic political thought*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003. EIJ Rosenthal, *Political thought in medieval Islam: an introductory outline*, University Press, Cambridge, 1958. A Black, *The history of Islamic political thought: from the Prophet to the present*, Routledge, New York, 2001. WM Watt, *Islamic political thought*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1998. Just to list a few.

⁴ HK Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim political thought and administration*, Porcupine Press, Philadelphia, 1977, p. 18. Other examples include AA Kurdi, *The Islamic state: a study based on the Islamic Holy Constitution*, Mansell, London, 1984. A Abū Sulaymān, *Towards an Islamic theory of international relations: new directions for Islamic methodology and thought*, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Herndon, 1993. MS 'Awwā, *On the political system of the Islamic state*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1980.

- God is the Sovereign over all creation, including human beings.
- There is a principle of order and obedience that God wants from humans (linking it to Qur'ānic *khalīfa* and how disorder (*fitnah*) is worse than murder quoting verse 2:217), hence, there is a divine command for structure.
- Muslims should turn to the Divine Law and the Prophetic teachings.
- Justice and law are vital for society (because of the need for order) and hence there is a need for an Islamic state to implement both justice and God's law.⁵

The view expressed above supports the argument that religion and politics are inherently part of Islam. Initially, Askari, in his critique of views such as Sharwani, argued that there are three ways in which this is expressed. The first idiom is the perception that the state is the vehicle to implement *sharī'a* and to 'preserve the historical continuation of community'. The second sees the state as the 'higher expression of community in its act of obedience to the authority of Qur'ān and *sunna* of the Prophet with which the authority of the state is normatively associated'.⁶ The third sees the 'Islamic state' as a fulfilment of the Islamic mission, as the establishment of the authority of God and as the 'abolition of the lordship of man over man'.⁷ According to Askari, the first expresses a legal approach, the second expresses a political approach and the third in seeing Islam and politics as one expresses an ideological approach. These kinds of formulations reinforced the assumption that the unification of religion and state 'was as fundamental to Islam as its creed of one God and Muhammed' as the last Prophet.⁸ One is justified to assert that the contemporary discussions are primarily based on the political and ideological approach, whereas the classical discussions were predominantly based on the first approach, namely the legal one.

In this Chapter the views of both the political and the ideological expressions are challenged through an examination of the multi-layered Qur'ānic expression of *khalīfa* and *imāma*. The idea that caliphate system or the concept of an "Islamic state" is inherently part of the Qur'ānic message is therefore challenged right at its core.

⁵ See his work Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim political thought*, pp. 23-31

⁶ H Askari, *Society and state in Islam: an introduction*, Islam and the Modern Age Society, New Delhi, 1978, p. 176.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid. p. 177.

This study also suggests that the concept of “political Islam” has complex interconnections with other concepts in a hierarchy of concepts which comprise the entire Qur’ānic worldview. The complexity is due to several factors: the perception of politics, the historical-polemical discussions amongst the Muslim sects, the ways in which scripture is understood and lastly whether the notion of political theory entails a prescribed application of politics or instead a more generally expressed ethico-political principles. This research calls into question the assumption that there is a conclusive understanding of these interconnected issues.

The problem with accounts like Sharwani's is that the Qur’ānic verses can infer numerous possible meanings. Eggen rightly points out this is due to the multi-layered content of the Qur’ān.⁹

In this Chapter the Qur’ānic concepts of *khilāfa*, *imāma* and *shūrā* will be analysed. However, *shūrā* will be discussed briefly as it has been mentioned only twice in the Qur’ān rendering it only a term according to the methodology explained in Chapter Two.

These concepts are thematically and semantically clustered together as discussed in the Introduction and in Chapter Two. Each concept is examined by its roots and their derivatives using Izutsian methodology.

4.2 THE MORPHOLOGY OF *KHALĪFA* USING IZUTSIAN APPROACH

Etymologically the words *khilāfa* and *khalīfa* derive from the same trilateral root *kh-l-f*. From this root, there are twenty-three forms used in the Qur’ān, of which 127 verses include the derivatives.¹⁰ *Khullifa* is mentioned once, *yukhālif* twice, *‘akhlāfa* 13 times, *tukhlaf* once, *yatakhallaf* once, *‘ikhtalāfa* 33 times, *‘ikhtulif* twice, *istakhlāfa* five times, *khalf* twice, *khālifūn* once, *khilāf* six times, *khilfah* once, *khawālif* twice,

⁹ NS Eggen, ‘Conceptions of Trust in the Qur’an’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies*, vol. 13 no. 2, 2011, p. 56

¹⁰ E Badawi & M Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, p. 279.

mukhallifūn four times, *mukhlif* once, *ikhtilāf* seven times, *mukhtalif* eight times, *mukhtalifūn* twice and *mustakhlafūn* 11 times. *Khalīfa* occurs twice, *khalafa* occurs five times, *khalā'if* four times and *khulafā'* three times.¹¹ The discussion in this chapter is focused mainly on the four last concepts (*khalīfa*, *khalafa*, *khalā'if*, *khulafā'*) as they are directly linguistically related to *khilāfa*.

The above derivatives denote several connected meanings including: 'successor'; 'to inhabit' or to 'cultivate', 'to take over another person's place'; 'to substitute'; 'to inherit something from a predecessor'; 'to be behind'; 'to follow'; and 'to be corrupt'.¹² It also comes to mean 'to delay'; 'to differ'; 'to be contrary'; 'to be different', 'to fail to keep a promise'; 'to let down'; and 'to alternate'.¹³

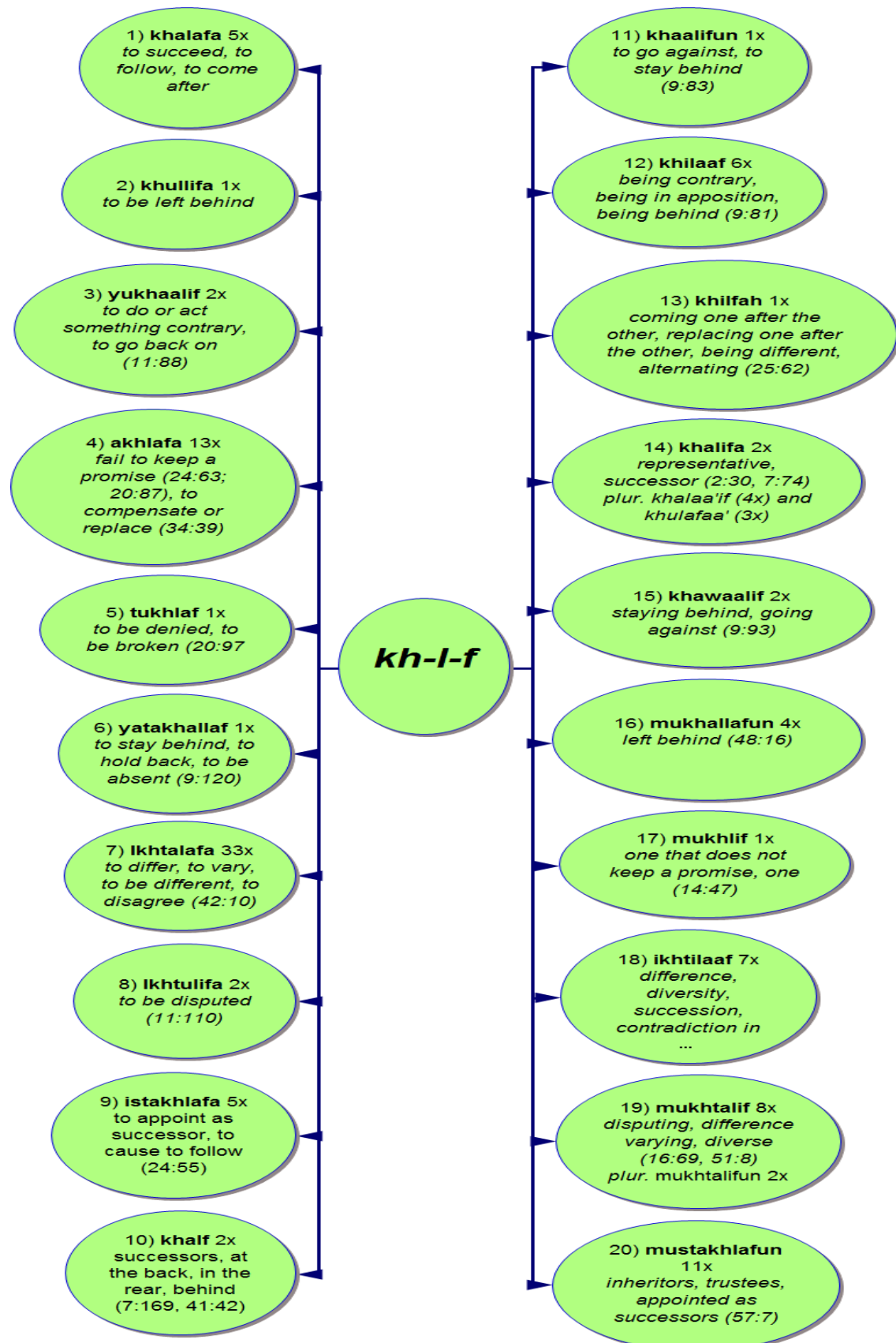
There are interconnected semantic fields that relate directly to the verses, which make mention of *kh-l-f* in its root form; Diagram 7 and 8 below clarify these semantic fields. Their themes revolve around concepts such as *wāriṭhīn* ('to inherit') *imām*, *arḍ* ('earth') as well as *sakana* ('to live') and 'ammara ('to build', 'to fix', and 'to bring about construction').¹⁴ Furthermore, the concept of *arḍ* also has its own connected semantic fields such as *fasād*, *iṣlāḥ*, *i'mār*, *khalq*, *nās* etc. These terms also connect and contribute to the meaning of *kh-l-f* even if they are not directly connected.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² AA Al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-alfāḍ al-Qur'ān*, vol. 1 & 2, Dar Al-Qalam, Damascus.

¹³ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 278-282.

¹⁴ W Al-Qādī, 'The Term "Khalīfa" in Early Exegetical Literature', *Die Welt Des Islams*, Vol. 28 no. 4, 1988, p.402. This is also demonstrated in Diagram 8.

Diagram 7: The Morphology of *Kh-l-f*

4.2.1 The Morphology of *Kh-l-f*

The word *khalafa* occurs five times (in 7:169; 7:142, 150; and 19:59) denoting ‘to succeed’, ‘to follow’, and ‘to come after’.¹⁵ The meaning of ‘successor’, ‘heir’, ‘representative’ or ‘replacement’ also comes twice in the form of *khalīfa* as in verses 2:30 and 7:74. As discussed earlier the root word of *kh-l-f* is the verb meaning ‘to come after’ and ‘to take the place of’. It should therefore come as no surprise that the meaning of ‘replacing’ someone and ‘succeeding’ someone would be merged into one, such that the meaning of *khilāfa* carries the idea of replacing ‘in some form of succession’.¹⁶ This form, however, does not occur in the Qur’ān. The form *khalā’if* is mentioned four times (6:165; 10:14; 10:73; 35:39) and *khulafā’* mentioned three times in the Qur’ān (7:69 and 74; 27:62) both as a plural form of *khalīfa*.¹⁷ *Istakhlafa*, which occurs five times, means ‘to follow’ or ‘to appoint as a successor’, as in verse 24:55.¹⁸ *Mustakhlafūn* is mentioned eleven times, it can denote: ‘inheritors’, ‘trustees’ and ‘appointed as successors’, for example in verse 57:7.

The passive form *khullifa* occurs only once in 9:118 denoting ‘to being left behind’.¹⁹ *Yatakhallaf* is also only used once and also means ‘to stay behind’, ‘to hold back’ and ‘to be absent’, as in verse 9:120. *Yukhālif* occurs twice and means ‘to do something contrary’ or ‘to act contrarily’ and ‘to go back on’, for example in the verse 11:88. *Akhlafa* has a similar meaning in that it refers to someone who fails to keep a promise, such as in verses 24:63 and 20:87. This form occurs thirteen times. It can also mean ‘to compensate’ or ‘to replace’ as in verse 34:39. *Tukhlafa* occurs once, meaning ‘to be denied’ or ‘to be broken’, as in verse 20:97.²⁰

The root word *kh-l-f* also can take the form of *ikhtalafa*, meaning ‘to differ’, ‘to vary’, ‘to be different’ and ‘to disagree’, occurring 33 times, for example, in verse 42:10. *khilāf* also means ‘being behind’, ‘being contrary’, ‘being in disagreement’ and ‘being in opposition’, as in verse 9:81. This form is mentioned six times in the Qur’ān. In addition, *mukhlif*, is mentioned once referring to ‘one who does not keep a promise’,

¹⁵ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, p. 279.

¹⁶ Al-Qādī, ‘The Term "Khalīfa" in Early Exegetical Literature; p. 406.

¹⁷ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, p. 281.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 280.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 279.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 280.

as in verse 14:47.²¹

Ikhtilāf, also with the meaning of ‘difference’, ‘diversity’ and ‘contradiction in consistency’, is mentioned seven times (such as 10:6 and 4:82). Furthermore, *mukhtalif* (which occurs eight times) is usually used to mean ‘disputing’, ‘difference’, ‘varying’ and ‘diverse’, as in verses 16:69 and 51:8; the plural is *mukhtalifūn*, occurring twice.²² Another form, *ikhtulifa* denotes ‘to be disputed’ as in verse 11:110 occurring twice.²³

Khalf also has similar meanings as both ‘successor’ and ‘to be at the back’, ‘to be in the rear’, ‘to be behind’ as in verses 7:169 and 41:42, and appears twice in the Qur’ān. *Khālifūn* is mentioned once in the Qur’ān in verse 9:83 with the meaning of ‘those who go against’ and ‘those who stay behind’. Furthermore, *khawālif*, which is mentioned twice in the Qur’ān, also has the meaning of ‘staying behind’ and ‘going against’, as in verse 9:93. *Mukhallafūn* according to Badawi and Abdel Haleem (hereon Badawi *et al*) denotes ‘left behind’ as a form of punishment, as in verse 48:16. This form occurs four times in the Qur’ān.²⁴

Diagram 8 shows the interconnectedness of each concept and by following this pattern one can eventually perceive a complex web of interconnectedness of concepts within the whole framework of the Qur’ān itself. Due to constraints of time, this chapter will examine only the direct semantic fields that connect to *kh-l-f*. The other connections to *arḍ* are included in Diagram 8 to illustrate how it can be expanded if one continues to move from one concept to another, eventually arriving at a very complex web of interconnectedness of the Qur’ānic *weltanschauung*.

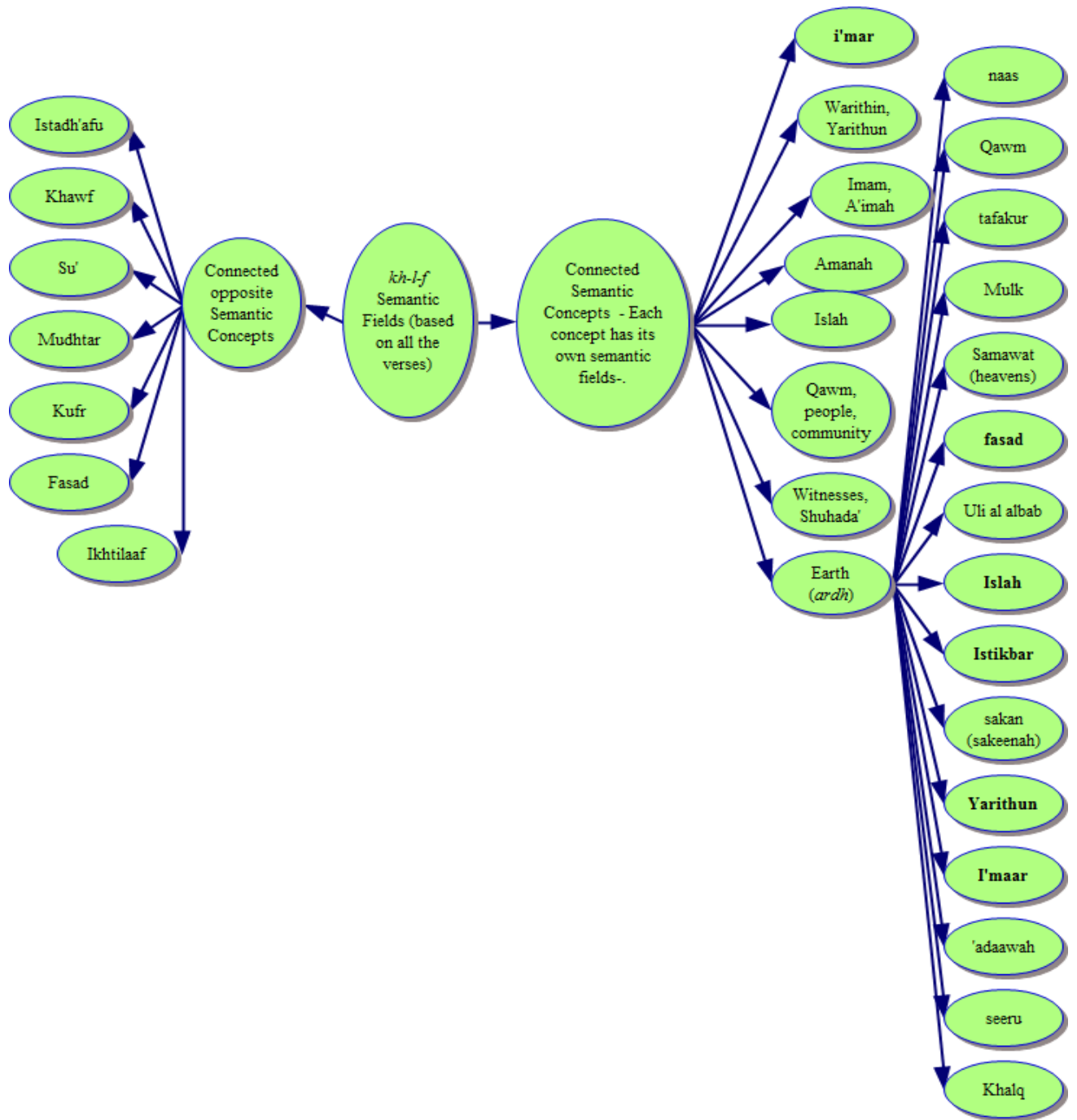
²¹ Ibid. p. 281.

²² Ibid. pp. 281-2.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid. pp. 280-1.

Diagram 8: Semantic and Thematic Field of *Kh-l-f*



4.2.2 The Semantic Connection of *Khalīfa* and *Imām*

The term *imām* is also connected to concepts that emerged in early Muslim history.²⁵ The singular form is *imām*, which the Qur’ān mentions seven times (2:124; 11:17;

²⁵ See Chapter Two p. 68.

15:79; 17:71; 25:74; 36:12; 46:12), and the plural form *a'imah* five times (9:12; 21:73; 28:5/41; 32:24). It can mean 'a leader'; 'a guide'; 'creed', 'conviction'; 'an example,' 'a model'; 'a highway' or 'in front'.²⁶ What is interesting about the root word of *imām* is that *i-m-m* signifies two interconnected concepts, of which one branches out to mean 'mother', 'race', 'roots', and 'groups'; the other branches out to denote 'front', 'main road', 'leader', 'example' and 'direction'.²⁷

Therefore, the word *imām* and the word *umma* share the same root word.²⁸ Their interconnection could connote the encompassing character of the concept of a mother and of a leader. *Umma* occurs fifty-one times in the Qur'ān.²⁹ In verses 2:124, 11:17, 25:74, 46:12, 21:73, 28:5 and 32:24 both *imām* and *a'imah* are referring to leaders as 'those who are put into a position of leading people' or 'those put into leadership situations.'³⁰

Verses 28:41 and 9:12 show the meaning of the *a'imah* in greater depth. Approaching the meaning of 'those people who lead', the term seems again to describe the leaders' position rather than prescribe a particular institution or political structure that has to be brought about. Therefore, it is safe to conclude that although *imām* as a concept may have a political element in its position as a leader, it is descriptive rather than prescriptive of any institutional framework.

According to Khan the concept of *imām* as the defenders of the faith was given much publicity by the 'Abbāsids for ideological reasons.³¹ If the 'Abbāsids use the word *imāma*, while the Shī'ites are claiming the right to rule, then the 'Abbāsids have created enough confusion about the concept of *imāma* in which the Shī'ites are not the sole claimers of legitimacy. He further argues that the meaning of *imām* in the Qur'ān was never used to mean a political leader or a person leading people in worship.³² Its

²⁶ Ibid. p. 49.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 47.

²⁹ See FM Denny, 'The Meaning of "umma" in the Quran', *History of Religions*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1975, pp. 34-70. Also see another article by the same author 'Umma in the Constitution of Medina', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1977, pp. 39-47.

³⁰ See the work of Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī.

³¹ Q Khan, *Political concepts of the Qur'an*, p. 19.

³² Ibid.

meaning, he asserts that it merely refers to a religious leadership, for instance in 31:73; 28:5; 17:71; and 32:24.

Furthermore, according to Manzooruddin Ahmed, *imāma* is interchangeably used for *khilāfa*, however, this could only be the case according to Sunnī political theology.³³ Etymologically, the word *imāma* means ‘one who is in front’, indicating a leader, later this word also developed to mean the man who leads congregational prayers. For this reason, the Sunnī political theology used *imām* interchangeably with caliph to mean the same person.³⁴

The multi-layered meaning of *kh-l-f* hence has the meaning of ‘replacement’, ‘disagreement’, ‘differences’ and ‘heirs’. From the above observation, the idea of a leadership in the Qur’ān seems to possess a general rather than any specific meaning.

4.2.3 The Connection of *Kh-l-f* with *Wārithīn*

W-r-th, when connected with a few forms of *kh-l-f* refers to ‘heirloom’, ‘to inherit’, ‘to leave a legacy’, ‘an inheritor’, ‘to cause someone to acquire something,’ and ‘to bring life (cultivate) to land’. From this root word, eight different forms occur 35 times in the Qur’ān. *Waritha* (‘to inherit’ and ‘to come into the possession of’) occurs 12 times and in the passive imperfect form once –*yūrath*; *awratha* (‘to cause to inherit’) occurs nine times and in the passive form ‘*ūritha* three times.³⁵

What concerns us with respect to the root word *w-r-th* is the form of *wārithūn* (sing. *wārith*), denoting ‘heir’, ‘inheritor’ and ‘the one who is the possessor’.³⁶ The most significant verse, and one that is particularly interesting to analyse, is verse 28:5: ‘And We wished to be gracious to those who were being depressed in the land to make them leaders (in faith) and make them heirs’.

Within this verse, two notable concepts are mentioned: *wārithīn* and *a’imah*. In this context, it is God, who as a favour, elevates the status of the people and not man, with

³³ M Ahmed, ‘The Classical Muslim State’, p. 93.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, pp. 1019-1020.

³⁶ Ibid.

the condition that man upholds righteousness. Thus, the meaning of the verse refers to God out of his Grace elevating those people who have been oppressed as inheritors or heirs and leaders. Again, the particular form in which this might happen is not mentioned, thus the idea remains vague and possibly pertaining to the in the metaphysical realm of God's actions and not to the human realm.

4.2.4 The Thematic Connection of *Kh-l-f* to *Amāna*

There have been a few interpreters, such as Mohammed 'Abduh, Rashīd Riḍā and Ṣadr, who associate the verse of *khalīfa* (2:30) with the verse of *amāna* (33:72) which is interpreted to refer to trusteeship, such as when the Qur'ān says:

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains: but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it— he was indeed unjust and foolish (33:72)

Afzalur Rahman (not to be confused with the late Fazlur Rahman) also makes a connection between three verses: (1) the covenant verse that Cragg discusses in length³⁷, (2) the *khalīfa* verse and (3) the *amāna* verse. He asserts that the:

Covenant taken by Allah from Adam and his progeny at the time of their creation was, in fact, a promise from them faithfully to fulfil the obligations of the Trust (*amanat*) that was being placed in their hands by their Sovereign in the form of being the *khalifah* of the earth for an appointed term.³⁸

According to Afzalur Rahman, the idea of *khilāfa* of Adam (which he translates as 'vicegerent') suggests that man is entrusted with certain powers and that he is to be given the freedom of action.³⁹ In support, Shaltut suggests that the *khalīfa* verse refers to 'man's Promethean ability both to understand the essence of all things and to be prepared to proclaim what is good and to distinguish it from evil'.⁴⁰

³⁷ See his book K Cragg, *Am I not your Lord? Human meaning in divine question*, Melisende, London, 2002.

³⁸ A Rahman, *Readings in Islamic political philosophy*, Seerah Foundation, London, 1987, p. 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴⁰ Cited in M Campanini & C Higgitt, *The Qur'an: modern Muslim interpretations*, Routledge, London, 2011, p. 30.

One difficulty with Afzalur Rahman's discussion on the concept of *khilāfa* is that his definition specifies Messengers whereas the Qur'ānic concept seems to include humanity in general. A bigger problem, however, with Afzalur Rahman and Shaltut is that they fail to discuss in depth the second section of the *khalīfa* and *amāna* verses. This second section characterises the actions of spreading bloodshed and corruption in the *khalīfa* verse and injustice and ignorance in the *amāna* verse.⁴¹

Furthermore, there is an on-going debate regarding what the *amāna* refers to.⁴² Even if one interprets the meaning as 'a trusteeship to mankind', what is the nature of that trust? Some have said it relates to rationality, responsibility, reason, free choice and, possibly, the prayer and other religious duties that God has demanded.⁴³

In any case, semantically, *amāna* denotes 'trust', as in verse 4:58. The root word of *amāna* is *a-m-n* and 19 forms occur in the Qur'ān referring to 'guard', 'keeper', 'to trust' and 'to be trusted'.⁴⁴ This *amāna* of course would seem to be a huge responsibility as the heavens, the earth and the mountains all felt ill-equipped to accept it. It must be a heavy responsibility for humankind to take care of the earth and reach towards man's highest moral ability. Like the *khalīfa* verse (2:30) which describes the situation of mankind as spreading corruption and shedding blood (*man yafsidū fihā wa yafikū al-dimā*). The second part of the '*amāna* verse (33:72) describes humans as tyrant/unjust and ignorant (*inahū kāna ḡalūman jahūlā*). Each verse seems to have been balanced by describing human tendencies and human states of affairs. This gives a balance to the human being both as *khalīfa* and as holder of the '*amāna*.

The only reasonable explanation in linking the *khalīfa* verse with *amāna* is the view that human beings were created with pressing responsibilities and expectations. This begs the question as to whether this in fact refers to a political vicegerency or not. In terms of *khalīfa* verse whether the vicegerence is of God on earth or of humans succeeding other species. We will return to this question later.

⁴¹ A Rahman, *Readings in Islamic political philosophy*, pp. 52-3.

⁴² See the work of Eggen, 'Conceptions of Trust in the Qur'an', pp. 56-85.

⁴³ See major exegetic works found at <www.altafsir.com>

⁴⁴ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 50.

4.2.5 The Thematic Connection of *Kh-l-f* with *Arḍ*

When looking at the inter-contextuality (*siyāq*) of the verses which mention *yastakhlif*, *khalā'if*, *yastakhlifakum*, *khalīfa*, eight of these verses (out of 13) contain the word 'earth' right after *yastakhlif*, *khalā'if*, *yastakhlifakum* and *khalīfa*, without specifying who is actually the *khalīfa*.

From the 13 verses also it is possible to find a number of interesting patterns. When the root word *kh-l-f* is accompanied or followed by the word *arḍ* (earth) the meaning of *kh-l-f* seems to convey an 'ām meaning.⁴⁵ However, when the word occurs without the word *arḍ* it seems to demonstrate a condition in which a group of people replace another people or nations, therefore the *khiṭāb* (the address of the Qur'ān to the reader) is more specific.⁴⁶

From this, we may infer two things; that the concept of *khalīfa* is a general kind of terminology addressing humanity as a whole, as opposed to other creations of God. The second is that the role of this *khalīfa* on earth is to be tested, as the verses indicate.⁴⁷ Of course, part of *khalīfa* includes an element of justice, but the terms and the expressions used to express these elements are very general. Furthermore, the word of the aforementioned verses seems closer to a statement and a warning than a command by God to create a political system.

The Qur'an speaks of '*arḍ*' constantly; and in these verses, it does not seem to recognise any formal boundaries. In fact, the Qur'ān is constant in referring to travel and that other parts of earth are a refuge, for instance in verse 4:97. This is consistent with the idea that goodness as well as the process of cultivation of earth needs to be encouraged regardless of any boundaries (see for example, 3:110; 3:104 and 114; 9:67 and 71; 22:41). This concept is associated with earth, *warath* and *kh-l-f* as shown below.

⁴⁵ Such as in verses 2:30, 6:165, 7:129, 10:14, 24:55, 27:62, 35:39 and 38:26.

⁴⁶ Such as in verses 6:133, 7:69, 10:73, 11:57 and 19:59.

⁴⁷ See verses 2:30, 6:165, 7:129, 10:14, 24:55, 35:39, 38:26 compared to verses 6:133, 7:69, 7:169, 10:73, 11:57, 19:59.

4.2.6 The Thematic Connection of *Kh-l-f* with '*Ammara* and *W-r-th*

'*Ammara* also includes the meanings 'to populate', 'to cultivate', 'to make habitable' and 'to maintain', occurring four times.⁴⁸ In this context, verse 30:9 is particularly interesting as it looks at the interconnectedness of 'to cultivate' the earth, including the sense of making it habitable and maintaining it. This is connected to the concept of earth and hence to the concept of *kh-l-f*. *Ista 'amara* also means 'to cause to settle', 'to cause to inhabit' or 'to cause to populate' and occurs once in the Qur'ān.⁴⁹ In its thematic connection then, it is possible to connote that the Adamic persons that are on earth are there with the task to cultivate and to maintain it.

4.2.7 Non-linguistic Connection to *Kh-l-f*

From the outset, there is an important non-linguistic connection within the term *kh-l-f* (and all concepts in the Qur'ān) which needs to be pointed out and acknowledged. This is the idea of *tawhīd* – Oneness of God, connecting all concepts into a metaphysical relationship and evoking eschatological beliefs.

4.2.8 The Antithesis of *W-r-th*

f-s-d carries a range of meanings: 'to corrupt', 'to spoil', 'to decay', 'to fall into disorder', 'to be perverted', 'to make trouble' and 'to be wicked'. Five different forms occur from the root word *f-s-d* and it is mentioned 50 times in the Qur'ān.⁵⁰ These forms include *fasada*, 'to become corrupt' and 'to fall into disorder'; *afsada* 'to act corruptly', 'to play havoc' and 'to cause damage'. *Fasād*'s associated meanings include 'mischief', 'destruction' and 'causing corruption'. *Mufsid* refers to the person who causes or spreads 'mischief', 'disruption' and 'destruction'.⁵¹ From the above meanings the verses that denote *f-s-d* refer to those people who spread corruption and mischief and therefore will not be the heirs of the earth.

⁴⁸ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 642-644.

⁴⁹ Ibid. pp. 643.

⁵⁰ Ibid. pp. 709-710.

⁵¹ Ibid.

The concept of *fasād* is connected to the concepts of both *khalīfa* and *wāriṭhīn* even though they do not share a common root. In this way, those who inherit the earth are linked to those who do not spread corruption and those who were replaced are equated with those who spread corruption; arguably for this reason they were replaced by God. Again, these concepts relate to God's promise rather than a prescribed command by God to establish any kind of political system.

It will be useful, then, for our research to relate the word *khilāfa* to Qur'ānic verses and to relate the word *caliphate* to the early political system that developed. As al-Qādī rightly suggests, 'one should dismiss the *initial* relation between the Qur'ānic term *khilāfa* and the historical reality of the caliphate'.⁵²

In the following section, it will be further demonstrated that the Qur'ānic *khilāfa* has no connection to the political caliphate system developed in the Umayyad period; the description in the Qur'ān is indeed Adamic and hence applicable to for humanity as a whole. The early exegetical traditions are useful in showing the kind of concern the early Muslims were engaged with in relation to the *khilāfa/imāma* debate.

4.3 THE VIEWS OF THE EXEGETICAL TRADITION OF THE CONCEPT OF KH-L-F

One of the earliest Sunnī exegeses is *Tafsīr Muqātil* by Muqātil bin Sulaymān (d.150/767).⁵³ Muqātil spends two short paragraphs explaining verse 2:30 by alluding to the view that the verse is addressing Adam and his offspring to replace the *Jinn* (a name of another creation alongside human beings and animals) on earth.⁵⁴ He does not go into detail about the meaning of *khalīfa* or whether there are different views about who the *khalīfa* is or whom the *khalīfa* is replacing. In contrast, later exegetical

⁵² Also see the work of Wadād Al-Qādī, 'The Term 'Khilafa'', p. 397.

⁵³ His work could be found online <<http://www.almeshkat.net>>, <<http://www.yasoob.com>> as well as <www.tafsir.com>. The later website searches the exegetes alongside the verse itself. This has been very useful in looking for verses quicker than looking at separate volumes.

⁵⁴ See verses 72:1-28.

works do spend a considerable amount of time discussing the nature of angels,⁵⁵ whereas Muqātil does not discuss the nature of angels and their abilities of replying to God.

A more detailed and widely-acknowledged *tafsīr* is by Moḥammed bin Jarīr Al-Ṭabarī in his *tafsīr* titled *Jāmi‘ al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl al-Qur’ān* (d. 310/922) which uses narrations and linguistic approaches to explain the Qur’ān.⁵⁶ In contrast, although Ṭabarī wrote at a later time, his book is nonetheless considered one of the authoritative works in the field of Qur’ānic exegesis. Ṭabarī speaks of the meaning of *khalīfa* as someone taking over or replacing the one who came before; he spends a considerable amount of time quoting different narrations. He suggests that the word *khulafā’* indicates that human beings will keep on overtaking each other throughout time (possibly by violent means); this, Ṭabarī explains, is what the angels meant in verse 2:30 when they ask God whether he intends to create a being that will engage in corruption on Earth.⁵⁷

Ṭabarī’s exegetical emphases is primarily concerned with the with theological debate as to whether the angels were actually questioning God or whether they were merely asking for information and not objecting to the creation of humanity. This is understandable as during his time, theological discussions on God’s nature, the nature of angels and human beings had become a serious debate with clearly delineated positions. Nevertheless, Ṭabarī’s explanation does not discuss in any detail the term *khalīfa* as having a political meaning other than as a vicegerent in a most general sense.⁵⁸ Ṭabarī’s exegesis on the verse 6:133 is interesting. He suggests that the meaning of *wa yastakhlif* is a the replacement of a human by means of a new creation rather than referring to any kind of political governance. His interpretation of 6:165 is the same. Therefore, he is consistent in his explanation of *khulafā’*, *khalīfa* and *khalā’if* as God replacing people in terms of societies rather than by a single

⁵⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr Muqātil*, Retrieved 20 November 2009

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=67&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁵⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān fī ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, retrieved 29 November 2009

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

individual or by a divinely-appointed political structure. His understanding of 19:59 is also congruent with his other interpretation of the terms as referring to people replacing other people.

Both Ṭusī⁵⁹ and Ṭabarsī⁶⁰ provide three different accounts of what 2:30 could infer, particularly regarding the word *khalīfa*. Ṭusī narrates a tradition that Adam was called *khalīfa* because he replaced the *Jinn* on earth, quoting Ibn ‘Abbās as saying that Adam was replacing the *Jinn* (as Ṭabarī also narrated) who shed blood and spread corruption and it is the people of Adam who will replace the *Jinn*. In this case the meaning of *khalīfa* is taken to refer to ‘replacing’ and not vicegerency.

In contrast, both Ṭūsī and Ṭabarsī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī thought the verse was addressing the sons of Adam who replaced and succeeded their father (Adam).⁶¹ Al-Ṭusī also brings forward Ibn Mas‘ūd’s interpretation that 2:30 indicate that Adam and his sons will rule the earth. Although he does not go into detail as to which view he thinks is the most correct, he does say that the meaning of *khalīfa* is ‘to replace’ or ‘to succeed’ rather than ‘to rule’. His interpretation of 6:133, 6:165 *etc.* again takes the word to mean replacing or succeeding people or nations.⁶² This is also true of Ṭabarsī’s *tafsīr* as he narrates similar traditions to those which both Ṭusī and Ṭabarī narrated. In contrast to the rest, Ṭabarī’s exegesis provides the full chain of narrations with his explanations.

⁵⁹ Abi Ja‘far Moḥammed bin al-Ḥasan al-Ṭūsī (d. 460/1067) was the first Shī‘ite scholar with a *tafsīr* (*al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*) who moved away from explaining most verses in relation to the *īmama* theory and other Shī‘ite doctrine.

⁶⁰ Abū ‘Alī Faḍl bin Ḥasan al-Ṭabarsī (d.548/1153) in his work *Mujma‘ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, found in <www.tafsir.com>

⁶¹ Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, retrieved 3 December 2009

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=4&tTafsirNo=39&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1>>. Also see Ṭabarsī, *Mujma‘ al-Bayaan fī Tafsīr al-Quran*, retrieved 3 December 2009

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=3&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁶² Al-Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān*, retrieved 3 December 2009

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=39&tSoraNo=6&tAyahNo=133&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

Qurṭubī, on the other hand, is the first *mufasir* (exegete) who equates verse 2:30 with the Muslim caliphate system right after the death of the Prophet.⁶³ He also equates this *khilāfa* with the idea of *imāma* in an attempt to answer those people he calls the *al-rāfiḍah* ('the rejecters', referring to the Shī'ite).⁶⁴ He goes into detail responding to the Shī'ite understanding of *imāma* and the rule of the *rāshidūn*. However, regarding the rest of the verses he gives a brief explanation of *yastakhlifanahum* as replacing the previous peoples. Interestingly, Qurṭubī narrates one *asbāb al-nuzūl* for 24:55 as addressing the Muslims before their migration to Medina, stating that God promised safety for the believers and a promise of taking over – *yastakhlif*- the earth.⁶⁵ Looking at the inter-contextuality of the verse 24:55, it seems that it is in support of Qurṭubī's interpretation that in light of the fear the Muslims were facing before migrating to Medina from Mecca, God was promising the people a safe place for them to replace Mecca. However, this does not appear in any of Ṭabarī or Ṭūsī's works. In fact, according to Ṭūsī this verse is alluding to the coming of Mahdī.⁶⁶ In any case, the early and medieval exegetical traditions seem to reinforce the idea that, with the exception of the Shī'ite, the word *khalīfa* comes to mean 'replacing'.

Intriguingly, in modern times, scholars such as Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1892-1981) in his *al-Mizān fī Tafasīr al-Qur'ān* claim that this verse was a Medinan one, which means that Qurṭubī's account of *asbāb al-nuzūl* is questionable, as the verse came when the Muslims were already in Medina.⁶⁷ In verse 38:26, like Ṭabarsī, he argues that David was replacing other Prophets as a *khalīfa* to condemn evil-doing and encourage good. Nonetheless, all interpreters seem to agree implicitly that this verse is only addressing David as both *khalīfa* and as a king, as compared to the other verse in which no relation has been made between the meaning of *khalīfa* and the state of being a king or any political figure in power.

⁶³ MiA Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 5 December 2009

<<http://www.altafasir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-ahkām al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 5 December 2009

<<http://www.altafasir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=55&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁶⁶ Ṭūsī, *al-Tibyān fī Tafasīr al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 3 December 2009

<<http://www.altafasir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=39&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=55&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁶⁷ Ṭabāṭabā'ī, Mohammed, Hussain, *Al-Mizān fī Tafasīr al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 15 December 2009

<<http://www.altafasir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=24&tAyahNo=55&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

The concept of ‘*khalīfatullah*’ comes in one example by Ṭabāṭabā’ī. Although he rejects the idea that in verse 2:30 the *khalīfa* (Adam) is not replacing anyone before him (*Jinn* or angels), he believes Adam to be *khalīfatullāh* not in person but as a representative or symbol of mankind and as a kind of society that would replace other societies to come.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Ṭabāṭabā’ī spends more time analysing such topics as the names of all things that God taught Adam, and the ways the angels were able to ask God the question about the creation of humanity, given that in their nature they are unable to disobey or challenge God. In terms of examining all the *kh-l-f* verses, Ṭabāṭabā’ī elucidates to the meaning of replacing and succeeding the people before.⁶⁹

Moreover, Mohammed ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā in *Tafsīr al-Manār* see verse 2:30 as a *mutashābih* (unclear) verse and that one cannot read this verse literally but only metaphorically (or allegorically). Compared to classical and medieval exegetes, modern works like ‘Abduh are one of the first to see this verse as metaphorical.⁷⁰ For ‘Abduh, the verse might also be indicating that there was a kind of creature similar to man, one who shed blood and spread corruption and whom the people of Adam were going to replace; this would explain the question that was raised by the angels. What made the people of Adam different was that they knew the names of all things, something the angels themselves did not know.⁷¹ Therefore, it might be reasonable to infer that the verse may refer to the replacement of the creatures before Adam. Once more, attention is given to the sense of being a replacement and not being God’s vicegerent.

It is noteworthy that the classical and medieval works were engaged in interpreting the names God had taught Adam much more than asking the question of the nature of this *khilāfa*. It is the modern works that speak at length with respect to the discussion of

⁶⁸ Ṭabāṭabā’ī, Mohammed, Ḥussain, *Al-Mizān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*, retrieved 15 December 2009
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ See Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār*, retrieved 15 December 2009
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=103&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁷¹ Ibid.

khalīfa/amāna; this increased debate highlights the modern preoccupation with the notion of an “Islamic state”.

4.4 QUR’ĀNIC WELTANSCHAUUNG OF KHALĪFA

From the above section, then, there are two references to the form *khalīfa* in the Qur’ān, one when addressing Adam:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a *khalīfa* on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (name)?" He said: "I know what ye know not." (2:30)

and another in verse 38:26 addressing David:

O David! We have indeed made you a *khalīfa* on the earth; so judge justly between people and do not follow desire that it then lead you astray from the way of God. Truly those who go astray from the way of God — for them there will be a severe chastisement because of their forgetting the Day of Reckoning

Although in verse 2:30 the addressee is thought to be Adam, because of the verse immediately following it, the verse as a whole indicates that it is meant to address humankind.⁷² However, the verse addressing David, inter-textually, seems to be only talking about David as both a Prophet and as a *khalīfa*. Of course, later in Muslim history, those two verses are quoted as the primary evidence for the link between Qur’ānic *khalīfa* and the caliphate system.⁷³ Taking verses 2:30 and 38:26 to reflect a political theory reveals a narrow interpretation of the word *khalīfa*, particularly when examining the use of derivatives in several different verses and especially when at the generality (*‘umūm*) of the verse 2:30.

Consequently, verse 2:30 could refer to humanity’s responsibility on earth rather than denote mankind as political vicegerent of God on earth, as has been commonly interpreted. This idea of supremacy is also suggested by Mohammed Asad. In his

⁷² See Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi‘ al-bayān fī ta’wīl al-Qur’ān*, retrieved 29 November 2009 <<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=30&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁷³ See D Sourdel, AKS Lambton, F Jong & PM Holt, ‘Khalīfa’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edn, P Bearman, T. H. Bianquis, C. E. Bosworth, E van Donzel & WP Heinrichs (ed), Brill Online, 2009, retrieved 23 December 2009 <http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0486>

book *The Message of the Qur'ān*, he argues that the word '*khalifah*' denotes man's rightful supremacy and authority on earth, which is clearly expressed by the words 'he shall inherit the earth'.⁷⁴ The supremacy is supported by scholars like Afzalur Rahman, suggesting that it exists because Adam possessed the ability to name things whilst the angels did not.⁷⁵

Given that God created human beings and honoured them above all other creatures (*wa karamnā banī Ādam*), thus giving them responsibility on earth, the question then arises as to whether being a vicegerent on earth would consequently entail being a vicegerent of God on earth. Even if it were to be taken that human beings are to be taken as *khalīfa tullāh* (vicegerents of God), as does the interpretation just noted, one still needs to explain the last part of the verse as to what kind of *khalīfa* would shed blood and spread corruption.

This supremacy might then be seen in that God taught Adam the ability to know the 'names of all things'; the verse that immediately follows 2:30 reads:

And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said: "Tell Me the names of these if ye are right."

There is an ambiguity about what the 'names' refer to, but the text makes it clear that the angels did not know them and Adam did. It also implies that if Adam knew these names (*asmā'*) so would his descendants on earth. This seemingly supreme status would then entail great responsibility.⁷⁶

As Cragg suggests, the term *khalā'if* always conveys a general sense of temporal successiveness and therefore replacement, 'taking the room of'.⁷⁷ For this reason the Qur'ān's consistently presents the concept of *kh-l-f* as referring to generational change and replacement and a sequence of historical accountability if corruption becomes widespread (as in verses 6:133 and 165; 7:69, 129, and 169, 10:14 *etc.*). We may agree with Cragg in part that Qur'ānic *khalīfa* (and in extension *khilāfa*) 'is not

⁷⁴ M Asad & A Moustafa, *The message of the Qur'an: the full account of the revealed Arabic text accompanied by parallel transliteration*, Book Foundation, 2003, Bitton, p. 8.

⁷⁵ Rahman, *Readings in Islamic political philosophy*, p. 2.

⁷⁶ See verses 2:38-39 and 33:72.

⁷⁷ K Cragg, *The Privilege of Man, A Theme in Judaism, Islam and Christianity*, The Athlone Press, London, 1968, p. 32.

the political institution later developed to serve the continuity of Mohammed's achievement after his death'.⁷⁸ However, as it is argued here the term *khalīfa* might not refer to the dominion of Adam over the world in a political sense but rather refer to a replacement or dominion of Adam as compared with God's other creations but not as custodian of God on earth.

In support, Manzooruddin Ahmed convincingly argues that it is futile to examine the Qur'ān for any concepts related to political sovereignty. Although concepts such as *malik* (owner), *mulk* (kingship), and *sultan* (sovereign) are mentioned in the Qur'ān, they are mentioned in reference to God with one exception, David.⁷⁹ Ahmed further argues that it is even difficult to claim that the term *khalīfa* be viewed as a political theory.⁸⁰

As mentioned earlier scholars such as Moḥammed 'Abduh and Ṣadr, have linked the *khilāfa* verse with the *amāna* verse, yet both verses challenge the reader in the end of the two verses.⁸¹ This is the case even though God's answer to the angels in the *khalīfa* verse is 'and I know what you do not!' there is a wisdom that the angels are not aware of in Adam being made the *khalīfa*, even though his progeny will be spreading bloodshed and corruption.

It is notable that Afzalur Rahman, despite interpreting *khilāfa* as man's supremacy on earth, later seems to see *khilāfa* as meaning 'messenger'.⁸² At first, the picture he draws seems convincing when talking about *amāna* and *khilāfa*. Verse 2:33 (and other verses that touch on the dialogue between God and the angels) refers to God asking the angels to bow down to Adam, thus emphasising the supremacy of His creation on earth. This entails three things. Firstly, that Adam is given a responsibility (a trust) referring to the *amāna* verse due to man having *khilāfa* – that is deputyship on earth. Secondly, that God will judge man on what he does with this trusteeship in the hereafter and hence, thirdly that God gave man free will (the same ability to disobey God's command as the *Iblis*- the devil- had). This is the relationship between God and

⁷⁸ Cragg, *The Privilege of Man*, p. 29.

⁷⁹ M Ahmed, 'The Classical Muslim State', *Islamic Studies*, vol. 1 no. 3, 1962, pp. 83-104.

⁸⁰ Ahmed, 'The Classical Muslim State', p. 89.

⁸¹ See MB Al-Ṣadr, *Muqadamāt fī tafsīr al-Mawdū'ī lil Qur'ān*, p. 16 retrieved 3 November 2009

<http://rafed.net/booklib/view.php?type=c_fbook&b_id=168#3>

⁸² A Rahman, *Readings in Political Philosophy*, pp. 53-54

man. What is contested is whether this *khilāfa* is interpreted to mean Prophethood or God sending messengers as *khalīfs* as stated by Afzalur Rahman - ‘these Messengers (*khalifahs*) receive Decrees and Messages direct from Allah and then establish them on earth’.⁸³ In another passage he argues that:

this chain of Divine Messengers who were directly appointed as *khalifahs* by Allah and directly received Messages and Decrees from Him ended with the arrival of the Last Prophet and Messenger of Allah on earth. As his *khilafat* had to remain on earth forever, till the Day of Judgment, it possessed certain special characteristics which distinguished it from that of other Messengers of Allah.⁸⁴

From this passage, one wonders how the concepts of *khalīfa*, *khulafā'*, *yastakhlif* are used to mean ‘message’ or ‘messenger’, especially as there are several verses that use the term ‘messenger’ to mean ‘a reminder’, ‘a guidance’ and a ‘call’.⁸⁵

It is very difficult to interpret the word *khilāfa* as ‘a messenger’ or ‘a message’ to guide mankind. From all the verses examined from the root word *kh-l-f*, it seems the word refers to either a group of people taking over previous people (by being the dominant one, well established and grounded), or a general supremacy on earth. As in verse 2:30 describes humanity as a whole as *khalīfa* on earth (and on earth alone).

Accordingly, for Qamruddin Khan the term *khilāfa* in all the verses discussed above refers to different nations having the opportunity to inherit the earth; these nations will be judged on their actions and how they would fulfil their covenant to God.⁸⁶ Khan further argues that ‘the Qur’an is not a treatise on political science; it is a moral history of mankind. It does not believe that political authority can rule or shape the conscience of man’.⁸⁷

Qamruddin Khan maintains that the concept of *khilāfa* in the Qur’ān philologically, does not have the slightest meaning of representation of God or delegation.⁸⁸ He further argues that the correct word would have been *niyāba* and not *khilāfa*. The term of *khilāfa*, Khan maintains, has been imposed on by later jurists and theologians out

⁸³ Ibid. p. 53.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 54.

⁸⁵ See 3:144, 16:36, 30:47 33:40 and many more along those lines.

⁸⁶ Q Khan, *Political concepts in the Quran*, Islamic book foundation, Lahore, 1982, p. 2.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.7.

of necessity.⁸⁹ In support, the concept of God's vicegerency was a notion that was infiltrated via the Persian and Hellenistic of Divine kingship.⁹⁰ Furthermore, according to Asma Afsaruddin, the early Muslim community only recognised differences according to piety and moral excellence.⁹¹

Khan holds strongly that the mission of all the Prophets including Mohammed has not been to establish any kind of political power on earth but rather to invite people to worship One God.⁹² Khan further supports his argument by noting that the Prophet Mohammed's mission in Mecca was not to establish a political order on the Quraysh but that to repudiate their faith of idolatry.⁹³ His thoughts are also echoed by 'Alī 'Abdul al-Rāziq, Fazlur Rahman, Asma Afsaruddin, Manzooruddin Ahmed, An-Na'im, Abdelwahab El-Affendi and Abou el-Fadl to mention a few.

For example, Abdullahi An-Na'im argues that the historical experience in Medina was not critical to the characteristics of Islam.⁹⁴ An-Na'im utilises the same argument as Khan in that the experiences of Medina was dictated by particular historical circumstances, thus these historical circumstances should not be given a normative weight.⁹⁵

Where Khan diverges from the rest is his indifference to 'democracy'. Many scholars who have argued for the absence of any overtly political institution or theory have argued for democracy. In fact those Islamists that have argued for compatibility of values and principles (for example, 'Alī 'Abdul Rāziq, Khalaf-Allah, even Mohammed 'Abduh and Rashid al-Ghannouchi) used concepts such as *shūrā* arguing for institutional democracy with in conditions.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ See the work of L Marlow, *Hierarchy and Egalitarianism in Islamic Thought*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997, p. 114ff.

⁹¹ A Afsaruddin, *Excellence and Precedence: Medieval Islamic Discourse on Legitimate Leadership*, Brill, Leiden, 2002. Also see Chapter One p. 29.

⁹² Khan, *Political Concepts in the Quran*, p. 13.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ See his work *Toward an Islamic reformation: civil liberties, human rights, and international law*, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1990.

⁹⁵ See his book *Islam and the secular state: negotiating the future of Shari'a*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, 2008.

Even Fazlur Rahman makes the same assertion, arguing that the Qur'ān has laid down that Muslims must decide their affairs through mutual consultation, quoting verses 42:38 and 9:199. Like many, he sees *shūrā* as part of the egalitarian vision of Islamic body-social and body-political.⁹⁶ He goes on to explain the meaning of 9:199, stating that 'the gap between the average members of the community and their religio-moral leadership must be minimized in the interests of Islamic egalitarianism'.⁹⁷ He thus suggests from the very start that Muslims have not managed to internalise this egalitarian nature of *shūrā* and have been ruled by political autocrats. Thus, the Qur'ānic *shūrā* was not institutionalized.⁹⁸ The view that Islam is egalitarian is shared by this author; however, whether the *shūrā* verse is the only indication of this is questionable. What is more questionable is whether the *shūrā* should be institutionalised, as Rahman suggests or internalised as an attitude, as this study suggests.

Qamaruddin Khan's explanation of the *shūrā* verse challenges most scholars that claim any association of *shūrā* to democracy. He proposes that *asbāb al-nuzūl* for 3:159 directly relates to the Prophet's lost battle in 'Uḥud. Khan suggests that the 'Prophet was instructed by God to consult with his men about the course of action to be taken after the recent disaster', indicating the contextual nature of the verse.⁹⁹ His inference therefore is that neither does the *shūrā* have any principle of popular representation nor does consultation indicate election.¹⁰⁰ This study would support Khan's argument that *shūrā* has been mentioned only twice in the Qur'ān, thus rendering it contextual and not universal. At best, it must be seen as a recommended attitude.

This is because Khan postulates that if the concept of state were entirely absent, it indicates the indifference of the Qur'ān itself to this question. Khan's conclusions reiterate the conclusions of this chapter as well. This raises the question as to why the Qur'ān is silent. The answer to this question seems much more complex, especially if one takes a holistic approach of the Qur'ān, nevertheless Chapter Six attempts to

⁹⁶ F Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1983, p.184.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Q Khan, *Political concepts in the Quran*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

investigate the Qur'ānic worldview, to determine as to whether the Qur'ān is apolitical.

As discussed previously, in the Qur'ān, the meaning of *khilāfa* is not bound to any institution or system. This makes it abundantly clear that the institution of the caliphate, so vigorously spoken of in contemporary times, must be seen as a reaction to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, not arising out of sacred scripture. Additionally, the intertextuality seems to be related to humanity as a whole, taking God's response to the angels particularly regarding Adam's capacity to know the names of all things whereas the angels did not.¹⁰¹ What is questionable, however, is the idea that man is God's political vicegerent on earth and that he exercises this dominion on behalf of God in a political sense.¹⁰²

Thus, for the verse that talks about Adam being a vicegerent on earth there are two components: one, who is replaced and, two, who does the replacing. It is unknown whom Adam is replacing, if anyone at all, although the question the angels ask may imply that there were a kind of people who spread corruption and shed blood who preceded him. It is clear, however, that it is God who assigns Adam as the *khalīfa*. The question is whether Adam represents God – the vicegerent of God on earth. If this were so, could this verse be political? Or is the verse more general in referring to the responsibility of mankind on earth?

Keeping this in mind, *kh-l-f* as a concept understood from all the forms and exegesis discussed above has two general meanings: one referring to people filling in as a replacement to a position or to other people who were previously in the position; the other meaning either 'build the place' or 'be placed on earth'. The association of replacing and building in *'ammara* has the connotation of having a good intention: building, spreading good and fixing or bringing about *iṣlāḥ*. Furthermore, as seen in Diagram 8 the same *khalīfa* is also able to spread corruption. This interpretation is consistent both with some of the verses themselves and with the forms of *kh-l-f* which

¹⁰¹ See Cragg, *The Privilege of Man*, pp. 28-31.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 29.

were discussed above, namely ‘that which is in disagreement’. It is a way of balancing both the honour and the responsibility with which human beings are bestowed.¹⁰³

The connected semantic fields in Diagram 8 give the root *kh-l-f* an interesting polar opposite which reflects humankind generally. On the one hand, this *khalīfa* has a relation with ‘to build’ (*i‘mār*), ‘to be a witness’ (*shahādah*), ‘to make upright’ (*iṣlāḥ*) and has the sense of connecting to a community in the act of replacing or succeeding a geographical place or people. On the other hand, the *khalīfa* also can convey the sense of spreading corruption and being fearful (*khawf*), weak (*istidh‘af*) and ungrateful (*kufṛ*). In fact one could take this argument further to point to other derivatives of *khalīfa* which includes *mukhlif* and *yukhālif* ‘to do something contrary’, *yatakhallaf* ‘to hold back, to be absent’ and *akhlaḥ* ‘to fail to keep a promise’. In this sense, and with this overview, one can conclude that it is possible that God is talking about a human being who is both able to spread corruption widely and is equally able to uphold and build the earth. This, of course, is consistent with the Qur’ānic viewpoint of man as examined in Chapter Six with regard to the notion of self-governance.

The contemporary debates which seem to formulate Islam as inherently political tend to ignore the metaphysical element of this discussion.¹⁰⁴ When singling out Islam as having a political vision as its all-encompassing worldview, some contemporary Muslim thinkers forget that any meta-narrative is in fact all-encompassing. Thus, characterising only Islam as a ‘way of life’ is a redundant distinction.¹⁰⁵

We can conclude therefore that none of the verses mentioned above indicate any kind of political system. Taking the verses as a whole or thematically, it might be safe to say that they refer to a form of description of succeeding or replacing some people or taking over other people or a place—mainly a geographical dwelling place, rather than an institution or of being a vicegerent of God on earth. It is rather an address to particular people; it is a concept that is used to describe something rather than provide

¹⁰³ See Chapter Five p. 225.

¹⁰⁴ See D. F. Eickelman & JP Piscatori, *Muslim politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1996. Also J. L. Esposito, *The Islamic threat: myth or reality?* Oxford University Press, New York, 1999.

¹⁰⁵ In addition, the contemporary discussion singles out Islam in arguing that the Qur’ān has a Divine order in the form of God’s Sovereignty. Ontologically, all faiths that have a perception of a Divine.

a system of governance. This idea that the *khalīfa/khulafā'* in the Qur'ān is the same as the historical caliphate system crystallised in the modern times but often referenced by appeal to its early historical roots. The section below provides an explanation of such association.

4.5 THE EMERGENCE OF SUNNĪ CALIPHATE THEORY WITH QUR'ĀNIC *KHILĀFA*

The meaning of *khalīfa* as 'to govern, to rule, to be king' al-Qādī postulates, was adopted only later in the exegetical work of Sufyān al-Thawrī before the end of the Umayyad period with reference to only one verse (38:26).¹⁰⁶ Therefore, the concept that man is *khalīfah tu-allāh* (God's representative) on earth came later in Muslim history. The first time a political figure used this term was at the start of the Umayyad dynasty by Walīd II in 125/742. It was then for the first time in Muslim history that a leader was called *khalīfatuallāh* using verse 2:30 to proclaim himself as a *khalīfa*.¹⁰⁷

In the period immediately after the death of the Prophet, it was Abū Bakr who was known as *khalīfaturasūlallāh* (successor of the Prophet of God)¹⁰⁸ as a natural semantic term used for whoever takes over from another person. In other words, Abū Bakr was described as the one who directly succeeded the Prophet. 'Umar was called *amir al-mu'minīn*, as 'Uthmān and 'Alī were called *amir al-mu'minīn* (commander of the faithful) rather than *khalīfatuallāh*.¹⁰⁹

This shows the usage of the word according to its linguistic form and not as a concept which enshrines any political theory. Afsaruddin also supports Qādī's point that Abū Bakr took the title *khalīfaturasūlallāh* and not *khalīfatuallāh*. This further supports the argument that refers *khilāfa* as a successor and not as a vicegerent. The title that was commonly used for all four companions was *amir al-mu'minīn* (leader/commander of the faithful) and not *khalīfatuallāh*. According to Afsaruddin

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. pp. 404-5.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 410.

¹⁰⁸ Sourdel, *et al* 'Khalīfa', retrieved 23 December 2009

<http://www.brillonline.nl/subscriber/entry?entry=islam_COM-0486>

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

the Umayyads ‘who came to power...initiated dynastic rule and had no compunctions about adopting the title "God's deputy" to signal their enhanced status’.¹¹⁰ Again, Ovamir Anjum makes a similar observation that when God’s caliph (*khalīfatullāh*) came about as a concept, it was in the time of Ummayad’s and only later crystallised in Māwardī’s time.¹¹¹

This view is opposed to that shared by Crone and Hinds in their accounts regarding the title of God's caliph.¹¹² They argue that it was used to address the early Muslim rulers. Although Hakim also supports Crone and Hinds’ accounts, it has been suggested that this viewpoint is incorrect.¹¹³ It has been maintained that the title was only used by the Umayyads and later by the ‘Abbāsids, particularly when one looks at early traditions attributed to the early companions of the Prophet in the likes of *Nahj al-Balāgha*.¹¹⁴

It is possible from the start, especially when speeches such as ‘Umar’s are taken into consideration, that the caliph (the person in authority) never had absolute authority.¹¹⁵ In support, the actual attempt to challenge ‘Uthmān’s decisions which led to his death (as discussed in Chapter Three) suggests that people at their time did not see the rulers as having absolute authority and certainly not God’s authority on earth. Even with this concept, no one actually thought the caliph was representing God on earth and therefore the caliph lacked both absolute religious and political authority. Were the caliph to possess such authority, there would be no need for him to reinforce his authority by commissioning, for example, Māwardī or Ghazālī to write about this matter. Furthermore, the occurrence of the first Muslim civil war does not support the view of Crone and Hind that the companions possessed absolute authority.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ O Anjum, *Reason and politics in Medieval Islamic thought the Taymiyyan moment*, Thesis (Ph. D.), University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2008, p. 83, retrieved 15 January 2010
<<http://books.google.com/books?id=N4YIAQAAMAAJ>>

¹¹² P Crone & M Hinds, *God's Caliph: Religious Authority in the First Centuries of Islam*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986.

¹¹³ See his article ‘Umar b. Al-Khatāb and the Title Khalifat Allah A textual analysis’, in A Saeed (ed.), *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, Routledge, London, 2011, p. 97.

¹¹⁴ See Sharīf al-Raḍī, Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn, and Mohammad Askari Jafery, *Nahjul Balagha*, Tahrike Tarsile Quran, Elmhurst, 1984.

¹¹⁵ See *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*.

Again, the fact that writings were commissioned to reinforce the caliph's authority may suffice to demonstrate that his authority was constantly questioned being as it was in the absence of clear and overt political designation from the Prophet.¹¹⁶ Very likely most of the classical, medieval and modern political theology came about as a reaction towards an absence of a clear political structure in the Qur'ān and the Prophet tradition and not as a proposal for a clearly prescribed political system.¹¹⁷

The 'Abbāsīd for their part continued to employ the term *khalīfa* as a concept referring to a political institution, possibly to delegitimize the Shī'ite claims. Furthermore, Persian ideas of social hierarchy gained dominance from eighth century onwards¹¹⁸ and in all likelihood were undermining the radical egalitarianism of early Islam.¹¹⁹ Afsaruddin further asserts that with the imported 'ancient foreign formulations of political authoritarianism progressively conferred on the Abbasid caliph an unmistakable mystique, reflected in the adoption of honorific such as "God's shadow on Earth".¹²⁰ The use of the Sasanians and Persian concepts of political and religious authority (the idea that *there can be no rule without religion, and no religion without rule*) conceivably also were of high importance in justifying rulership.¹²¹ The role of the Umayyad, and those who came after until the Ottomans was the state-sponsored genre literature that combined previous philosophies with the Qur'ānic worldview in such a way that the two have been read to imply a self-evident political theory in Islam.

Lambton also suggests that there has been Persian influence upon the development of Muslim political theory, especially with the idea of philosopher king, which was also drawn from Plato's writings in his Republic. She observes that a treatise found in the Testament of Ardashir states:

¹¹⁶ Although this point in itself is challenged by the Shī'ite that the Prophet did clearly designate, the fact of the disagreement could indicate the absent of at least a clear designation.

¹¹⁷ Even for those that may read the Prophetic tradition as having a clear proclamation of an Islamic State in the establishment of the city-state in Medina, ignore the early debates on who and how should the Muslim rule. See the previous Chapter for more details.

¹¹⁸ Afsaruddin, 'The "Islamic State"', p. 157.

¹¹⁹ See L Marlow, *Hierarchy and egalitarianism in Islamic thought*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1997.

¹²⁰ Afsaruddin, 'The "Islamic State"', p. 157.

¹²¹ P L. Heck, 'Politics and the Qur'ān', *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, JD McAuliffe (ed.), Vol. 4, Brill, Boston, 2004, p. 142.

Religion and kingship are two brothers, and neither can dispense with the other. Religion is the foundation of kingship, and kingship protects religion. For whatever lacks a foundation must perish, and whatever lacks a protector disappears.¹²²

She is referring to the adoption of this system in Islam. In addition, this author strongly holds that even if one takes the meaning of verse 2:30 to mean that any political leader is a representative of God on earth, the last part of the verse still needs to be explained. How is it possible then, that a *khalīfa* on earth would also spread corruption and bloodshed? Therefore, the verse is far from clear, highlighting further that there is no clear prescribed political theory in the Qur'ān in the form of particular kind of institution or system.

In modern times, considering the 'Islamic state' as referring to the modern nation-state, Hallaq asserts, is both an impossible proposition and a contradictory in terms.¹²³ According to Hallaq, the Islamist thinkers take the modern state for granted, thinking it has been a timeless and neutral phenomenon. He goes on further to argue that the Islamist form of government is unsustainable giving the conditions of our modern world. These conditions include 'increasing collapse of organic social unit, the rise of oppressive economic forms, and...the havoc wrought against the natural habitat and the environment'.¹²⁴ It is impossible and contradictory because the very state's genealogy is exclusively European inherited, both structurally and by its form, and therefore cannot be adopted as "Islamic".

4.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that there is a significant distance between Qur'ānic *khilāfa* and the caliphate system developed in Muslim history. Based upon the analysis laid out in this chapter, it is possible to argue that the formulation of a caliphate system as it is known does not derive clearly from scripture. This means that the caliphate system was based on 'social necessity rather than on any Qur'ānic

¹²² Cited in Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam*, p. 45.

¹²³ W. B. Hallaq, *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013, p. iv.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* p. xiii.

injunction or Prophetic instructions'.¹²⁵ This would also mean that the structure in Medina was not aimed to set a state but a religious community, concluding that the caliphate system is not obligatory.¹²⁶

Additionally, due to the polemical debates, even the word *khalīfa* became a concept which lost its original Qur'ānic disposition of succession, but undertook a semantic shift to now refer to an institution, a system of government; it even became elevated into a theory. This explains how the early jurists treated the *imāma* and caliphate as synonymous.¹²⁷ This might be because the meaning of *imām* came about in early Muslim period to refer to a religious leader. The religiosity of the Companions learned from the Prophet meant that they also become in charge of the affairs of the people (the concept of *khalīfat rasūlillāh*). As discussed in the previous chapter, the claims of the Shī'ites for 'Alī and the first civil war canonized the earlier formative period a utopian ideal. This resulted in making the institutionalisation of the 'caliphate' into a system in which the ruler is labeled as the caliph, to delegitimise the Shī'ites, some Mu'tazilites and the Khārijī'ite. Arguably, the 'Umayyads also managed to gather enough traditions that were attributed to the Prophet regarding obedience to the ruler.¹²⁸

As discussed in Chapter Three, these kinds of discussions and questions concerning the obligatory nature of caliphate were a reaction against the *Shī'ite* doctrine of *imāma*.¹²⁹ The modern formulation, instead, has been formulated by Orientalist writers. These writers in turn, already possessed a straightforward conceptual framework for the existence of a political theory when in fact, such a theory was the subject to much ambiguity. The early Orientalists were also ambivalent to the heated polemical discussions that occurred early in Muslim history.¹³⁰ One possible example is found in the writings of Gibb when he speaks of the caliphate system.¹³¹ Gibb is not the only one; Western literature as a whole seems to have underestimated the

¹²⁵ Ahmed, 'The classical Muslim State', p. 101.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ For example the work of Bāqillānī. See the previous Chapter p. 68.

¹²⁸ See the previous Chapter p. 68.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Gibb, *Studies on the civilization of Islam*. Also see HAR Gibb, *Mohammedanism; an historical survey*, Oxford University Press, London, 1953.

polemical discussions of the classical and medieval period. For once the theological schools formalised their doctrine of belief, such discussions shaped the kind of question asked about leadership as well about the reading of scripture.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers have understood the idea of a form of institution that is called the caliphate in late 19th and early 20th century as a reaction to the Western colonialism. At the same time, they nevertheless take the Orientalist argument on board. The early discussion of Ibn Taymiyya, Māwardī and Ghazālī was read predominantly outside their polemical theological discussions, resulting in a narrative that suggests that there is a clearly indicated “Islamic” political system.¹³²

Furthermore, Muslim history was written and understood by western academics, who framed the discourse as they understood it. This goes hand in hand with Edward Said's critique of the European Orientalists of the colonial age as they have been unable to ‘forsake the conceptual framework they had created in order to grasp -and dominate- the other’.¹³³

As a whole, all the exegetical works are very similar in their explanation of the concept of *khilāfa*. It seems that many early exegetical works took the word *kh-l-f* for granted and usually did not examine it in detail, in comparison with their analysis of other words such as *rahmān*. Furthermore, verse 2:30 seems the most puzzling for exegesis as it begs the question of who is Adam (i.e. humanity) replacing? And if the Qur’ān were addressing Adam as the *khalīfa* in that verse then how could a *khalīfa* act corruptly and shed blood? If the human being were God’s representative, how then is this possible?

Most of the classical and medieval works of exegesis end up trying to understand the angels’ apparent questioning of God. As a consequence, many early works do not equate the Qur’ānic concept of *khilāfa* with the caliphate system. Those that did, relied on narrations known to us as *isrā’iliyāt*.¹³⁴ Certainly none of the early exegetes

¹³² See Chapter Two p. 68.

¹³³ See J Van Ess, ‘Text and Context: A Few Causal Remarks on the Topic’, in IA Bierman (ed.), *Text and Context in Islamic Societies*, Ithaca Press, Reading, 2004, p. 3.

¹³⁴ Body of *ḥadīth* generated by Judo-Christian traditions rather than sources collected by Muslim traditions.

used the term *khalīfatullāh* in their interpretation.¹³⁵ The discussions in these periods reflect the evolution of schools of theology and their attempt to understand the nature of reality. The modern exegetic works reflect an attempt to accommodate pressing questions pertaining to the position of Islam in the modern world.

As shown, the concept of *kh-l-f* at its highest levels connotes succession and guardianship of mankind in comparison with other creatures on earth. In its lowest form, it describes replacing or being replaced, being in dispute or disagreement as a descriptive language rather than a proposition for a political blueprint for governance.

As Fazlur Rahman asserts, amongst all the creation, humankind is bestowed with morality, self-awareness, free will and a rational capacity that gives him/her heavy responsibility (*amāna* verse) and great potential (in knowing the names).¹³⁶

According to him, Muslim political thought has usually rationalised the existing status quo with an exception of very few scholars. Of course here Rahman is referring to Sunnī political thinking.¹³⁷ Further to this, Kerr also holds that the ‘constitutional theory of the caliphate’ was utopian and later became ideological in modernist reformers such as ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā.¹³⁸

Considering the conclusion of this chapter, the findings are in strong contrast to those of contemporary Muslim ideologies such as Ḥizb al-Taḥrīr and to some extent the Muslim Brotherhood.

However, the Qur’ān and by extension the Prophetic tradition has no prescribed political system that is overtly clear. This comes as an uncomfortable and unsettling conclusion for proponents of Muslim political theory. Although some Muslims would

¹³⁵ Al-Qādī, ‘The Term ‘Khilafa’’, p. 411.

¹³⁶ See F. Rahman, ‘The Qur’ānic Concept of God, the Universe and Man’ in BS Turner (ed.) *Islam: Critical Concepts in Sociology*, vol. 1, Routledge, London, 2003, pp. 48-62.

¹³⁷ F. Rahman, & E Moosa, *Revival and reform in Islam: a study of Islamic fundamentalism*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2000.

¹³⁸ M. H. Kerr, *Islamic reform; the political and legal theories of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966, p.13 and p. 26.

claim there is a clearly defined political system, the existing sectarian differences suggests otherwise.¹³⁹

The findings of this chapter thus beg two important questions. First, even if there has been no clearly prescribed de facto political structure to implement God's law, one inevitably needs a system (in the form of an Islamic state). This is the proposition that in order to have a functioning moral community one needs a territorial boundary to facilitate the needs of the community. In this case, this kind of proposition defines the moral community in terms of legal inferences and therefore implicitly requires a political system.

This question is dealt with in the next chapter discussing concepts of *ḥukm* and its conceptual association(s). The second question that arises is: if there is no clear political prescription in the Qur'ān, what then does exist? It is not possible to argue that the Qur'ān has an *apolitical* worldview; as will be seen in the Chapter to come, there are many references to corruption (*fasād*) and injustices (*ẓulm*). In this case, would it be conceivable to argue for a paradigm shift that takes its reference point away from the 'systemic/structural' outlook into a fundamentally different lens? The study will examine this assertion in Chapter Six.

¹³⁹ Especially in comparison to rules on issues such as worship that are conclusively agreed upon by all Muslims.

CHAPTER 5: THEORY OF LAW

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Often the early Muslim jurists saw the purpose of any government as to establish *sharī'a*, which entails reinforcing justice and security.¹ This kind of argumentation and perception of government is not independent of the kind found in the early political experiences of Muslims, particularly in the development of sectarian groups claiming particular rights over rulership.

As the rise of the Khārijī'ite brought with it the theo-political discussions on the governorship, the notion of *ḥukm* was one of the central concepts they called for *lā ḥukma illā lilāh*.² This is the idea that any form of government or judgement necessarily must be based on what was sent down by God in the form of *sharī'a*. Those that implement this form were seen as the people in authority (*ulī al-amr*) and obedience (*tā'a*) therefore is an obligation for believers. A modern call for *ḥukmu-allāh* contends that to establish God's law on earth, one also necessarily needs to establish an "Islamic" state. In other words, the goal of establishing an 'Islamic' state is to implement *sharī'a*. This debate has been referred to as the *hākimiya* assertion.³ Yet as mentioned earlier, the contemporary concept of "Islamic" state is contradictory in terms as the foundation of the state is a modern European conception both in structure and in form.⁴

The task of this chapter is to understand the possible meaning(s) of *ḥukm*, *sharī'a* and *ulī al-amr*; as articulated in the Qur'ān. This chapter will first examine the root word *ḥ-k-m* and its derivatives, again using both the semantic and the thematic approaches, drawing an interesting Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* in understanding *ḥukm* from an epistemological point of view. This chapter will also point out the link between the

¹ *Sharī'a* Commonly translated as "Islamic law", however this chapter will show the mistranslation of this concept looking at it from the Qur'ānic perspective.

² See Chapter Three p. 68.

³ See p. 183.

⁴ This argument is formulated by Wael Hallaq in his recent book *The Impossible State: Islam, Politics, and Modernity's Moral Predicament*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2013.

word *ḥukm* and other concepts, namely *ʿadl*, *qisṭ*, *qiṣāṣ*, *ṭāʿa*, *ṣāliḥīn*, and *muḥsinīn*, as well as the antithesis of *ḥukm*. These connections include *fiṣq*, *fasād*, and *ẓulm*. These concepts will also be examined to draw a holistic picture of the term *ḥukm*. Furthermore, exegesis will be used to shed further light on the concept of *ḥukm* with respect to particular verses that have been quoted as the most politically-oriented.

5.2 THE MORPHOLOGY OF *ḤUKM* USING AN IZUTSIAN APPROACH

According to Badawi *et al*, *ḥukm* indicates several meanings including: ‘to curb’, ‘to restrain’, ‘to govern’, ‘to control’, ‘to judge between’, ‘to express an opinion’, ‘to arbitrate’, ‘to fortify’, and ‘to recognise’; it could also denote ‘wisdom’ and ‘knowledge’.⁵ The root word could also denote ‘to tighten’. There are 14 forms in the Qur’ān, which occur 209 times. They include *ḥakama*, *yuhakkimūn*, *yuhkim*, *uḥkima*, *yataḥākamū*, *ḥukm*, *ḥikmah*, *ḥakīm*, *aḥkam*, *muḥkamah*, *muḥkamāt*, *ḥakam ḥākimīn* and *ḥukkām*.⁶

Ḥakama usually means ‘to pass judgement’, ‘to judge between’, ‘to command’, ‘to ordain’, ‘to find a solution’, ‘to decide’ and ‘to conclude’, as described in verses 4:58; 68:36; 5:1; and 12:80. This form occurs 45 times in the Qur’ān. *Yuhakkimūn* denotes ‘to make someone judge’, ‘to choose someone to arbitrate’, ‘to ask someone to arbitrate’ and ‘to entrust someone with judgement’. This form occurs twice such as in verse 4:65. Badawi *et al* state that *yuhkim* signifies ‘to affirm’ and ‘to protect’, occurring once in verse 22:52.

Badawi *et al* indicate further that when the trilateral root *ḥ-k-m* occurs in the form of *uḥkima* it then means ‘to be perfected’, ‘to affirm’, as in verse 11:1. This form appears once when God describes the scripture whose verses are perfected and affirmed. Furthermore, the same root word is found once in the form of *yataḥākamū* also meaning ‘to agree to bring dispute before a judge’, as in verse 4:60.

⁵ E Badawi & M Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, Brill, Leiden, 2008, p. 226.

⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 226-229.

Hukm occurs 30 times in the Qur'ān and has many interconnected meanings. It can denote 'wisdom' or 'sound judgement', as in verse 3:79 and verse 68:48. Badawi *et al* also suggest *hukm* denotes 'ordinance', as in verse 13:37; 'practices', 'customs' and 'norm', for instance in verse 5:50. *Hukm* could also mean 'verdict' and 'decision', for example in verse 13:41. Alongside *hukm* denoting 'God's Will', 'scheme of things', 'realm', 'kingdom' and 'domain', it also denotes 'article of law', 'legal judgement' (such as in verse 5:43); 'rule', 'judgement between right and wrong' and 'responsibility' (for example in verse 12:40). The many meanings for this form suggest that the concept cannot only mean 'law'. Debatably then, no attention has been given to explaining the connections and the significance of the other meaning(s) of the concepts arising from *hukm*.

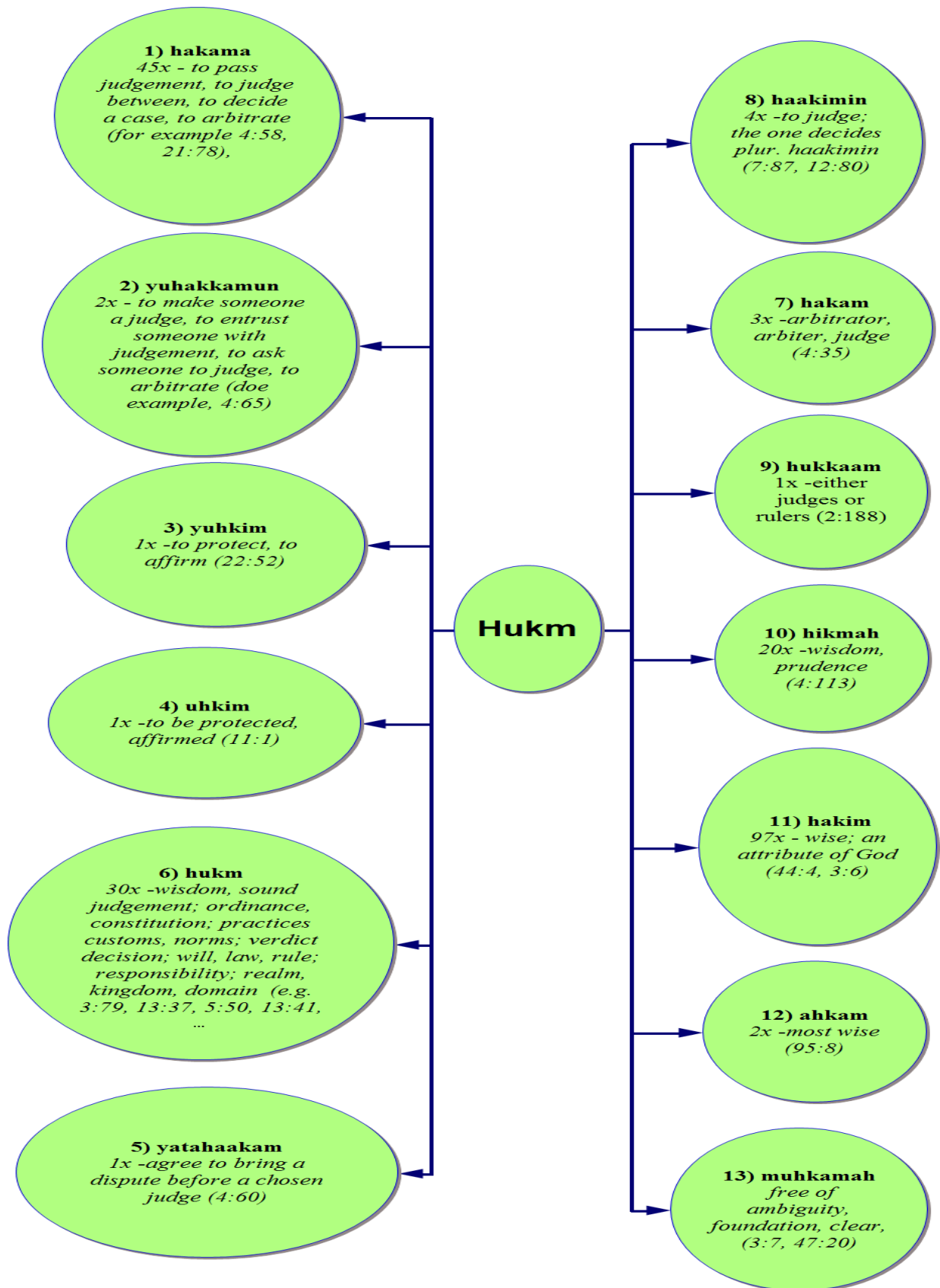
Likewise, the meaning of 'arbitrator' or 'judge' in the form of *hakam* occurs only three times in the Qur'ān. The same meaning in the plural form also occurs four times in the form of *hakimīn*. In Arabic, *hukkām* in the plural could mean 'judges' or 'rulers'. In the Qur'ān, however, it occurs only once in verse 2:188 with the meaning of judges.

The forms and their semantic connections discussed above can be better understood from Diagram 9 below, which shows the derivative words and their occurrences.⁷ Diagram 10 shows the root word *h-k-m* with its connected semantic and thematic fields such as '*adl, qiṣṭ, qiṣāṣ, haq, mu'minūn, shuhadā, takhshaw, 'ilm, ṭā'a, ṣāliḥīn, muḥsinīn* and *taqwā*'. These interconnected words are selected by their reoccurrences with the root word *h-k-m*. These concepts can be used to establish a holistic understanding of *h-k-m*. The concept of *hukm* does not stand alone in a web of complex interconnection to other concepts that make up the Qur'ānic worldview.⁸ Furthermore, there are non-linguistic fields that surround these concepts, namely *tawḥīd* (oneness of God) and *ākhirah* (accountability to God by knowing there is a judgement day in the hereafter) which need to be in the mind of the reader when looking for the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*.

⁷ It was not possible to use transliteration symbols with the application of Inspirations.

⁸ See Chapter One p. 37.

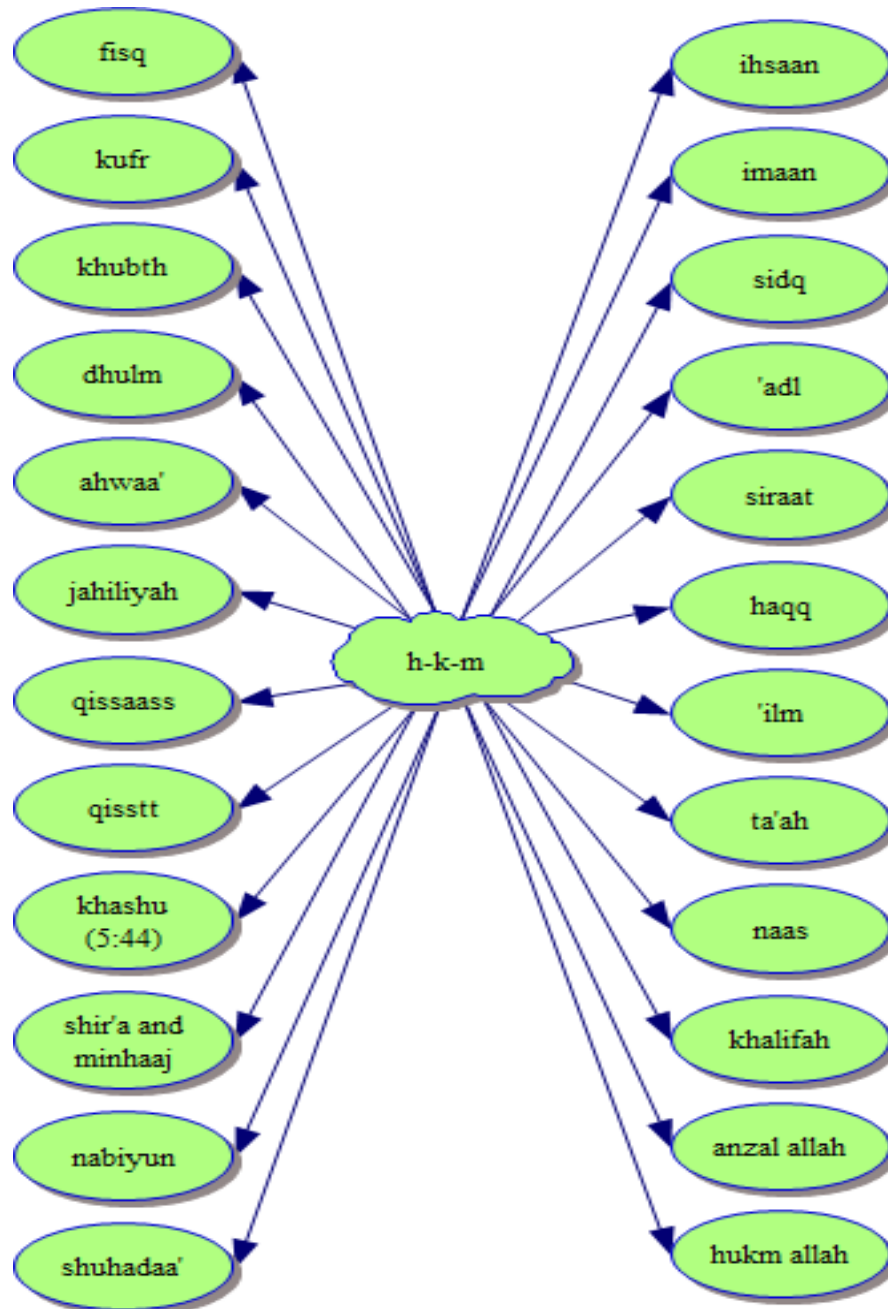
To make this analysis easier, this study has focused on verses that were historically noted as a direct order to follow God's *ḥukm* (especially in verses 5:44, 5:45, 5:47, 5:48 and 13:37). These verses, depending on their hermeneutical understanding, are significant implication in understanding *ḥukm*, its application and even the definition and boundaries of belief. After looking at the exegesis, this chapter will bring together the thematic meaning(s) of *ḥukm*.

Diagram 9: The Morphology of *H-k-m*

5.2.1 The Connection of *Hukm* with other Concepts

Diagram 10 shows the thematic connection of *hukm* with other concepts such as *fiṣq*, *kufr*, *khubth*, *jāhiliyah*, *ẓulm*, *'adl*, *qisṭ*, *mīzān*, *iḥsān*, *ṣidq* and *imān*. Due to time restraints, only a sample of the meanings of these concepts are explained in detail below:

Diagram 10: Semantic and Thematic Fields of *H-k-m*



5.2.1.1 The Connection of *Hukm* with *Hikma*

Interestingly, one of the derivatives of *h-k-m* also means ‘wisdom’ or ‘prudence’ in the form of *ḥikma*, which occurs 20 times and *ḥakīm* 97 times (referring at times to God being all wise).⁹ The interconnection of *ḥukm* and *ḥikma* is very important, connoting that the one who judges needs also to be wise. The former relates judgement, authority, deliverance, verdict, and decision. The latter relates to general knowledge, wisdom and to having foresight. Hence, one possible inter-relational connection between the two concepts is that in order to judge one needs to also have foresight in judgement and possess wisdom.

Again, a related linguistic form which sheds further light on the root word under discussion is *aḥkam*, occurring twice, referring to the most wise; another form is *muḥkamah*, occurring once, and its plural form *muḥkamāt* (also once), referring to a single interpretation, something that free of ambiguity, decisive and clear.¹⁰

5.2.1.2 The Connection between *Hukm* and *Khalīfa*

Verse 38:26 also mentions both *ḥukm* and *khalīfa* together when addressing David:

O David! We did indeed make thee a *khalīfa* on earth: so judge [*fa-ḥkum*] thou between men in truth (and justice): nor follow thou the lusts, (of thy heart), for they will mislead thee from the Path of Allah: for those who wander astray from the Path of Allah, is a Penalty Grievous, for that they forget the Day of Account.

God describes him as a *khalīfa* and orders him to judge in a just manner. In this verse the term *khalīfa* can be understood as a king or a ruler.¹¹ It is also worth mentioning that, as we will see, none of the exegetes took this verse to apply to all Prophets being *khulafāʾ*, nor do they infer that David’s *ḥukm* is evidence for a Muslim political system. The *siyāq* (inter-textuality) of the verse in second part also emphasises the gravity of following one’s desires that might make David err from God’s path; hence the weighty responsibility of being in David’s position.

⁹ See Abū Al-Qāsim Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt al-fāḍ al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1 & 2, Dār Al-Qalam, Damascus, 1997.

¹⁰ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qurʾanic Usage*, pp. 226-229.

¹¹ W Al-Qādī, ‘The Term ‘Khalifa’ in Early Exegetical Literature’, in A Rippin (ed.), *The Quran: Formative Interpretation*, Ashgate, USA, 1999, pp. 404-408. Also refer to Chapter Three p. 133 on the meaning of *khalīfa*.

For that reason, the *siyāq* of the verse is vital in determining the verse's meaning. For example, when the Prophet Yahyā (John) is described as been given *ḥukm* when young (in verse 19:12), we know from historical accounts that John was neither a king nor had any political authority. Here the word *ḥukm* could mean that God granted John knowledge and wisdom from a young age, which prompted people to come to him for advice. John was able to judge between people as part of his wisdom and not as part of any 'political' position. This has important implication as the discussion more often than not refers to the role of the Prophets as both a Prophet and a statesman, and particularly relates it to Prophet Mohammed.¹²

Even in situations where the majority of scholars see the Prophet as having acted as a law maker, Rahman is of the opinion that there is strong evidence in the Qur'ān suggesting that the Prophet was a moral reformist. Apart from occasional decisions (which were *ad hoc* cases) he seldom set down legislations in the Qur'ān.¹³

5.2.1.3 The Connection between *Ḥukm* and 'Adl

Within the semantic field of *ḥukm*, the only other concept that is connected strongly is 'adl. The Qur'ān mentions only two forms of this root word, 'adālah referring to acting equitably, judging justly, compensating, making straight, making upright, and causing to be well-proportioned.¹⁴

'Adl occurs 14 times, connoting 'justice', 'fairness', 'equity' and 'uprightness'.¹⁵ One example is in verse 16:90, which states:

Verily God commands justice and well-doing and giving to kindred; and He prohibits lewdness and wickedness and oppression; He exhorts you that haply ye may be admonished.

¹² See for example W. M. Watt, *Muhammad: prophet and statesman*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961.

¹³ F. Rahman, *Islamic Methodology in History*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 1965, p.10.

¹⁴ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 605.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Semantically then, *‘adl* points towards the meaning ‘to put something in its right/proper way or order’, ‘to be equal to’, ‘to be straight’ and ‘to be upright’ connoting ‘to be of impeccable character’.¹⁶ In this case, it is the balancing of an act or judgement that needs to be put in the right place and given its due. Failing to do so is the unbalancing of an act, which would lead to the state of injustice. One can also see an interconnectedness between *‘adl* and *ḥikmah*. If *‘adl* is putting everything in its proper place then *ḥikmah* is acting properly in every situation. As mentioned earlier then, *ḥikmah* and *ḥukm* are also connected to the concept of judgement as putting things in their right place. To act justly is to give things their true value and put them in their appropriate place. The meaning of *ḥukm*, *ḥikma* and *‘adl* seem to convey an *‘ām* (general) connotation, as is demonstrated in the sections below.

5.2.1.3.1 The Connection between *‘Adl* and *Qisṭ*

It is true to say that *‘adl* connotes many interrelated meanings including ‘equity’, ‘fairness’ and ‘proportion’ as well as ‘ransom’ and ‘compensation’.¹⁷ Another concept that is connected to *‘adl* is *qisṭ*. From the root word *q-s-ṭ* there are five different forms in the Qur’ān which occur 25 times. The root word means ‘justice’, ‘equity’, ‘balance’, ‘measure’ and ‘instalment’.¹⁸ The form *qisṭ* is connected to *mīzān* (plu. *mawāzīn*) in five verses (6:152, 11:85, 21:47, 55:9 and 57:25) and to *ḥaq* in two verses (7:8 and 42:17). The root word of *mīzān* is *w-z-n* referring to ‘balance’, ‘scale weight’, ‘to estimate’, ‘to compare’; ‘justice’; ‘to be wise’; ‘to be parallel with’ and ‘to be equal or equivalent to’.¹⁹ It is not surprising then that *mīzān* is associated with *qisṭ* and *ḥukm*, as they convey similar meanings. In reference to *ḥukm*, denoting when one is put in the position of *ḥukm*, one should be balanced, fair, equal and within scale. Again these verses seem to indicate general meaning(s). It is undeniable that *qisṭ*, *qisṭāṣ*, *mīzān* and *‘adl* are all thematically interlinked.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ C. P. Turner ‘Bediuzzaman and the concept of ‘Adl: Towards a nursian ontology of divine justice’, *Asian Journal of Social Science*, vol. 38, no. 4, 2010, p. 560.

¹⁸ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, p. 756.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 1024.

5.2.1.4 The Connection between *Hukm* with *Qisās*, *Islāh* and *Haq*

As for *qisās* the trilateral root is *q-ṣ-ṣ*. This form occurs four times in the Qur'ān referring to 'just or fair retribution' and 'retribution equal to the crime'.²⁰ These two concepts are both connected to *ḥukm*, *ḥikma*, *ḥaq* and 'adl, which in turn are connected to *islāh*. That is 'to be or to become good'; 'uncorrupted', 'right', 'just', 'virtuous', 'righteous', 'honest', 'to be in a good state' (proper state); 'reconciliation' and 'peace'.²¹ The trilateral root *ṣ-l-ḥ* has ten forms in the Qur'ān occurring 240 times.²²

In addition to the above, *ḥaq* is usually translated as 'truth', but it also means 'centre', 'to be sure', 'to verify', 'to give someone his or her dues', 'to deserve', 'to give someone their rights' and 'to prove a point, an argument'.²³ Of this root eight forms occur 268 times, connecting the meaning of 'judging in truth' when addressing Prophets or giving general commands. The above concepts all encompass and enhance the meaning of *ḥukm*, that is judgement in justice and giving someone their proper due. The state which *islāh* aims to achieve is to struggle against the state of *fisq*, *khubth*, and *ẓulm*, which are also connected to *fasād*.

5.2.3 The Antithesis of *Hukm*

As mentioned in the previous chapter, *fasād* means 'to corrupt', 'to spoil', 'to decay', 'to fall into disorder', 'to be perverted', 'to make trouble' and 'to be wicked'.²⁴ Five different forms occur from the trilateral root *f-s-d* and it is mentioned 50 times in the Qur'ān.²⁵

Fisq refers to something coming out from another in a corrupt and wicked manner. Within the Qur'ānic context, *fisq* usually either describes a characteristic of the individual or society that is acting in deviation, which also entails going against God's

²⁰ Ibid. p. 761.

²¹ Ibid. p. 531.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid. p. 224.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 709.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 709-710.

commands.²⁶ The root word is *f-s-q*, which has five forms in the Qur'ān and occurs 54 times.²⁷ The connection between *ḥukm* and *fisq* is made in verses 5:47 and 5:49. Izutsu would argue that *fisq* is one aspect of *kufr*, which relates to ingratitude, indicating some sort of depravity.²⁸

In addition to *fasād* and *fisq*, *khubth* also has the sense of 'wickedness', 'corruption', 'evil', 'impurities' and denotes 'to be bad'. The root word *kh-b-th* occurs 16 times in six forms.²⁹ Verse 21:74 suggests this connection between the spread of corruption in society and the connection of *ḥikma* and *ḥukm* as a way of overcoming societal disorders.

Furthermore, verse 5:50 might also be significant in acknowledging that the state of ignorance, foolishness and being rash has been the state of a kind of *ḥukm* that is undesirable and to some extent irrational by the virtue of asking the question 'Do they then seek after a judgment of (the Days of) Ignorance? But who, for a people whose faith is assured, can give better judgment than God?' (5:50). This is the task for those who are in the position of judgement to be sufficiently aware not to take the path of foolishness, quick temper and peevishness.

Simply put, if one's judgement is harsh, foolish, unfair and unjust, the spread of corruption and *fasād* is expected. For this reason, these concepts are seen as negative, thematic connections to the concept of *ḥukm*, which shed further light on the complex web of interconnection of the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* of *ḥukm*.

5.2.3.1 The Connection of *Ḥukm* with *Zulm*

The emphases of *ḥukm* as judgment that is necessarily just, fair and proportionate connotes that a judgment of unproportionality is an act of injustice or *zulm*. Another important concept which is strongly connected to both *ḥukm* and 'adl is *zulm*, which is often translated as injustice. The trilateral root *z-l-m* also means 'darkness', 'to

²⁶ Ibid. pp. 710-712.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ See T. Izutsu, *Ethico-religious concepts in the Qur'ān*, McGill University Press, Montreal, 1966.

²⁹ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 252.

descend', 'to put something in the wrong place', 'to act improperly'; 'to cause someone to suffer a loss'; 'to wrong someone'; 'to act unjustly', 'to be subjected to injustice', 'tyranny' and 'oppression'.³⁰ Of the root word, 14 forms occur a total of 315 times in the Qur'ān.³¹ As mentioned earlier, one in the position to judge has the primary aim of reducing the spread of *fasād*, *khubth*, *ẓulm* and *fiṣq*. This comes with the active aim of *iṣlāḥ* as well as having the mindset of *taqwā*.³²

These concepts assume a deep understanding by the reader of what exactly *fiṣq*, *khubth* and even *taqwā* actually mean other than their semantic meanings; the Qur'ān does not define the concepts but it does use them. It is almost as if the assumption is that the concepts are already known, which consequently has a major implication on what or how virtue, principles and concepts are generally understood. As Reinhart asserts, the Qur'ān's message seems to be exhorting Muslims to perform the right act rather than defining right and wrong.³³ One can even go so far as to claim that the epistemological foundations of these terms (or principles) are assumed to be rooted within us. The same can be said of the concept of justice, or of the concept of good society. Rather than describing the exact details, it is reinforcing the concept as it is understood by the receiver.

The ambiguity or rather the absence of detailed instructions for the meanings of *ḥukm* and *ʿadl* and the way in which to achieve this *ḥukm* is thought by this author as intentional. It is the belief of this author that these details were left out intentionally to preserve the universality of these principles as principles. It is not a political theory in the instrumental sense but rather a moral imperative or a higher goal in the sense of principles (this will be discussed further in Chapter Six). One of the main pieces of evidence for this claim is the Qur'ān's silence on how to apply such principles and the detailed prescriptive meanings of these principles.³⁴ This brings us to the question of how do all these concepts bring about the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* of *ḥukm*? What are these *aḥkām* (plur. *ḥukm*) that the Qur'ān speaks of? The next section attempts to answer this question.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 585.

³¹ Ibid.

³² See Chapter Six p. 233 for further extensive discussion on *ẓulm*.

³³ K. A. Reinhart, 'Ethics and the Quran', in JD McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, Vol. 2, Brill, Boston, 2004, p. 65.

³⁴ See Chapter Two on the meaning of silence in the Qur'ān p. 59.

5.3 THE EXEGETICAL VIEWS OF *H-K-M*

Viewing the possible meanings of *ḥukm* lexically is one angle in understanding the depth of these verses. The views of the exegetes are equally valuable in understanding the concept of *ḥukm*. For example, the Khārijī'ites call for *lā ḥukma illā lilāh* refers to three verses between 5:44-47, ending in the following manner:

...and whosoever judgeth not by that which God hath sent down - those then they are the unbelievers (ungrateful/ingratitude). (5:44)

...and whosoever judgeth not by that which God hath sent down - those then! they are the wrong-doers. (5:45)

...and whosoever judgeth not by that which God hath sent down, then those! - they are the transgressors. (5:47)

These verses signify that those who do not apply God's '*ḥukm*' are the disbelievers (*kufār*), the wrong-doers (*ẓālimūn*) and the transgressors (*fāsiqūn*). Of course, the immediate question is what does this *ḥukm* mean? Is there *asbāb al-nuzūl* for the revelation of these verses? What are the inter-textuality (*siyāq*) of these verses? And are the verses universal or addressing a particular people in a particular situation? Many exegetes have argued that the *sharī'a* is what God is referring to in these verses of *ḥukmu-allāh*, which is narrowly defined by some as jurisprudence derived through some of the laws revealed in the Qur'ān.³⁵

However, a closer examination shows that these verses were not addressing the Muslims at the time but rather the people of the book. According to Ṭabarī the last part of 5:44 is a statement towards those people who knowingly judge differently from what has been demanded by God.³⁶ Furthermore, Ṭabarī points out verses 5:44, 5:45 and 5:47 are not related to Muslims but to the unbelievers or the people of the book.³⁷ Both Ṭabarī and Muqātil look at the *asbāb al-nuzūl* of these verses and suggest that they were addressing the people of the book who did not obey their own religious laws. This *ḥukm* is understood by Ṭabarī as religious laws and not as a political law. It is obvious however, that Ṭabarī does not go into detail regarding the meaning of *ḥukm*, especially verse 13:37.

³⁵ This will be examined under *ḥudūd* law in the coming section in this Chapter.

³⁶ Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī Jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 2 March 2010
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

³⁷ Ibid. Also see verse 4:47.

Qurṭubī, like Ṭabarī, shows that some have taken these verses to address the *kufār* and not the Muslims.³⁸ Others argued that the word ‘disbelievers’ was addressing the Jews of the time, ‘the wrong doers’ addressing the Muslims and ‘the transgressors’ the Christians of the time.³⁹ However, from the *siyāq* it seems that all of these verses are actually addressing the people of Moses.

Whatever the case, it is clear that there are several possibilities for interpreting these verses, none of which indicate that *ḥukm* refers to political governance or a direct command for an “Islamic state”. This is to say that the description given in previous verses (5:42-3) suggests that a group of Jews have asked the Prophet Mohammed to arbitrate between them, inferring that his arbitration is just. These verses state:

Listeners for the sake of falsehood! Greedy for illicit gain! If then they have recourse unto thee (Muhammad) judge between them or disclaim jurisdiction. If thou disclaimest jurisdiction, then they cannot harm thee at all. But if thou judgest, judge between them with equity. Lo! Allah loveth the equitable. (42)

How come they unto thee for judgment when they have the Torah, wherein Allah hath delivered judgment (for them)? Yet even after that they turn away. Such (folk) are not believers. (43)

Having said that, historically the three verses (5:44-7) were used by the Khārijī’ites, as discussed earlier, designating ‘Alī as a disbeliever for agreeing to negotiate with Mu‘āwiya, which meant that ‘Alī did not rule according to God’s laws and that gave the Khārijī’ite the right to draw a boundary of belief in which killing would be justified.⁴⁰ As discussed earlier, the discourse on who is a believer and who is not, with its obsession of boundaries, started with the Khārijī’ites quoting these verses. The boundary debate is essential because there were consequences when one is declared as being outside the faith.

The problem that lies with the Khārijī’ites’ claim is their conclusive assertion that they have both understood what God has intended to mean regarding *ḥukmu-allāh*, and that they have the absolute right to implement it. Contrary to the Khārijī’ite view, there is a majority consensus by the classical and medieval *mufasirūn* that the verses

³⁸ Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi‘ li-ahkām al-Qur‘ān*, retrieved 3 March 2010

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=45&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Chapter Three the section on Khārijī’ite p. 82.

relate to the Jews.⁴¹ In these verses the meaning of *ḥukm* is seen to be religious and not political. Therefore, there is a distinction to be made between political power, judicial rulings and religious legal rulings.

Ṭūsī also narrates accounts regarding the above verses similar to Ṭabarī and Qurṭubī, suggesting that 5:42-49 addresses the Jews first and the Christians just after. However, he does emphasise that Muslims should abide by the *sharī'a* including the law against the adulteress. This is because one of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* suggests that one of the Jewish tribes came to the Prophet asking for his judgement hoping for an easier law, arguably to avoid the Torah.⁴² In support, Ṭabarsī suggests, these verses were addressed to the Jews when they came to ask the Prophet to judge on the issue of adultery. According to Ṭabarsī, in the verses that follow (5:43-47), God questions the Jews (at the time of the Prophet) for asking the Prophet to judge between them even though they do not acknowledge his Prophecy. At the same time, they are not obeying the regulations of the Torah, as they hope instead to get a more lenient judgment from Mohammed.⁴³

Hence, the specific verses from 5:42-45 continue to speak of the Jews asking the Prophet to judge between them without acknowledging his Prophecy. This is particularly seen in verses 5:43 and 5:44 when God emphasises that the Torah also contains God's laws which they could have returned to but instead knowingly decided not to, fearing people and not God:

It was We who revealed the Torah (to Moses); therein was guidance and light. By its standard have been judged the Jews, by the Prophet who bowed (as in Islam) to Allah's will, by the Rabbis and the Doctors of Law: for to them was entrusted the protection of Allah's Book, and they were witnesses thereto: therefore fear not men, but fear Me, and sell not My Signs for a miserable price. If any do fail to judge by (the light of) what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) Unbelievers.

⁴¹ See the work of Ṭabarī, retrieved 3 March 2010
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁴² Al-Ṭūsī, retrieved 3 March 2010
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=39&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁴³ Ṭabarsī, retrieved 3 March 2010
<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=3&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

These verses have led to two kinds of interpretation. One group saw these verses as particular (*khāṣ* and *muqayad*) addressing only the Christians and the Jews. The second group saw these verses as general and universal (*‘ām* and *muṭlaq*) addressing everyone, including Muslims.

Ṭabāṭabā’ī belongs to the latter group in seeing these verses as both general and universal, even though he narrates the same *asbāb al-nuzūl*. That is, a group of Jews asking the Prophet regarding the law against the adulteress and wanting him to give his judgement which would be different to what is in the Torah.⁴⁴ In concordance with the rest, Ibn ‘Āshūr also narrates the same *sabab al-nuzūl* and goes into depth on whether these verses were actually meant to be *muqayad*, which would mean that they are only addressing the people of the book, or *muṭlaq*, which consequently would mean that they would also apply to Muslims.⁴⁵

Nevertheless, all the exegetes are in agreement that the *ḥukm* is referring to religious laws that were sent down to all of the Prophets. In this case, *ḥukm* is used in two ways: one is that these verses are addressing the Prophet - to judge justly; and the second is that this judgement is addressing the people of the book.⁴⁶

Accordingly, this is significant in two ways; firstly the meaning of *ḥukm* seems to be inclined towards judging (including religious laws) rather than anything overtly political. Secondly, these rulings are addressing the Prophet only, and the *khiṭāb* (addressee) is not addressing the Muslims, although one can infer that it also applies to Muslims. Perhaps the Qur’ānic point for Muslims is the ‘attitude’ of asking for arbitration from a Prophet and then choosing not to take what the Prophet said. Especially in the verses that follow (5:4:48-50) and the ones before (5:40-3). The exegetes above support the notion that *ḥukm* was understood as religiously and not politically although there are political implications if one takes the wider meaning of political.

⁴⁴ Ṭabāṭabā’ī, *Tafsīr al-Mizān*, retrieved 15 March 2010
<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=56&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=45&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

⁴⁵ Ibn ‘Āshūr, retrieved 15 March 2010
<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=7&tTafsirNo=54&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>

⁴⁶ Verses 5:42, 5:43, 5:44, 5:45, 5:48, 5:49, 5:50 and 24:48.

However, it can be said that the general point behind the verse(s) *-sha'n al-nuz'ol* (situational circumstances) still applies to the Muslims, in that they should obey God's law. What is noteworthy here is that when looking at the severity of the language used in these verses helps one to understand the *sha'n al-nuz'ol*. In other words, saying that those people who avoid God's laws are the disbelievers, the wrongdoers and the transgressors emphasises the gravity of knowingly hiding knowledge and deceiving people, rather stating the need to establish a political system in order to implement *ḥukmu-allāh*. Therefore, one could argue that what is meant in these verses is the actual mind-set involved in avoiding what one knows and attempting to deceive the Prophet knowingly. Here one is not denying God's laws or saying that they should be followed, but merely pointing out that these verses do not assert any form of an overtly political structure or system.

Yet, in modern times, *ḥukmu-allāh* has been formulated as the *ḥākimiya* argument by many political Islamists such as Māwdūdī.⁴⁷ Semantically, the word *ḥākimiya* comes from the word *ḥukm*. The following section examines this *ḥākimiya* argument in even more detail.

5.3.1 The Modern Development of *Ḥākimiya* Theory

The argument for *ḥākimiya* is articulated on the basis of a dichotomy between God's divine sovereignty and "western" notions of human sovereignty. Popular sovereignty consists of people deciding on laws for themselves and freely obeying them, therefore, the assumption is that people are not subjected to any other power or authority.⁴⁸

Although there is a disagreement between 'Islamists' as to what it means to obey God's sovereignty, the same verse 4:59 is often quoted in support for that argument. For example, according to Ghannouchi, this verse established 'the basis of the Islamic

⁴⁷ A. A. Mawdūdī, *Political theory of Islam*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1980.

⁴⁸ See Raja Bahlul article 'People vs God The logic of 'divine sovereignty'' in A Saeed (ed.) *Islamic political thought and governance*, vol. 4, Routledge, London, 2011, pp. 268-269.

social, political, and religious system. It is the legal cornerstone of the Islamic state and constitution'.⁴⁹

Expressed in another way, the dichotomy has been articulated as either government by people who govern themselves by laws of their own making, or government by God according to divine law. However, what is missing in this dichotomy, and arguably is a simplistic distinction, is both the assumption that people in reality have a genuine choice, and that there is a manual of divine law to be applied. It is not within the scope of this research to discuss the former, however the latter point will be explained further.

One of the definitions of sovereignty is the ultimate authority that established values, rights and obligations.⁵⁰ In terms of ontology of sovereignty, in the theist *weltanschauung*, it could be seen as God or a transcendent reality. This is also divided into first order and second order. First order can be seen as the natural Divine law, in the second order it is the interpretation of these values, rights and obligation. The second order is the epistemology of the first order (the ontology). In this sense, the revealed law needs to be understood and hence interpreted. Where most of the debate and dispute occurs might present itself in the confusion of the first order with the second order, concluding that the second order is itself divine sovereignty.

In his argument relating to the idea of God's sovereignty, Kerr contends the same point suggested earlier. Taking the above assertion, Kerr argues that Islam as a 'theocracy' is only true if one follows the first order of sovereignty (in the ultimate sense), explaining that such an idea is:

meaningless in the practical sense, for in the later "theocracy" signifies the rule of a priestly or other supposedly divinely inspired individual or class, which is absent in Islam. An effort to apply the initial premise of divine sovereignty to temporal affairs must inevitably come to grips with the question of interpretation and deal with what have been called "the procedural test of Islamicity".⁵¹

Although Kerr points out this difficulty, it has been taken for granted that theocracy might still be part of Islam. Fundamentally, this thesis shows, as does Kerr, that the

⁴⁹ Cited in Bahlul, *Ibid.* p. 269.

⁵⁰ Bahlul 'People vs God The logic of 'divine sovereignty'', p. 268.

⁵¹ M. H. Kerr, *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1966, pp. 4-5.

question of governance and government lies in the heart of interpretation and therefore also questions of the second order. This thesis also shows that in the Qur'ān there is an overwhelming silence about government, a fact which has significant implications.

Paradoxically, Asad himself notes that Islamic teachings do not only circumscribe man's relation with God 'but also lay down a definite scheme of social behaviour to be adopted in result of that relation'.⁵² The ultimate purpose is for the creation to comply with the will of the Creator. The Qur'ān, therefore, outlines how one should live according to God's Law. At an ontological level the existence of this cannot be disputed (and is not in this thesis). For what is at stake here is not an ontological argument but rather an epistemological one. According to the Qur'ān, although God has ordained how humans should behave, the question remaining is how to understand these laws and how to apply them.

The paradox in Asad's argument is in his following statements:

As is well known, not all the laws which form the subject matter of conventional Muslim jurisprudence (*fiqh*) rest on injunctions expressed in clear-cut terms of command and prohibition in Qur'ān and Sunnah. By far the larger part of *fiqhī* rulings are the outcome of various deductive methods of reasoning, among which *qiyās* (deduction through analogy) figure most prominently.⁵³

Of course, these rulings become enshrined in most people's mind as the core component of *sharī'a* rather than as *ijtihādī* matter derived by the *mujtahid*. Therefore, as Asad himself argues, one can conclude that nothing is ordained by God in the Qur'ān and the *sunna* to avoid rigidity.

His conclusion however is paradoxical in that for Asad there is an ordained political theory that manifests itself in the shape of an "Islamic state" even if nothing is mentioned in the Qur'ān. From another perspective, the silence could easily have been interpreted as a moral requirement rather than a political one; as a moral vision rather than a political vision; whereas Asad does not allow for this possibility. To answer

⁵² M. Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1961, p. 2.

⁵³ Asad, *The principles of state*, p.11.

this question, Asad, as well as many other scholars, argue that there are clear undoubted *nuṣūṣ* that make up the *sharī‘a* which cannot be *interpreted* differently:

By their very nature, they are not subject to conflicting interpretations; in fact, they are in no need for any “interpretation” whatsoever, being absolutely self contained and unambiguous in their wording.⁵⁴

Again, this is true on an ontological level while the problem of interpretation and understanding context and meanings are at the epistemic level. Many writers have failed to make a clear distinction.

It is true that Asad argues strongly that ‘the outward forms and functions of an Islamic state need not necessarily correspond to any “historical precedent”’.⁵⁵ Although he also includes the outright clear-cut and unambiguous ordinances of Islam as he puts it, it is not that clear-cut when one carefully examines the understanding of the spirit of the law on the part of the *rāshidūn*. Using the evidence of *rāshidūn* by arguing that each one had created his own style of governance suggest that the structure does not need to be the same as long as the *sharī‘a* is applied.⁵⁶ What begs the question here is what *sharī‘a* in the Qur’ān is if it is not *fiqh*?

Although for Muslims it is true that God is the ultimate sovereign ontologically (as mentioned above), some have confused its epistemological implications. That is to say, unavoidably, the divine message is subject to interpretation by human beings. Thus, there are two very important points made here. One is this *ḥākimiya* is true ontologically to God at the level of all creation and the entire cosmos. If *ḥākimiya* were interpreted to be legal (law) based rules to govern human beings then these inferences in the Qur’ān are very few in number.⁵⁷ The second point is that the sheer number of “Islamic laws” have developed discursively post-Qur’ānic era with actual human involvement in interpreting and deriving law.

Afsaruddin makes a similar observation as this thesis. She argues that the greatest contention is in the Islamist concept of ‘divine sovereignty’ or ‘divine governance’. She further maintains that the idea of *ḥākimiya* is not discussed in any of the classical

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.12.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.17.

⁵⁶ See the section on Flexibility of Jurisprudence p. 210.

⁵⁷ See this Chapter, p. 207. Also see Chapter One, p. 30.

or medieval works but rather it appears in modern works articulated mainly in the 20th century.⁵⁸ Thus, as Afsaruddin observes correctly, the concept used in the Qur'ān to refer to God's domain and sovereignty is *mulk*, *mālik* and *malakūt*.⁵⁹

Interestingly, Afsaruddin postulates that the understanding of *ḥukm* in classical terms had no political genealogy but rather the early commentators on the Qur'ān understood the concept to refer only to God's judgement of human beings.⁶⁰ Consequently, the concept of *ḥukm* had no political significance.⁶¹ She raises an important question to be answered by those that advocate *ḥākimiya*: why do writers like Mawdūdī choose to refer to God's sovereignty as *ḥākimiya* and not *mulukiyya* or *sulṭāniyya*? In particular, Afsaruddin further maintains that the concept of *ḥukm* is not used in the sense of sovereignty or dominion (like verses 6:57; 12:40). Rather it refers to God's judgment of human beings, especially in its eschatological terms.⁶² Further to this, the concept of *sulṭān* is referred to as God's Sovereignty.⁶³

Again, Afsaruddin rightly observes, as this thesis pointed out, that the first use of the concept of *ḥukm* as denoting a political imperative was by the Khārijī'ites as they argued for God's judgment.⁶⁴ The mistake they made as discussed is associating their own actions to be the true actions of God and confusing the truth of the statement with their understanding of it. They in effect put themselves in God's place. The same seems to be argued when the word *ḥākimiya* is used in the modern times. The actions and ideology of the Khārijī'ites seem not too far from some modern movements such as *al-Qā'ida* in Afghanistan or the *hijra wa al-takfīr* in Egypt.

⁵⁸ A Afsaruddin, 'The "Islamic State": Genealogy, Facts, and Myths', *A Journal of Church and State*, vol. 48, no. 1, 2006, p.161.

⁵⁹ From the root word *m-l-k* it comes to mean to own, to acquire, to rule, to control, kingdom, sovereignty, king, from the root word 13 forms occur 206 times. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 893.

⁶⁰ For example see *tafsīr Muqātil*

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=67&tSoraNo=1&tAyahNo=1&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁶¹ Afsaruddin, 'The "Islamic State"', p.162.

⁶² Ibid. pp. 161-2.

⁶³ The word *sulṭān* comes from the root word *s-l-ṭ* meaning power, authority, mastery, to prevail to predominate occur 39 times. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 447-8.

⁶⁴ See Chapter Two p.69.

In addition, Fazlur Rahman suggests that the idea of *ḥākimiya* in the Qur'ān is a very different conception from what writers such as Mawdūdī have made it to be. He maintains that the idea of *ḥākimiya* does not directly refer to legal or political sovereignty, but refers rather to the idea that 'God has bestowed a certain constitution both to this universe and to man'.⁶⁵

Additionally, the idea that one must obey God is also linked to the verse *lā ḥukm ilā lillāh (wa man lam yaḥkum bimā anzal allāh fa ulā'ik hum al-kāfirūn 5:44-48)*. Hence, due to the hermeneutical tendency of the modern Qur'ānic interpretations to simplify the message of the Qur'ān, writers like Quṭub and Mawdūdī have imposed a single meaning to the verse.⁶⁶ Concepts such as *ḥukm*, *mā anzal allāh* and *kāfir* are taken to be reflecting just one meaning, in this case, *ḥukm* is interpreted to refer to rule, what has God sent is seen "Islamic law", and *kāfirūn* are understood as unbelievers, ignoring both *asbāb al-nuzūl* and *sha'n al-nuzāl*. Further to this, as explained in Chapter Two, the semantic meanings of these concepts are much more complex. The context in which the verse was revealed has been ignored. Furthermore, as has been demonstrated, the meaning of *ḥukm*, although interpreted in modern times to refer to political rule, also has come to mean 'to judge'.⁶⁷ Missing in the discussion is how this ruling or judgement is to be carried out and at what level, that is whether by the individual or the state; is this *ḥukm* in the domain of God or the Prophet or is it generally in the domain of the *'ulamā* or political leaders?⁶⁸

Ḥākimiya is also connected to concepts of "obedience" (*tā'a*) and "people in authority" (*ulī al-amr*). These two concepts also emerged in Chapter Three. The next section suggests the diverse meanings of this verse.

⁶⁵ F. Rahman, 'The Islamic Concept of State', in J. J. Donohue & JL Esposito, *Islam in transition: Muslim perspectives*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982, p. 264.

⁶⁶ See for example, S. Quṭub, *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*, retrieved 18 April 2011 <<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=7&tTafsirNo=53&tSoraNo=5&tAyahNo=44&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>.

⁶⁷ A Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*, Routledge, England, 2006, pp. 111-2.

⁶⁸ For further discussion, see Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur'an*, p. 112.

5.3.2 The Concept of Obedience (*Tā'a*) and People of Authority (*Ulī al-Amr*)

The idea of *ulī al-amr* and obedience (*tā'a*) is also linked in the verses stating that one should obey those in authority. This concept also emerged in Muslim history as discussed in Chapter Three. Lambton states that it was the later jurists that were demanding absolute obedience to the caliph 'as a religious obligation defined in terms of the *sharī'a* and justified by the Qur'ānic obligation Obey God, Obey the Prophet and those in authority among you'.⁶⁹ One of the core elements of Muslim political theology hinges, to a large degree, on a fundamental verse 4:59 that states:

O ye who believe! Obey Allah, and obey the messenger and those of you who are in authority; and if ye have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to Allah and the messenger if ye are (in truth) believers in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more seemly in the end.

The Qur'ānic term *amr* means 'matter', 'affair', 'order' and 'authority'. Afsaruddin further suggests that in:

Qur'anic usage (4:59), *amr*, as in the collocation *ulī 'l-amr* ("those possessing authority"), refers broadly to moral and social authority, while *ḥukm*, particularly in relation to God (6:57; 12:40, etc.), refers to "judgment" and "arbitration." By the ninth century of the common era, *amr* would acquire the additional meaning of "political authority" while *ḥukm* continued to be used in its polyvalent significations of "arbitration," "legal ruling", and "moral judgment".⁷⁰

The phrase *ulī al-amr* has given rise to multiple interpretations. Some have found the basis of political authority in this verse.⁷¹ However, there remains the questions as to whom is it addressing and as to what is the function of *ulī al-amr*. It is noteworthy that this phrase occurs in another place in the same chapter 4:83, stating:

And when there comes to them information about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it. And if not for the favour of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have followed Satan, except for a few.

Our focus is on 4:59 as most of the literature highlights this verse as critical evidence for an overtly political theory in the Qur'ān. There are, however, occasions of revelation which the early exegetes narrate that provides a context for this verse. The

⁶⁹ A. K. S. Lambton, *State and government in medieval Islam*, p. 20.

⁷⁰ Afsaruddin, 'The "Islamic State"', p. 162.

⁷¹ See Manzooruddin Ahmed, *The Classical Muslim State*, p. 91.

early exegetical interpretations had a broader understanding of *ulī al-amr*. For instance, Mujāhid in his *tafsīr* interprets the *ulī al-amr* as those who possess critical insight into religion and reason.⁷² The distinctive characteristic of the *ulī al-amr*, it has been argued, is knowledge, independent reasoning and critical discernment.⁷³ In support, Muqātil, another early exegete, notes that this phrase was revealed in reference to a specific case in the context of a particular historical context. In his proclamation, he notes that two companions Khālid bin Walīd and ‘Ammār bin Yāsir had a disagreement regarding the status of a prisoner of war to whom ‘Ammār had given protection. The disagreement lay in Khālid's refusal to recognise ‘Ammār's protection. It is stated that the Prophet notes ‘Ammār's action but at the same time requested ‘Ammār not to disobey Khālid as he (Khālid) was the military commander. It was in the context of this incident that this verse came.⁷⁴

What is interesting is that Muqātil sees 4:59 as prescribing the obedience of God and his messenger, excluding *ulī al-amr* by considering 24:51-2 as an analogy to it.⁷⁵ This phrase was also interpreted to mean ‘learned people’, i.e. the *ulamā*.⁷⁶ Hence, according to Afsaruddin, the first two centuries of Muslims understood the *ulī al-amr* as insightful and learned people in general and the Prophet's designated military commanders in particular,⁷⁷ with no indication that this phrase took on any political meaning. It is Ṭabarī who shows us the semantic evolution of this phrase by noting the several interpretations.⁷⁸ For example, according to Ṭabarī, Mujāhid was inclined to interpret *ulī al-amr* as referring to all companions of the Prophet. The thesis's analysis is in concordance with their views.

⁷² See the work of A Afsaruddin, 'Obedience to Political Authority: An Evolutionary Concept', in MAM Khan (ed.), *Islamic Democratic Discourse: Theory, Debates, and Philosophical Perspectives*, MD: Lexington Books, Lanham, 2006, p.37.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 38.

⁷⁴ See Muqātil, *tafsīr Muqātil*, retrieved 29 Jan 2012

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=0&tTafsirNo=67&tSoraNo=4&tAyahNo=59&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ This is attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās who quotes the opinion of some. It is also cited that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī also of similar opinion. Cited in Afsaruddin, 'Obedience to Political Authority', p. 38.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 39.

⁷⁸ See Ṭabarī, retrieved 29 Jan 2012

<<http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=4&tAyahNo=59&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1>>

By the medieval period, as theo-philosophy developed, the meaning of this phrase was also interpreted to denote the scholars. According to al-Rāzī, *ulī al-amr* refers to those scholars that engage in *ijtihād* in regards to legal matters. Those scholars are the people who loosen and bind (*ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd* as referred to in *fiqh* literature).⁷⁹ It seems that Rāzī interprets it to refer to jurists influenced by their own circles. According to Afsaruddin, the word *amr* became associated with political authority only by the 9th century AD, whereby the term is understood as exhorting the people to obey their rulers and advocating for political quietism, as there were many rebellions.⁸⁰

In contemporary times, the accumulation of the meanings developed throughout the exegetical historical evolution is also evident. In his influential exegetical volumes of *Tafsīr al-Manār*, Riḍā concurs with al-Rāzī in seeing *ulī al-amr* as *ahl al-ḥal wa al-‘aqd*, however he expands upon the kind of people that have such authority. He suggests it would also include judges, the *‘ulamā*, the chief of army and the rest of rulers and leaders.⁸¹ With this in mind, Riḍā still emphasized that obedience is binding only to God and His messenger, quoting the remainder of the verse that ‘if you have a dispute concerning any matter, refer it to God and the messenger...That is better and more seemly in the end’. Riḍā is echoing Muqātil's point on the binding nature of obeying God and His messenger and not the *ulī al-amr* as well as broadening the definition of *ulī al-amr*. This highlights the possible non-political nature of the verse, as this research is pointing out.

Interestingly Abu al-A‘lā Mawdūdī in his *tafḥīm al-Qur‘ān* reiterates Riḍā's broad interpretation of this phrase. He asserts that it includes ‘intellectual and political leaders of the community, as well as to administrative officials, judges of the courts, tribal chiefs and regional representative’.⁸² Where Mawdūdī departs from Riḍā is in his analysis of those *ulī al-amr* who have been ordered to establish the prayer. His interpretation of establishing prayer by definition hangs on the interpretation of the concept of *aqimū* (the Arabic verb *aqāma*), meaning to establish something. Mawdūdī associates prayer with public acts and argues that this is a clear evidence for

⁷⁹ Cited in Afsaruddin, 'Obedience to Political Authority', p. 41.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Cited in Afsaruddin, 'Obedience to Political Authority', p. 42.

⁸² Mawdūdī, *Towards Understanding the Qur‘ān*, Islamic Foundation, Leicester, 1988, p.51.

establishing an “Islamic state”, equating ‘establishing’ a state with ‘establishing’ prayer.⁸³ However, as Afsaruddin rightly points out that *aqāma* could also come to mean to ‘perform’ or ‘to carry out’. Furthermore, even if one infers this meaning, she suggests that ‘it still would not a priori convey the meaning of “to establish something publically”’.⁸⁴ In agreement with Afsaruddin, even if the interpretation of the verses is taken to mean political authority, it is difficult to construct an entire political theory.⁸⁵

In contrast to many speculations, Quṭub does not spend much time on this phrase *ulī al-amr*. Like Riḍā, for Quṭub, the binding of obedience is only towards God and His messenger.⁸⁶ It might be safe to conclude, like Afsaruddin, that the phrase *ulī al-amr* underwent a transformation and evolution in meaning. This general disposition is reflected in the early exegetical work which refers to the people of knowledge, especially when *asbāb al-nuzūl* is consulted, and that obedience is only binding to God and His messenger.

This point that obedience is necessarily made only by choice, as verse 5:92 for example suggests, is also connected to 5:91. In 5:91, the drinking of alcohol and the act of gambling are clearly stated to be Satan’s plan. In 5:92 it continues, ‘Obey God and obey the messenger, and beware! But if ye turn away, then know that the duty of Our messenger is only plain conveyance (of the message).’

What is significant here is the final description of the role of the Prophet, which is only to convey the message in clear, eloquent and precise way.⁸⁷ This means that even when the Prophet is present, his role is to warn and to guide; his message is a clear call, but is not imposed forcibly. The following of God’s guidance is an individual act of conviction even in issues that relate to public sphere. ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Rāziq is one of the scholars that argued for this, emphatically concluding that there is no political theory in the Qur’ān, similar to the conclusion of this research.⁸⁸ The idea that there is an absolute individual freedom in accepting a worldview of the Qur’ān is

⁸³ Cited in Afsaruddin, ‘Obedience to Political Authority’, p. 44.

⁸⁴ See Afsaruddin, ‘Obedience to Political Authority’, p. 44.

⁸⁵ See M Ahmed, ‘Classical Muslim State’, p. 92.

⁸⁶ Cited in Afsaruddin, ‘Obedience to Political Authority’, p. 45.

⁸⁷ See p. 195

⁸⁸ A ‘Abdul al-Rāziq, *Al-Islām wa-uṣūl al-ḥukm*, Al-Mu’assasa al-‘Arabī lil Dirāsāt wa al-nashr, Beirut, 1988.

also articulated by Maḥmūd Moḥammed Ṭāhā. In contrast to many, Ṭāhā suggests that the message of the Qur'ān lies between *imān* and *islām*, with the former revealed in Medina and the latter in Mecca.⁸⁹ The aim of the message is *al-islām*, and through *imān* one can arrive at *al-islām*. The difference between the Meccan and the Medinan verses, Ṭāhā argued, lies not in style but in audience, as the Meccan verses address humankind in general.⁹⁰

This means that people were invited to adopt *al-islām* (in the ultimate sense) in Mecca for 13 years; after they failed and 'demonstrated they were below its standard, they were addressed in accordance with their abilities' in Medina with laws that would eventually elevate them to absolute humanity.⁹¹ He suggests that once the

individual as well as collective human capacities are sufficiently mature, the original precept shall be restored. This is the reason why the original precepts of religion were postponed, and the subsidiary precepts were implemented.⁹²

Although Ṭāhā is seen as controversial, his notion of individual freedom remains substantial and is echoed in Chapter Six.

5.3.3 Summary

It seems consistent in both Sunnī and Shī'ite *tafāsir* in the classical and medieval periods that their exegesis does not consider that God is ordering a formation of a Muslim political system. Questions as to whether God has prescribed a particular political system arose as a modern phenomenon or at least the level of detailed attention to this issue in modern literature is not observed in the medieval writings.⁹³ This research is examining whether such a political system is prescribed and ordered in the Qur'ān and therefore binding. As we have shown, no single verse directly talks about a political theory or system, although there are general verses asking the Prophet and the *people in authority* to be just and good. The structure and methodology through which this is to be applied is not expressed in the Qur'ān.

⁸⁹ M M Taha, *The Second Message of Islam*, trans. AA Na'īm, Syracuse University Press, Syracuse, 1987, p. 125.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ *Ibid.* p. 130.

⁹² *Ibid.* p. 132.

⁹³ See Chapter Two p. 69.

Although it is clear that the idea of *ḥukm* seems to have evolved gradually throughout the exegeses mentioned above, the underlying theme seems the same; that is, if anyone is in place to judge, then they should be just. Thus, there is nothing overtly political in the modern sense of the word. The verses seem to acknowledge an already existing phenomenon - individuals or groups of people who are in a position to judge, and the emphasis is that they should judge in a just manner. This in no way suggests a particular form of political governance. From the apparent meaning it seems they are describing a specific situation and emphasising the justice element of *ḥukm* between the people.

Furthermore, a distinction needs to be made between *ḥukm* as laws that God commands and general understandings of *ḥukm* as ‘to rule’ or ‘to govern’, as seen in the verse when God addresses David in 38:26 as a Prophet. Taking these verses on *ḥukm* holistically, it means that the person who is in a position to judge should bear in mind ‘*adl* and should aim for peace and reconciliation (*ṣāliḥīn*). The person should also be honest and righteous and should have ‘*ilm* and *imān*, concepts that re-occurred with *ḥukm*.⁹⁴ Arguably, the Qur’ānic vision of *ḥukm* is to avoid or aim to abolish *fiṣq*, *khubth*, *jāhiliyah* and *ẓulm*, by the process of ‘*adl*, *qisṭ*, *mīzān*, *iḥsān*, *ṣidq*, and *imān*, ultimately aiming in creating a *ṣāliḥ* community.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, one could still maintain that regardless of the understanding of *ḥukm*, there is still a need for a system in which these laws need to be applied. This question has two components to it: One is ontological in nature. It asks if the state itself believes in the Islamic worldview; i.e. if the revelation itself is in fact true, a question with which this theses is not concerned. The questions being asked here are: (1) How should *ḥukm* be understood? (2) What would it look like? (3) What are the principles? and (4) How does it manifest itself? It is hoped that part of the answer to these questions has been given above. The following section conceptualises the Qur’ānic *weltanschauung* of prescribed law and *sharī‘a*.

⁹⁴ Especially verse 3:110 and 4:135 which associates both *qisṭ* and uprightness within the community.

⁹⁵ See Diagram 10.

5.4 THE QUR'ĀNIC WELTANSCHAUUNG OF *HUKM*

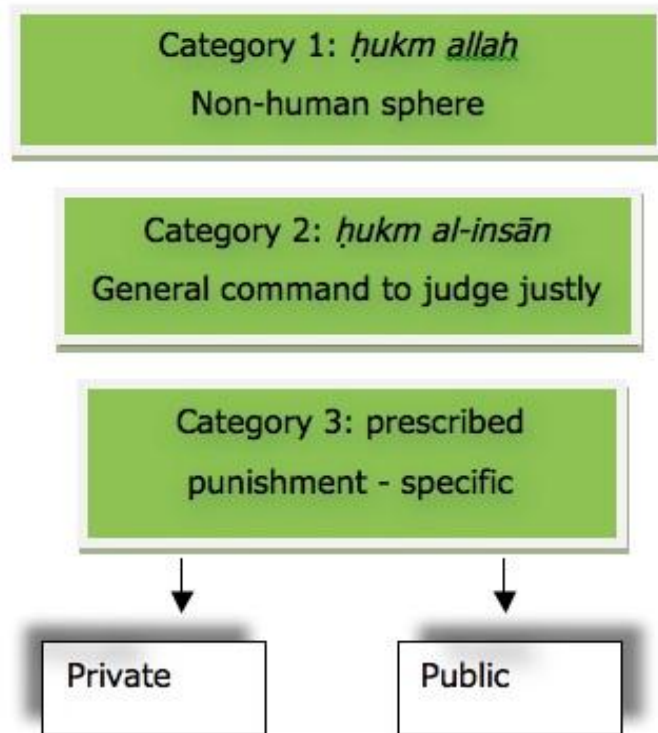
So far we have looked at the semantic and thematic connection of *ḥukm*, its purpose and what it has come to achieve. Begging the question is whether these are laws or judgments. How can *ḥukm* be applied? Is there a difference between *ḥukm* as a religious and political law? Another issue is the notion that even if there is no explicit mention in the Qur'ān of any form of political theory or organisation, in order to establish God's law one inevitably will need an institution.

To answer these fundamental questions and from the above semantic analysis, when God is talking about *ḥukm*, it is important to recognise three categories of the concept of *ḥukm*: The first category is *ḥukmu-allāh*, which entails God's Law on earth, the cosmos and life after death. This category, on both the ontological and the epistemological level, is unattainable by human beings. It is purely God's sphere. This includes verses such as 6:57, 62; 12:40, 67; 13:41; 18:26; 27:78; 28:70, 88; 40:12; 42:10; and 52:48. In the sense of understanding the wisdom or having any influence on it, for the purpose of distinction from here on, it will be written with capital L for Law. The second category, *ḥukmu al-insān*, entails an open, unspecified command by God to human beings to judge justly, as shown above, with the ambiguity of how to judge; it is only possible on the epistemic level. Concepts such as *ḥukm*, *mizān*, *qisṭ* and *ʿadl* are used in their general meaning without any specific form. It is on epistemic level because it ultimately relies on human understanding of justice and 'putting things in their proper place'. This includes verses such as 4:58; 5:42; 5:48; 5:95; 13:37; and 38:26.

The third category is prescribed punishment but unlike the former, has a specific prescription that falls either into a private act or a public act, each of which may also be seen as *ḥukmu al-insān*. It is worth noting here that the content of verses dealing with specific command also uses *ḥudūdu-allāh* as a form of a reminder. To illustrate these three categories, Diagram 11 shows this hierarchy.

Our investigation here disentangles these three categories that in the past have been confused with each other, just as much as the enquiry has confused between epistemology and ontology.

Diagram 11: The Categorisation of *Ḥukm*



In both the second and the third categories (*ḥukmu al-insān* and prescribed punishment), there is an important non-linguistic field attached to *ḥukm* - that is the awareness of two things- *tawḥīd* and *‘ākhira*. Both of these reinforce human accountability to God directly, an accountability that will be manifested in either the life in which they are living or in the hereafter. Human accountability is eschatologically emphasised in references made in the private sphere of abiding by what God has commanded in the concept of *ḥudūd*.⁹⁶

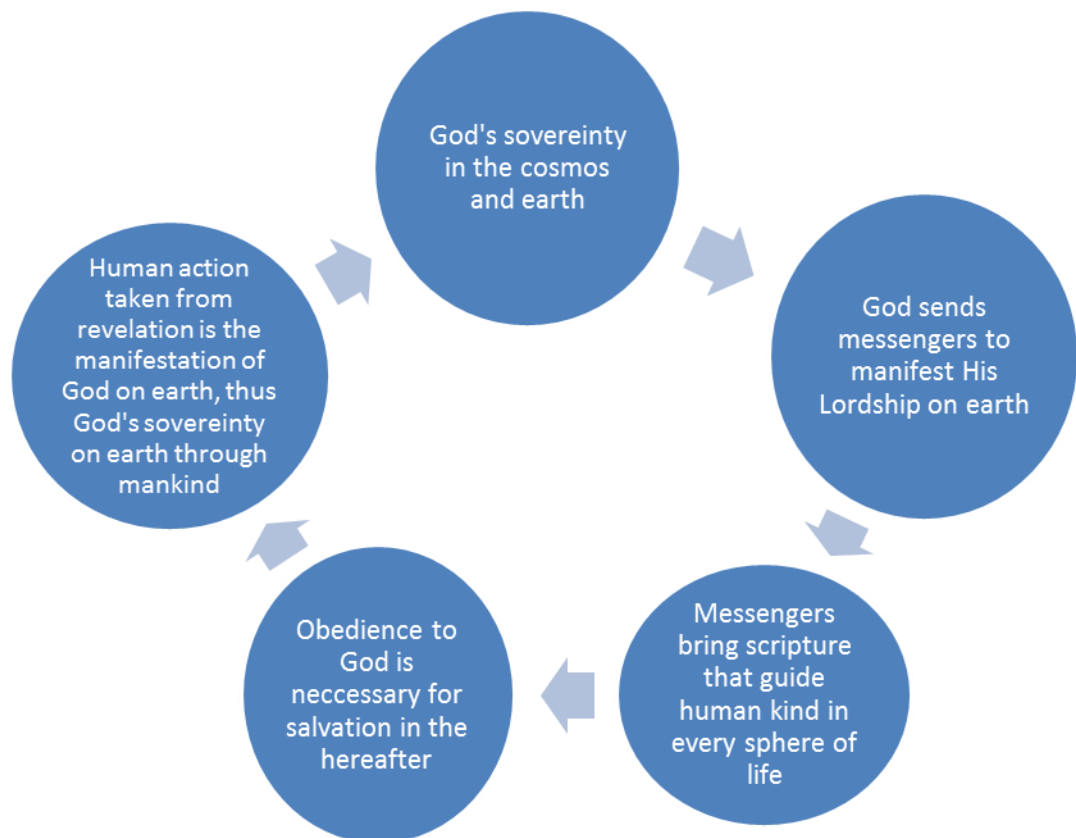
It is critical to determine how the intended meanings of these verses are related to the third category, namely prescribed law and the issue of how to holistically understand these concepts. Are these laws only context-related? How do they apply to our times, without any mention of a political structure in the Qur’ān? Is it assumed that the

⁹⁶ For the meaning of Qur’ānic *ḥudūd* see p. 205.

structure is not important? These questions are vital and indeed for a long time it was these questions that made the differences in drawing conclusions. If these verses were that clear, current debates would not exist.

What has happened within many Muslim political writings is that these three categories have been combined, bringing about the misunderstanding that human *ḥukm* is the same as God's *ḥukm*. Further confusion has been as a result of combining categories two and three resulting in mixing the general axioms and teachings of the Qur'ān with the prescribed command of punishment. To many, this means that there is a connection that comes full circle between God's *ḥukm*, sovereignty, lordship of the hereafter, the cosmos and man's obedience to this *ḥukm*. The following diagram will help to spell this out:

Diagram 12: Circular Argument of "Islamist"



Needless to say, this *full circle* argument is problematic on two grounds. One is that there is an assumption that the messengers of God are themselves placed as political judges, yet the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* is full of reminders that the Prophets are sent

only to remind people of good tidings or warn them of God's wrath.⁹⁷ Therefore, within the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*, Prophets are not seen as either political leaders nor do they aim to establish a political order or a system.

The second assumption that breaks this circle is that human action is not seen as God's action on earth. The actions of human beings themselves are not the same as God's *ḥukm* but rather *ḥukm* is within our own human framework of human understanding and human practice. In other words, the problem with this line of argument is based on the premise that when one is seeking what is good (or even *ḥukm* as prescribed by God) in using the revelations, one automatically assumes that they are acting on behalf of God and thus the action itself becomes that of God. This line of thought is problematic, as mentioned earlier because it does not recognise human error, misunderstanding, or the context of revelation. Nevertheless, it is not new within Muslim thinking. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Khārijī'ites were the first to make this full circle type of connection.

One fundamental connection made with *ḥukm al-insān* is the concept of *sharī'a*. Although commonly translated as "Islamic law", it semantically has a broader meaning. The next section examines the Qur'ānic meaning of *sharī'a*.

5.4.1 Qur'ānic *Sharī'a*

Sharī'a comes from the root word *sh-r-'* meaning 'to enter into', 'to begin to do', 'paths leading to drinking water'; 'to make plain or manifest'; 'to strip off;' 'to be similar', 'to be equal'; 'to reach for'; and 'a way'.⁹⁸ It also refers to a source of water that never runs dry. A path towards the source of water is significant as the same word is used to mean both 'path' and the 'source'. Ali Shariati also uses this meaning of *sharī'a* as a 'path leading down to a river, enabling the thirsty to take water', *sharī'a* would mean:

⁹⁷ See for example 7:184; 7:188; 17:105; 24:54; 25:56; 33:45-6; 35:23-24. Also see p. 202.

⁹⁸ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 481.

a road or a path, leading from clay to God and conveying man from vileness, stagnation and ignorance, from lowly life of clay and satanic character, toward exaltation, motion, vision, the life of the spirit and divine character.⁹⁹

Regardless to whether Shariati's explanation is sound, the Qur'ān mentions *sh-r-* 'five times in four different forms, *shara'a* could be translated as 'to legislate', 'to lay down as part of the faith', and 'to ordain' (verses 42:13 and 42:21 are examples of this form). *Shurra'an* denotes 'visibly' and 'openly for all to see' (this form occurs in verse 7:163). *Shir'atan* denotes 'a law', 'legislation from God' and 'divine way of religion' (for example verse 5:48). Finally, *sharī'atun* denotes a 'clear path' (such as verse 45:18).¹⁰⁰

The form *sharī'a* as a term is mentioned only once in the Qur'ān in verse 45:18. Again it is interesting how the verse has been translated by Yusuf Ali, Pickthal, Thomas Cleary and Abdul Daryabadi just to name a few.

Then We put thee on the (right) **Way of Religion**: so follow thou that (Way), and follow not the desires of those who know not.— (Yusuf Ali)

And now have We set thee (O Muhammad) on a clear road of **(Our) commandment**; so follow it, and follow not the whims of those who know not. (Pickthal)

Then we set you on a **sacred law from the divine order**; so follow it, and do not follow the whims of those who do not know' (Thomas Cleary)

And thereafter We have placed thee upon the **law of the religion**; so follow it thou, and follow not the vain desires of those who know not. (Abdul Daryabadi)

There are two interconnected issues here relating to the verse. One is the translation of *sharī'atin min al-amr* as 'way of religion', 'law of religion', 'sacred law from the divine order' and 'a clear road of commandment'. The meaning of *sharī'atin* is consistent with that of 'the way' or 'path'. What is interesting is the connotation (the premise with which the two words are translated) to be law, religion and commandment. *Al-amr*, in this context, linguistically means 'issue', 'affair' or 'a thing'; thus, it could be read as 'Then We have put thee on the clear way (path) of the affair'. The question here is the issue of *amr*. This is the second connected point at which the two previous verses shed light on the context:

⁹⁹ A Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, trans. Hamid Algar, Mizan press, Berkeley, 1979, p. 94.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

And assuredly. We vouchsafed Unto the Children of Israel the Book and the wisdom and the prophethood, and We provided them with good things and preferred them above the worlds. (45:16) And We vouchsafed Unto them **evidences of the affair**. And they differed not except after the knowledge had come Unto them, through spite among themselves. Verily thy Lord will decide between them on the Day of Judgment concerning that wherein they have been differing. (45:17)

Here the context relates to the children of Israel having been given a clear sign (evidence) for their affairs. The word *amr* is used in verse 45:17. Furthermore, verse 45:17 connects to verse 16 by giving the people of Israel a list of God's favours, namely the book, *ḥukm* and Prophethood, God gave them all that is good and preferred them above all peoples. Verse 45:17 continues with 'and we gave them clear signs for their affairs', referring to verse 45:16. Again when reading verse 45:18, the context relates to speaking to Mohammed in connection with verse 45:16 and that God gave Mohammed the clear way for the 'affair' (the same as in verse 45:17) and the order that he should follow it. This cannot be translated as 'law of religion', 'the commandments' or 'way of religion', because the book mentions *ḥukm* and Prophethood. These three are separate favours of God to the people of Israel. The meaning of *bayinātin min al-amr* (in verse 45:17) can be understood as the Israelites' belief being clear in knowing the truth by virtue of having all these favours from God, to the point of being favoured over other peoples. Here the meaning of *sharī'a* is understood to refer to God addressing Mohammed 'We have also made your affairs a clear way (path) and follow not the desires of those who know not'. This path is about avoiding division and acknowledging *bayinātin min al-amr* in verse 45:17.

It is interesting that most translations equated *sharī'a* with 'law' and not with 'way' or 'path' or to make 'manifest'. The *Mujma' Mufradāt Alfāḍ alqur'ān* (Qur'ānic lexicon) by al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (499/1105-565/1169) explains *sharī'a* as linguistically meaning 'taking a clear path' or 'a source'.¹⁰¹ Thus, the Qur'ānic verse 5:48 may indicate two things: (1) what God has bestowed on all mankind in search of the right path and (2) following that which has been ordained by God. Furthermore, there is an analogy between *sharī'a* and the Arabic term for a flowing river, which means that to know God's way is to be as full as you would be as if you drank the entire river water.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ R Al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāḍ alqur'ān*, vol. 1, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus, pp. 414-5.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Therefore, this study conjures that a better, more accurate translation of the word is ‘a way’ or ‘path’ rather than ‘law’; otherwise the translation would be confused with context-related particular law rather than a general meaning of law (way or path). In fact, one might argue that in popular literature and at times even in academic writing, the concept of *sharī‘a* has been narrowed down to the ‘does and don’ts’ of a speculative opinion of a jurist. This is not to say that the jurist’s opinion is not important, but it is the belief of this author that the concept of *sharī‘a* is not accurately translated in English to mean a general way or path that also includes law (the general and the specific). For example, if *sharī‘a* meant legal law then the translation ‘*sharī‘a* law’ would be ‘law law’, which would make no sense. If, however *sharī‘a* meant Islamic law then, as discussed earlier, the law that is known now is discursive in nature developed by jurists as new situations arose.¹⁰³

It is clear, however, when looking at early Muslim times to the present, that this concept witnessed a semantic shift. Assuming that the framework adopted in this study yields constructive results from looking mainly at the Qur’ānic worldview, it is striking to see the post-Qur’ānic discourse and its evolution in relation to the argument presented here. The terms *sharī‘a* and *sharī‘a* are much looser, wider and more general in terms of *siyāq*, contextuality and the style in which they address the reader.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the root word *sh-r-* linguistically means ‘way’ or ‘path’ and if one agrees that the Qur’ān in essence is not a law book (and law here refers to prescribed law) then the *sharī‘a* must be read to mean the general way of turning towards God’s path. This refers to acknowledging the Oneness of God and being righteous. And if we read the message as a reminder to mankind this would include the reminder of a person’s accountability in this world and the hereafter.

A further challenge to the Islamist is the description of the role of the Prophets. An overwhelming number of verses describe the Prophets (including Mohammed) as

¹⁰³ For more detail see Y Muhammad, *Al-Ijtihād wa-al-taqlīd wa al-itbā‘ wa al-nazar: baḥṭh istidlālī muqāran yu‘nā bi taḥdīd al-mawqif al-sharī‘ī lil muthaqqaf al-muslim*, Mu’assasat al-Rāfid lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī‘, London, 1996.

having no power over their people; they are not in charge and unable to protect their people; they are not a guarantor - *wakīl*.¹⁰⁴ They have come only as a guide or to give warning to their people, that is—a *nadhīr*;¹⁰⁵ their message is only to announce clearly, eloquently and precisely, that is, to convey a message – *blāghun*¹⁰⁶ *mubīn*.¹⁰⁷

Lastly, the prophet's role is as a reminder, as an admonishing to mankind – *mudhakir*.¹⁰⁸ Note for example, the following verses, among others: 4:80, 5:92, 6:107, 10:108, 25:43, 39:41, 42:48, 50:45, 88:21-22, 5:92 and 99, 10:2, 7:188 and 184, 11:12, 13:7 and 40, 16:35, 64 and 82, 17:105, 18:110, 19:97, 20:2-3, 22:49, 24:54, 25:56, 27:02, 29:18, 33:35-6, 34:28 and 46, 35:23-24, 36:17, 38:65 and 70, 41:6, 46:9, 48:8, 67:26. Therefore, this suggests two interconnected themes: (1) that the Qur'ān should not be described as a law book, and (2) that the word *shar'* cannot be read as meaning only law but also a path or a way to God. Since the entirety of the Qur'ān has few legal inferences, the meaning of *sharī'a* could not only have legal connotations, but also mean very generally the path towards God that internalises these inferences.

The framework in which both the discourse and the translation have taken the term *sharī'a* to mean 'law' is clear. For those that see the Qur'ān as a law book, the translation of *sh-r'* would be reflective of that understanding, in particular the connotation of *sh-r'* with *dīn*, often translated as religion. This can be seen in verse 42:13:

He hath **ordained** for you that **religion** which He commended unto Noah, and that which We inspire in thee (Muhammad), and that which We commended unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying: Establish the religion, and be not divided therein. Dreadful for the idolaters is that unto which thou callest them. Allah chooseth for Himself whom He will, and guideth unto Himself him who turneth (toward Him).

¹⁰⁴ *Wakīl* from the root word *w-k-l* occurs 24 times in the Qur'ān. See Badawi and Abdel Haleem pp. 1044-1045.

¹⁰⁵ The root word being *n-dh-r* 11 forms occur in hundred and thirty places in the Qur'ān. *Nadhīr* occurs 44 times, *andhara* forty one times and *mundhir* five times. All of which mean to warn. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, pp. 925-926.

¹⁰⁶ *Blāgh* occurs 14 times and *ballagha* six times are from the root word *b-l-gh* that has nine forms that occur 77 times in the Qur'ān. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, pp. 111-112.

¹⁰⁷ *Bayyinātun* (occurs 19 times) *bayināt* (52 times), *mubayyinātun* (3 times), *mubayyināt* (3 times) and *mubīn* (119 times) come from the root word *b-y-n* in the middle, to clarify, to explain, eloquence, enlightening and verifying. From the root 14 forms occur 574 times in the Qur'ān. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, pp. 123-125.

¹⁰⁸ From the root word *dh-k-r* has 19 forms and is mentioned 292 times in the Qur'ān. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, pp. 328-332.

Yusuf Ali translates it as ‘The same **religion** has He **established** for you...’, Abdul Daryabadi translates it as ‘He hath **instituted** for you in **religion** that which He had enjoined’ and Pickthal as ‘He hath **ordained** for you that **religion** which He commended unto Noah’, and again in verse 42:21 in a plural form

Yusuf Ali translates *shara‘a* as ‘established’, as does Abdul Daryabadi but in the singular form, and interestingly Pickthal translates the term as ‘made lawful’.¹⁰⁹ Semantically *shara‘a* could also denote ‘ordained’ or ‘way/path’. This is consistent with the meaning of 42:21, 45:18 (discussed above) and, as we will see, in verse 5:48. Verses 42:12 and 21 connect the meaning to religion – *dīn* – which can mean religion, creed, or conviction.¹¹⁰ Again, one’s premise is critical for understanding what *dīn* means. If the understanding of religion is taken to refer to prescribed law (that which is lawful and unlawful and the prescribed punishment) then the post-Qur’ānic development of the meaning of *sharī‘a* to mean *sharī‘a* law in the narrow sense is understandable.

On the other hand, using the methodology of this research, our reading of the verses has shown a different focus. That is to say, *shar‘* and *sharī‘a* are taken to mean the path or clear way of religion/faith. Therefore, verse 42:13 is manifested as the path/way of God’s religion, which is the same as that described by Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. This interpretation is consistent with the *siyāq* of the verse and understanding that Mohammed’s call is the same call and the same path/way. *Dīn* is also taken to denote a holistic encompassing of the message of the Qur’ān. The messenger’s purpose is to advise and to warn people. It is to apply and understand the moral guide and teachings; the Qur’ān’s function is to act as a reminder to mankind.¹¹¹ The teachings also, of course, include God’s *ḥukm* and *‘adl*, but are understood in the framework that was explained earlier.

Verse 5:48 is interesting as well:

¹⁰⁹ See <<http://www.quranexplorer.com/quran/>> which contains the English and the Arabic translation of the entire Qur’ān.

¹¹⁰ From the root word *d-y-n*, *dīn* occurs ninety two times in the Qur’ān. Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, pp. 320-321

¹¹¹ See p. 202 for the verses that describe the Prophets as only messengers.

And We have sent down the Book unto thee with truth; and confirming that which hath preceded it of the Book, and a guardian thereof. Wherefrom judge thou between them by that which Allah hath sent down, and follow thou not away from that which hath their desires come to thee of the truth. **Unto each of you We appointed law and a way.** And had Allah listed, He would have made you all a single community, but He willed not in order that he may prove you by that which He hath vouchsafed unto you. Hasten wherefore to the virtues; unto Allah is the return of you all; then He shall declare unto you concerning that wherein ye have been disputing.

The last part sheds further light upon the meaning of *shir'atan wa minhājan*, and 'if God willed he would have made you one nation'. This oneness does not refer to law or decree, as the first part of the verse implies (that this message is guarding over it), but rather in terms of the way/path of life that people choose to take. After all it follows with 'Hasten wherefore to the virtues; unto Allah is the return of you all; then He shall declare unto you concerning that wherein ye have been disputing'. This indicates that it does not refer to any law or scripture but rather to how people choose to live their life and that it is essential to perform virtuous acts.

One possible way of understanding the Qur'ānic *shar'* is to consider Maḥmūd M. Ṭāhā's book *The Second Message of Islam*.¹¹² Ṭāhā suggests that there are two messages in the Qur'an. He postulates that 'the first message is based on the application of the Qur'an, the second on its principles'.¹¹³ The spiritual dimension of faith is the second message revealed first in Mecca and as it was hard for believers to practice this message in Medina, God sent particular laws for believers to realise the second message of Islam. Ṭāhā's major contribution is that in reality the process is to realise the second message of the Qur'an and hence the Medinan message is supplanted and replaced by the Meccan, although not permanently.¹¹⁴ This would also entail what is known to be '*sharī'a*' as an applied system would be abolished once the real internalisation of the Meccan message is realised. For example, inheritance law, polygamy, slavery, are all not part of the Meccan message.

Although Ṭāhā's argument is interesting, his conclusion however allows one to propose that even Ṭāhā was reacting to the political situation of his time when he

¹¹² Ṭāhā's views are generally seen controversial; however, there is no harm in examining his ideas and reflections on the Qur'an.

¹¹³ Ṭāhā, *The second message of Islam*, pp. 31-2.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 153.

argues for ‘democratic socialism’.¹¹⁵ As mentioned earlier, the problematic nature of these concepts is that it is imposed on the Qur’ān mainly because of Western readings and understanding of particular concepts and experiences. This is not to say these concepts are not important, however, the Qur’ānic worldview goes beyond these concepts when it is connected to eschatology and *taqwā*.¹¹⁶ This is where this thesis departs from Ṭāhā.

What this thesis is emphasising is that the meaning of *shr*’ remains consistent throughout the five verses. That is referring a clear way or path. *Sharī’a* then might be best translated as Islamic normativity rather than Islamic law.¹¹⁷

Ṭāhā’s postulation regarding laws that have mainly been revealed in Medina also connects to what commonly known as *ḥudūd* laws. The following section examines the Qur’ānic *ḥudūd*.

5.4.2 Qur’ānic *Ḥudūd*

In general, in Muslim writings, as mentioned earlier, *ḥudūd law* is postulated to include verses that have a prescribed punishment (such as theft and homicide). However, although the term *ḥudūd* is mentioned in the Qur’ān, the verses that contain punishment have not been described as *ḥudūd*. The logic behind the use of this terminology by Muslim jurists is that the word *ḥudūd* means ‘limit’, or ‘to deter’ and hence the prescribed law is there to keep limits and to deter. *Ḥudūd* also prescribes how one should behave in a situation of worship (such as pilgrimage), in diet, as well as in divorce, giving way for the jurist to make an analogy to other verses that speak of thefts and homicide.

The common word *ḥudūd* is mentioned in the Qur’ān 14 times from the trilateral root *ḥ-d-d*. Of this root, four different forms occur in the Qur’ān 25 times.¹¹⁸ *Ḥudūd* mainly translates as ‘prescribed limits’, ‘to put an end to’, ‘to deter’, ‘boundaries’;

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 147.

¹¹⁶ We will come to this in the next Chapter p. 233.

¹¹⁷ See for example Anjum, *Reason and politics in Medieval Islamic thought*, p. 299.

¹¹⁸ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, p. 194.

‘ordinance’ and ‘decrees’.¹¹⁹ It is striking when reading verses such as 2:187; 2:229; 2:230; 4:12-14; 9:97,112; 58:4 and 65:1 that the context is overwhelmingly that of an individual covenant of keeping and preserving the limits in the mindfulness of God. In most instances, the concept of *ḥudūd* is paralleled with God and *taqwā*. This would suggest that the context of the verses mentioning *ḥudūd* is in line with the meaning of keeping the boundaries between human being and God and therefore, describing the God consciousness (*taqwā*) of the believers in knowing their limits. What is interesting is that none of the fourteen verses mentioning *ḥudūd* are in the context of punishment. Rather they refer to *taqwā*, particularly in individual practice of worship, and in being God-aware in keeping with dietary requirements and pilgrimage practices. These are private acts, of which, it might be the case that no one would be aware were they not practiced. Seemingly, *ḥudūd* as a concept could also refer to the individual keeping the boundaries rather than as something themselves reinforced by a society or a state. That is to say, the emphasis is on the responsibility of the individual to keep the covenant without any human witness by the constant reinforcement of *itaqū allāh* from the word *taqwā*.¹²⁰

In support, the verse 9:112 shows the manifestation of keeping that covenant and boundary with God:

(Triumphant) are those who turn repentant (to Allah), those who serve (Him), those who praise (Him), those who fast, those who bow down, those who fall prostrate (in worship), those who enjoin the right and who forbid the wrong and those who keep the limits (ordained) of Allah - And give glad tidings to believers!

Keeping those limits willingly, arguably, is the key to understanding the concept of *ḥudūd*. If the meaning were related to the state re-enforcing *ḥudūd*, then many of the verses that mention *ḥudūd* do not make sense. Take for instance 2:229, 230 and 65:1. If the emphasis were upon reinforcing a public notion of *ḥudūd*, there would be no need to reinforce *taqwā* and the reminder that the boundaries are from God. The emphasis here is the account of the husband being truthful in a private setting, of both counting the ‘waiting period’ as well as proving they have committed ‘manifest indecency’. The stress of the verse lies with the trustworthiness of those who keep their limits with God in private. For how could anyone know whether the addressee is

¹¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 194-5.

¹²⁰ *Taqwā* is discussed in Chapter Five in details, see p. 242.

being truthful if it was not for keeping the boundary of God in private; it is not the act itself but that it has been observed in private, without the reinforcement of any external body, which makes keeping *ḥudūd allāh* profound. There is an element of choosing not to do something, and hence the verses always emphasise two things, that is *taqwā* and the consequences of transgressing the boundaries. The same applies to the verse on fasting, 58:4. It would not be an exaggeration to say that fasting two months consecutively could only be done as a private matter between the person and God and hence it is difficult for anyone (or any political structure) to actually prove or disprove the action.

Another example is verse 2:187. Again the Qur'ān reminds the addressee that when they are fasting they should not approach their wives and that they should keep God's limits. How would the others know if they did or did not? Keeping God's limits, therefore, must be a private covenant between the addressee and the addressor. If it was intended to be a law that is reinforced by non-individual actors, the *khiṭāb* in all these verses would not make much sense.

This is why the concept of *ḥudūd* is manifested in these verses as reinforcing a relationship with God that cannot be seen or reinforced by anybody other than the person her/himself. These boundaries are normative, an ethical/moral covenant between the individual and God that should not be transgressed. The reason for the reinforcement of the concept of *ḥudūd allāh* is that it is so easy not to keep the covenant as it is a private commitment. This analysis is contrary to the post-Qur'ānic development of the concept, and it is also contrary to the reading of these verses in accordance with later historical developments. Most of these laws were reinforced by the state very early on, providing the 'public' reading of these verses as well as seeing the concept to mean the punishment itself, which needed to be reinforced by a legislative body.

If this is the case, then how can one understand prescribed punishment? The section below provides possible conceptualisation of punishment in the Qur'ān.

5.4.3 Conceptualising Punishment in the Qur'ān

Although the number of legal verses are contested, some have estimated there to be between 80 to 500 verses with legal content out of a total of 6, 346 verses.¹²¹ From the outset, the legal verses appear marginal, which suggests that these verses, though important, are not the sole purpose of the revelation. This idea is made even more apparent when one reads the overwhelming repetition of the ethico-religious verses in both the thematic and literal senses. It is not that the legal verses are unimportant but rather that the repetition of both the literal and thematic meanings of the verses need to be understood in order to reinforce the high level of importance of these verses. This is contrary to what Hallaq has argued; that because the majority of the ethico-religious verses are repeated this actually renders the legal verses as more significant.¹²²

Legal verses were introduced in selected matters of ritual practices (including prayer, fasting and pilgrimage) as well as related to alms tax, property, marriage, inheritance (prescribing the amount of inheritance to which both men and women are entitled), treatment of orphans, beggars and by passers. Business laws including prohibiting usury and gambling, keeping oaths, dietary rules, adultery, theft and homicide, are also included in this legislation; noting that some of these categories also fall under rituals.

One may be able to divide these instructions/prescribed duties into those which concern the individual (such as the rituals) and those which concern the society (such as homicide). Within *uṣūl al-fiqh* some of these laws are indeed seen to be private and some public – especially those which have been termed *ḥudūd* laws (those which have punishment). It is conceivable, however, that these two categories are problematic, fluid and difficult to define. Before getting into further discussion it is important here to point out the terms that are usually used when describing these laws. Within Muslim literature, *sharī‘a* law is generally used to refer to any religious legal ruling, which also includes that which is lawful and the unlawful (*halāl wa harām*) and *ḥudūd* law which generally includes legal rulings that have a form of punishment.

¹²¹ W. Hallaq ‘Law and the Qur’ān’, in J. D. McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Brill, Boston, 2003, vol.3, p. 150.

¹²² Ibid.

As we discussed, earlier these concepts do not accurately reflect the Qur'ānic worldview.

In support, Rahman also maintains that most of the Muslim intellectual tradition has failed to make a clear distinction between that which is ethical and that which is legal or consists of commands; as a result the two have been constantly confused.¹²³ It is hoped, through the use of Izutsian and thematic approach, that a clearer and a more holistic understanding will be possible of the verses relating to punishment.

5.4.4 Jurisprudence as a Human Endeavour in Epistemic Terms

It has been argued by some, such as Wael Hallaq, that “Islamic law” in reality is the jurists’ law ‘not because it happened to have been constructed by jurists, but mainly because the jurists are the *carriers* of the authority that sustained it for over a millennium’.¹²⁴ The jurist has therefore become the sole agent of ‘legal epistemology and hermeneutics’.¹²⁵

This is because, as Hallaq explains, they were:

the spiritual and practical guides of the *umma*...they controlled the entire infra-and super- structures of legal education...They collected taxes and improved public works; supervised the affairs of the market-place and controlled and ran charitable foundations...as guardians of orphans and other unprivileged social groups, administering their financial and other affairs.¹²⁶

This meant that as legal interpreters, the jurists possessed a distinctive authority. Their authority was, as Hallaq postulates, ‘epistemic in nature -*knowing* the law and how it is to be derived, interpreted and applied were the qualities that conferred epistemic authority’.¹²⁷

In support, Khan holds that ‘Islamic jurisprudence as a well-defined academic

¹²³ F Rahman, *Islam and Modernity Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, p. 155.

¹²⁴ W Hallaq ‘Juristic Authority Vs. State Authority The legal crisis of modern Islam’ in A Saeed (ed.), *Islamic political thought and governance*, vol. 3, Routledge, 2011, p. 353.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. p. 354.

discipline was organised only at the end of the second century of Islam'.¹²⁸ What “*sharī‘a*” law is in practice is the opinion of a jurist developing a particular methodology in extracting law within their own understanding and context. Yet in the early Muslim history there were no attempts to codify the law (*fiqh*), with the exception of Ibn al-Muqafa‘ who in the eighth century proposed this to the Umayyad caliph.¹²⁹

Notwithstanding, Qamruddin Khan boldly insists that the genre of Islamic law is not based on the Qur’ān. This is because the inferences in the Qur’ān cannot be defined as law in the modern sense, as it is beyond state boundaries, and much of it, such as prayer and moral obligations, cannot be reinforced by human courts.¹³⁰

This chapter is also in agreement with Ovamir Anjum’s point that Islamic law developed to become the prime position of Islamic identity, which gave the jurists the status of ‘unquestioned guardians of the Islamic doctrine’. Khan’s bold statement is supported by this investigation.¹³¹

Furthermore, the *sharī‘a*'s principles remain a human interpretation based on the understanding of the Qur'ān and the *sunna*.¹³² Therefore, any understanding of *sharī‘a* is the product of *ijtihād* (informed reasoning) in that ‘reasoning and reflection by human beings are ways of understanding the meaning of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet’.¹³³ The development of the *sharī‘a* in a systematic and methodic way occurred only in the 2nd and 3rd century of Islam.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Khan, *Political concepts of the Qur'an*, pp. 54-55.

¹²⁹ See AE Mayer, ‘The Shari'ah: A Methodology or a body of Substantive Rules?’ in N Heer (ed.), *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence*, The University of Washington Press, Washington, 1990, p179.

¹³⁰ See Q Khan, *Political concepts of the Quran*, p. 53.

¹³¹ O Anjum, *Reason and politics in Medieval Islamic thought the Taymiyyan moment*, Thesis (Ph. D.) University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2008 retrieved August 2011
<<http://books.google.com/books?id=N4YIAQAAMAAJ>> p. 190.

¹³² See A A An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*. Cambridge (MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, p. 10 referencing Ibn Rushd.

¹³³ Ibid. p. 13.

¹³⁴ See Y Mohammed, *al-Ijtihad wal taqlid*.

Khalid Abou el Fadl puts the distinction differently in observing that Muslim ‘jurists have called God's law, in its ideal and abstract form, the *Shari'ah* (the Way to God), and called the attempt to understand and implement the *Shari'ah*, the *fiqh*’.¹³⁵

This makes *fiqh* a human endeavour attempting to get as close as possible to the abstract ideal but is never able to claim that its understanding is a hundred percent. Further to this is the flexibility of *fiqh* itself as the next section shows.

5.4.5 The Flexibility of Jurisprudence

Afsaruddin, like Hallaq, also suggests that *fiqh* is a result of human effort and reasoning, referring to both the Qur'ān and the *sunna* as sources of legal inferences. Thus, it is an epistemic endeavour of human effort. The mistake has been in conflating *sharī'a* with *fiqh* hence ‘attributing immutability and divine provinces to many legal rulings that are rather the product of human deliberation and thus contingent’.¹³⁶

This diversity in how one should derive law and how to determine its main principles may be seen in comparing Al-Shāṭibī (d.790/1388) and Ṭūfī (716/1316). Al-Shāṭibī attempted to move beyond the traditional jurisprudential theory of deriving law by emphasising *maqāṣid* (principles of *sharī'a*). As for Ṭūfī, his view articulated that the purpose of deriving law is in fact *maṣlaḥa* (public interest).¹³⁷

Ṭūfī further argued that both the Qur'ān and the *sunna* were based on *maṣlaḥa* but it has not been articulated in that way by the traditional jurisprudential theory of law. The examples above are presented to show the diversity, flexibility and the epistemic nature of the process of legal theory. This notion of public interest is formulated by Askari as ‘right to security of person, property, freedom of association, freedom of

¹³⁵ Abou el Fadl, ‘The Unbounded Law of God and Territorial Boundaries’, p. 216.

¹³⁶ Afsaruddin, ‘The “Islamic State”’, p. 165.

¹³⁷ Cited in WB Hallaq, *A History of Islamic Legal Theories: An Introduction to Sunnī Uṣūl Al-Fiqh*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 150-3 & pp. 162-206.

conscience, right to offer equal treatment before law...to protect one's religion'.¹³⁸ He is not the first to identify the purpose of law in these categories. As these categories were identified by the classical jurists, there is no reason why other categories could not also be included such as context and environment.

From the outset, it is important to point out that due to the small scale of these prescribed punishments, it is arguable that they cannot be the core of the message. This is not to say that they are not important, but rather that the revelation is not a law book. Therefore, this means that the prescribed punishments must be understood within their original historical context and hence it is vital to have an understanding of the society in 6th and 7th century Arabia.

Hence, none of these verses have the concept of *ḥukm* accompanying the command of particular punishment and the word *ḥudūd* is only used in verses that are of *private concern* in obeying God's commands such as in dietary requirements and cases of fornication, as mentioned earlier.¹³⁹ This is considered significant. This suggests that *ḥukm*, when it does occur, has always been a general concept in tune with a holistic understanding of both justice and what is good in the category of *ḥukm al-insān*.¹⁴⁰

Interestingly, Ṭāhā postulates that prohibitions and limitations in terms of their legal inferences are there for two reasons. The first is because of the interest of the 'community would be preserved by deterring the aggressor himself, as well as deterring others'. The second is 'the aggressor deepens his sensitivity, by himself experiencing the pain he inflicts upon others, and thus realizes the severity of the pain and the magnitude of the loss he has caused'.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, this stage is only a transitional one en route to the higher level of truth where one achieves an absolute freedom.¹⁴² *Iḥsān*¹⁴³ is superior to 'adl, so the verses that mention an eye for an eye are speaking of the first level (as in verse 42:40) that is the community. In contrast,

¹³⁸ H Askari, *Society and State in Islam: An Introduction*, Islam and the Modern Age Society, India, 1978, p. 99.

¹³⁹ For example verses 2:187, 2:229, 2:230, 4:12, 4:13, 4:14, 9:97, 9:112, 58:4 and 65:1.

¹⁴⁰ See section Qur'ānic *Weltanschauung* of *Ḥukm* p.192.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.* p. 73.

¹⁴² *Ibid.* p. 75.

¹⁴³ It comes to mean 'to improve, to adore, goodness, charity, to favor, to act properly'. It also comes to mean beauty. From the root word *ḥ-s-n* 14 forms occur 195 times in the Qur'ān. See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 209-211.

the verse that mentions *ihsān* addresses the second level (as in verse 42:43), which is the higher level.¹⁴⁴ The stage of ultimate *islām* would require ‘moving out of the law for the community as a whole’ and moving into the law for the individual’.¹⁴⁵ This means individuality is only achieved when the law for the community is perfected and until the point at which one is able to exercise absolute individual freedom.¹⁴⁶ Ṭāhā’s perspective is interesting when looking at the purpose of prohibition and limitations, which denotes to the idea of particularity and universality of a concept or punishment.

5.4.6 The Universal and the Particular

Even the application of the verses that included commands prescribed by the companions in the aftermath of the death of the Prophet suggests that these verses have two components to them, one of which is eternal and one of which is dynamic.

Fārūqī further describes the prescribed law as a ‘real-existent state’. For example, he argues that the verse that speaks of the cutting off of the hand has values to be *realised* suggesting that:

this verse seeks to realize...purification through penitence, education through example, and retribution...but they do not all stand on the same level. A cutting off of the hand that realizes retribution but violates the other two cannot be deemed obligatory.¹⁴⁷

If committing the punishment goes against the values of the Qur’ān ‘it would not only be undesirable but would constitute a crime or sin against the higher values, even if its realization of the lower were complete.’¹⁴⁸

In line with Fārūqī’s point, one can, for instance, point towards Abū Bakr’s time when the punishment for consumption of alcohol was both reinforced and fixed (to be forty lashes) and later changed by ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb (634-644) and ‘Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib to

¹⁴⁴ See Ṭāhā, *The second message of Islam*, p. 77.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 152.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ IT Fārūqī, ‘Towards a new Methodology for Qur’ānic Exegesis’, *Islamic Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1962, p. 48.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

eighty lashes.¹⁴⁹ This indicates two things: (1) the moral component of the laws that drinking is harmful does not change, but the punishment does and (2) the punishment can change according to the appropriateness of context; the punishment is thus contextually based. Another example from early Muslim history is that the authority enforced some of the laws including *zakāt* (giving alms), inheritance and so on, whereas in the time of the Prophet, this was not enforced by any kind of entity.

Another example of ‘Umar making *ijtihād* involves the case for divorce and war booty. Although during the Prophet's time the declaration ‘I divorce you’ spoken three times at the same time was seen as rendering a single divorce, ‘Umar declared that three utterances of the word divorce would be considered to be three divorces.¹⁵⁰ The reason for this is thought to be the high divorce rate that was affecting the community, so by making it count three times, it would accordingly become irrevocable, in the hope that men would think more before uttering the words.¹⁵¹

In terms of the war booty, in spite of the particular command in verse 8:41 gives particular command, ‘Umar decided not to distribute the land of Iraq and Egypt as a booty to the army as it would have created large economic inequalities.¹⁵² This indicates that there was a direct understanding of the purpose of verses and their moral principles that although it relates to rules, it does not create rules as fixed but rather creates them as dynamic, capable of being changed to ensure and uphold the Qur’ānic moral/ethical principles. In support, Rahman postulates that it is:

beyond any shadow of doubt that our earliest generations looked upon the teaching of the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet not as something static but essentially as something that moves creatively.¹⁵³

This of course was done to preserve the universal maxim of justice, and if understood in that framework one can make the argument that their actions are actually Qur’ānic, based on the principle of adhering to justice as a binding maxim and taking the command in the verse as contextual. This idea is not new, but was first proposed by al-Shāṭibī when examining the *maqāṣid*; Fazlur Rahman is also one of the advocates

¹⁴⁹ See W Hallaq, ‘Law and the Qur’ān’ in JD McAuliffe (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān*, Vol. 3, Brill, Boston, 2003, p. 153.

¹⁵⁰ Cited in Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 87.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Cited in Saeed, *Interpreting the Qur’an*, p. 124.

¹⁵³ F Rahman, *Islamic methodology in History*, Central Institute of Islamic Research, Karachi, 1965, p. 189.

of *maqāṣid* and later on it was developed intensively as a methodological tool by Yahya Mohammed.¹⁵⁴

Therefore, this research differentiates between the moral law and the command for the punishment (for example, the law which states that one should not steal and the punishment for stealing). By making this distinction, one can fully realise the universal aspect of the verse and the context related to the verse. One may come to understand the prescribed command in the Qur’ān as having a component of moral right and wrong (which within the Qur’ānic framework would entail an objective, knowable, generalisable universal maxim) and the punishment prescribed for breaking the moral maxim.

Many have used different ways to describe this, which this investigation argues as all meaning the same thing. For example, these would include terms like the inner and the outer of the verse, the letter and the form, the intended meaning and the prescribed law, the written and the unwritten, *sharī‘a* and *maqāṣid al-sharī‘a*. Furthermore, Saeed asserts that ‘the Qur’an does not abrogate *the objective* of a ruling, but rather reinforces that objective by amending the ruling itself’.¹⁵⁵ These categories have all been conceived of as a way of reconciling the eternal moral maxim and the specific command; it also aimed to reconcile those practices of the early companions that at times went against the letter of the verse itself.

It suffices here to say that the verses with particular commands for punishment pertaining to public order do not constitute sufficient evidence to argue (albeit in an indirect way) that God intended an “Islamic” political system through the indirect application of these laws through the state, and that an “Islamic state” is necessary to apply these laws. Furthermore, as many have proclaimed, this state necessarily abides by ‘*sharī‘a*’ law, yet the subsequent development of legal law post-Qur’ānic era is different too. While God's Law in the Qur’ān is eternal and universal, *fiqh* is contextual and temporal by definition.

¹⁵⁴ In the case of Yahya Muhammed, he proposes to include context (*wāqi‘*) as part of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in deriving legal ruling. Y Muhammad, *Madkhal ilā fahm al-islām: al-fikr al-islāmī, nuṣūmuh, adawātuh, uṣūluh*, Mu’assasat al-Rāfid lil-Nashr wa al-Tawzī‘, London, 1997.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 86.

5.5 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Taking what this chapter has suggested, there are serious implications for the common appeal by many Muslims to apply what has come to mean *sharīʿa* law. It remains a human endeavour due to its hermeneutical structure. With this in mind, this chapter is not arguing that there should be a “secular” law but rather acknowledges the human element in any kind of law and therefore its divinity can only be spoken of in terms of the intention of the individual applying the law.

The idea of theo-religious administration arose in the 20th century theme. Although most Islamist arguments refer to the scripture, upon deeper inspection, verses that have been given political significance would appear to possess multiple meanings.¹⁵⁶ Once again, this suggests that theo-religious administration is a modern phenomenon that arose in reaction towards modern challenges, as suggested in the Introduction and in Chapter Three.

Many discussions of this topic and arguments have mixed together both ontological and epistemological discussions on God’s law, thereby leading the reader to believe that by examining the concepts of *ḥukm* one is entering into an ontological discussion. Simply put, the assumptions are that questioning the truth of the *concept* of *ḥukm* is almost synonymous with questioning the *meaning* of *ḥukm*. The basic question asked is: what does the Qur’ān mean when it talks about *ḥukm* (and its derivatives). This has also affected the understanding of Western academics studying Muslim political thought.

The question regarding the understanding of *ḥukm* within the third category (*ḥukm al-insān* in terms of prescribed punishment) does not only concern Qur’ānic students but is also fundamental to contemporary Western legal theory.

The fundamental dilemma that many modern western legal theorists face is whether law and morality are separable or whether law reflects moral right and wrong, i.e. that which corresponds to legality and illegality of acts. This modern dilemma is the result

¹⁵⁶ See The Introduction p. 1 and Chapter Two p. 69.

of the influence of positivism in general and legal positivism in particular.¹⁵⁷ This is the belief that moral utterances are subjective, immeasurable and hence un-testable, and therefore it is in the faculty of desire and not reason and should be abandoned as an enquiry in associating ethics with law.¹⁵⁸

The question that is vital here is whether these commands are private (obedience being important from the individual point of view) or should it be the state's responsibility to apply these commands. Hence, taking the premise that *sharī'a* does not depend upon any positive law, political decision or state would suggest that *sharī'a* creates a space parallel to temporal power and to the political sphere. It challenges them when required although it may also be manipulated by them as it has been in the past. Yet, the possibility of a space that potentially challenges power is ignored. In support, An-Na'im distinguishes between *sharī'a* as a concept and the particular 'methodology for determining the normative *content* of Shari'a'.¹⁵⁹

This Chapter argued that the moral principles are however eternal because the principles are divine. Put another way, stealing is morally wrong and verse 5:38 not only reinforces the wrongness of the act but also offers a deterrence. The deterrence is not an expression of morality but simply a punishment to remind and reinforce the moral view of the wrongness of theft. Therefore, as discussed earlier, there is a difference between the divine principle and the legal punishment. What is abrogated at times is not the Law but the punishment. Understood in this way, the decisions made by the early companions in governing during the post-Mohammed era are consistent with this view. Again for example, in the case of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭāb, when the *great famine* hit the Arabian Peninsula, he gave orders for people to stop contributing towards charity (*zakāt*) and he allowed mitigating circumstances for thieves. This was under the supposition that this famine had created huge poverty in Arabia and therefore it would be unjust to expect charitable donations and to punish those who stole only to survive. What is interesting is that none of the close companions opposed him or even said that he was going against God's boundaries-*ḥudūd allāh*, he was in accordance with the Qur'ān.

¹⁵⁷ M Tebbit, *Philosophy of Law: An Introduction*, 2nd edn, Routledge, London, 2000.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ A An-Na'im, *Islam and the Secular State*, pp. 2-3.

Bearing this in mind, the worldview of the Qur'ān then takes a holistic look at interconnected concepts, as mentioned earlier in terms of *ḥukm*, *ʿadl* and so on. The various readings of the Qur'ān have created a dichotomy in today's debates between law and its purpose. However, it suggests that there is no dichotomy, that there is rather an interaction between the two categories.

This chapter has shown the Qur'ānic worldview of *ḥukm*, its conceptual categories and its connection to other concepts. The pressing question here is what happened within the Muslim tradition that caused the Qur'ān to be read as a law book so that the verses of prescribed command were read as making up the body of *sharīʿa* law and *ḥudūd* law was seen as the prescribed punishment that needs to be applied by the state. The answer to this question lies in the early political development of the Muslim community.

Both the strong interest in the collection of *ḥadīths* in a structured and scientific way as well as the development of *uṣūl al-fiqh* to derive a strict and clear ruling could be read as reactions to the political corruption of the post Mu'āwīya era. Even the centuries-long debate on whether the Qur'ān (i.e. word of God) is eternal or created can be seen through the same lens - that of the political elite pushing and using a particular theological stand for the justification of their own actions or justification of their power.¹⁶⁰ Believing that the word of God is created would consequently mean that it is changing and contextual, which would in turn also justify how some (if not most) the political leaders at that time failed to abide by a moral framework. And this was a moral framework that had been presented to the people in terms of situational and not eternal moral value - such as justice. Within this framework, it does not come as a surprise that those scholars who did not support state-sponsored theology were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and at times killed. For example, three renowned scholars Mālik ibn Anas, Abū Ḥanīfa and Ibn Taymiyya were all imprisoned during their lives.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter Two p. 169.

Reading between the lines, traditional scholars have realised that this emphasised the word of God as being eternal and unchanging. In debates between the Mu‘tazilite and the Ash‘arite, Qur’ānic verses were used as well as rational arguments. But the verses were not used in a neutral sense to determine what the Qur’ānic view was; instead the verses were used to speak out against the misuse and the exploitation of these ideas by the political elite. The same can be said regarding the heated debates between Sunnī and Shī‘ite. Again, the debates do not seem to be based on the Qur’ānic worldview even though Qur’ānic verses are used to support their arguments. The immediate aim of both groups is to dispute their opponent’s view, and to delegitimize their premises. The canonization of the legal tradition as well as the reading of the Qur’ān as purely a legal book therefore relates strongly to the early political violence that occurred during the first Muslim civil war.¹⁶¹

The same can be said regarding the collection of *ḥadīth*. After the death of the Prophet, the companions were known to be careful in narrating what the Prophet did say. This was so much the case that when ‘Umar heard that Abu Huraira was narrating too much he ordered a lashing as a way of punishing him.¹⁶² If this were true, then it could be taken to mean that the companions were cautious, so that people would not mix what the Prophet did and said with what the Qur’ān dictates, and to show that the Qur’ān takes supremacy. In support of this view, *ḥadīth* collection started near the first civil war, indicating that although there was an emphasis on writing the Qur’ān the sayings of the Prophet were seen as secondary. The move to methodically collect *ḥadīth* came after the spread of many obscure sayings whose authenticity needed to be verified. Moreover, since post Mu‘āwiya, what the Prophet said and did was to some extent in contradiction to the living memory of some of the prominent *ṣaḥāba*.¹⁶³ This could explain why later on *ḥadīth* was collected and particular attention was given to checking authenticity after Mālik.¹⁶⁴

These examples are not arbitrary; they suggest that although the Qur’ānic *weltanschauung* has no direct jurisprudential framework, it developed to protect

¹⁶¹ See Chapter Three p. 69.

¹⁶² See Y Muhammad, *Mushkilat al-ḥadīth*, Mu‘assasat al-Intishār al-‘Arabī, Beirut, 2007.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

against misuse. This chapter maintains that this is one explanation for the disparities between the Qur'ānic view of *sharī'a*, *ḥukm*, *ḥudūd* and what later developed.

The development of jurisprudence became part of the fabric of Islam to the extent that anything different would not even be considered. What aided this framework was the *tajzi'ī* mind-set of the majority of jurists that failed to see the entirety of the Qur'ānic worldview and in looking at the concept of *ḥukm* attempted to connect the dots, as has this chapter aimed to demonstrate. That is, by examining scripture from a verse by verse approach, many have failed to look at and read the Qur'ānic themes and concepts as a whole, which are connected to the general worldview. For example, many have taken (at a jurisprudential level) the implementation of the *ḥudūd* law as the ultimate point of an “Islamic state” and therefore it has become the ultimate aim of both the Muslim believer and the Muslim country. As we have suggested in this chapter, *ḥudūd* had little to do with public limits and more to do with private commitment to God.

Furthermore, the nature of this debate is at an epistemological level and not an ontological one. This means the debate is not whether or not God actually sent these laws or whether or not the Qur'ān is the word of God, but concerns how to understand these verses and their meanings and conditions. As mentioned in the methodology section, an enquiry that deals with understanding the Qur'ān – that is epistemic - is inevitably constructive and hence remains on the human level. This has been essential when looking at the Qur'ān as a whole and the verses on *ḥukm* in particular. Once the verses are read by human beings then their divinity is at the human level and not at God's level. It is a mistake to think that the reader's understanding is actually that of God.¹⁶⁵

In addition, this chapter has also addressed two important questions: the first is whether establishing a state is a necessary component of achieving God's *ḥukm*. Contrary to many Islamists, *sharī'a* could be seen as being in apposition to power; as its answer, this chapter argued that God's *ḥukm* transcends human ability and that within human capacity the *ḥukm* is a general concept that refers to judging fairly and

¹⁶⁵ See the Chapter on Methodology p. 29. See also Y Muhammad, *Manṭiq fahm al-naṣṣ: dirāsah manṭiqīyah tu'nā bi baḥth ālīyāt fahm al-naṣṣ al-dīnī wa-qibalīyātih*, al-Dār al-Bayḍā', Morocco, 2010.

justly. The second question is whether the role of the state is to enforce prescribed commands. It has been shown that the prescribed commands have two components to them - one is moral principle which is eternal and universal and unchanging, and the other, temporal, contextual and changing with the changes of context.

The silence of the Qur'ān and the absence in it of any intended particular political structure is understandable when applying the moral principles of the Qur'ān. This is not to say the Qur'ān is *apolitical* in its outlook, but it is to highlight that mainstream discourse does not reflect the Qur'ānic framework. The absence of a direct prescription of the structure of government, a particular way that could be *Islamic* is significant. At the same time, Qur'ānic injunctions repeatedly addresses concepts of social justice, social wellbeing, accountability, rights of others and responsibility.

This then begs the question: what is the Qur'ānic worldview? The next chapter will attempt to note possible Qur'ānic frameworks of the individual and society and examine the foundational premises these concepts rely on. Particular focus is made on semantics of the individual and the collective.

CHAPTER 6: THOUGHTS ON QUR'ĀNIC WELTANSCHAUUNG OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapters using both semantic and thematic methodologies have argued that the existing “Islamic political theory” as formulated by some Islamists has little evidence in the Qur’ān. The misconception made by thinkers such as Ḥasan al-Bannā and Mawdūdī is that they postulated their understanding of the Qur’ān by implementing a structure that is thought to be “Islamic” (that is binding, eternal and ahistorical). They appeared to have made two mistakes by this formulation. Firstly, they ignored the agent (the individual), which the Qur’ān speaks of continuously in terms of the foundation of moral/ethical being. By ignoring the individual, they have arguably adopted a structuralist approach. This is to say that their argument suggests that the structure itself is what determines whether something is ‘Islamic’ or not. As we discussed earlier, the Qur’ān has no such proposition. Perhaps this is where the Qur’ānic concept of ‘the political lies’, which ironically exists outside any structure or institution. Considering the individual as the key building block of any society or institution, this has led to the second misconception, in which one mistakenly thinks that a top-down approach (that is implementing a structure) would bring about good governance.

Having said that, there are parts of the Qur’ān that do speak of how one’s life *ought* to be, connecting the individual to the wider community and by extension to any governing body. The themes of the Qur’ān do include concepts such as justice, equality, rights and fairness as important components of a functional or what can be termed as *ṣāliḥ* individual and community.¹ Thus, one is justified in arguing that one cannot separate the moral/ethical behaviour of the individual from public life.

¹ From the root word *ṣ-l-ḥ* it comes to mean righteous, pious, like in 18:82. It also comes to mean good, uncorrupt proper state. The form *ṣāliḥ* occurs 47 times. For further details see Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur’anic Usage*, pp. 531-2.

It is no easy task to construct a possible Qur'ānic worldview by examining how the revelation envisions the way human being possibly *ought* to live within a single chapter. The challenge to construct a new set of Qur'ānic narratives thus cannot be overestimated. This is particularly the case given that each concept could be related to other concepts and therefore the possibility of expanding the scope of research beyond the bounds of what is viable remains an ever-present possibility.²

The difficulty ahead of us however should not discourage us from the enquiry, as it is nevertheless important to see the interconnectedness of other concepts of the individual as well as development of a fuller understanding of this notion from the Qur'ān alone. Nonetheless, the effort may allow one to more closely apprehend to the Qur'ān's outlook on the "ideal community". The aim of this chapter is to indicate possible narratives for future research.

This chapter is divided into three parts; the first part is a survey of verses that semantically connect to the concept of the individual and its related semantic fields. The second part examines in detail the concept of *taqwā* (God-awareness) as the notion of self-governance in the Qur'ān. The reason for this is that thematically *taqwā* is often associated with the individual's mission to self-govern and is linked with the concept of *nafs* (self). It is the contention of this author that the Qur'ān aims to build a holistic individual who will be able to act wisely in public sphere, and hence the reason for the absence of any overtly prescribed structure. The third part of this chapter highlights some of the Qur'ānic notions of community and its possible dialectical and paradoxical relations with the individual.

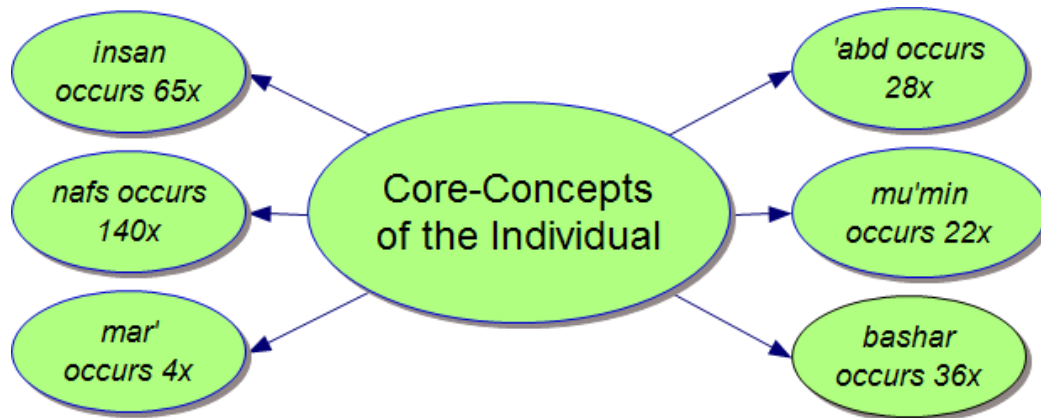
6.2 THE SEMANTIC FIELDS OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE QUR'ĀN

The Qur'ān at times uses the word *nafs* (self), at other times *insān* (human being), *mar'* (person) and *bashar* (human being) in addressing the individual. There are also other concepts that are more specific referring to the individual such as *mu'min*

² An idea that Izutsu highlights, see Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an*, Malaysia, Islamic Book Trust, 2008.

(believer) and *'abd* (servant) which builds into the semantic-field of the individual as shown in Diagram 13.

Diagram 13: The Semantic field of the Individual

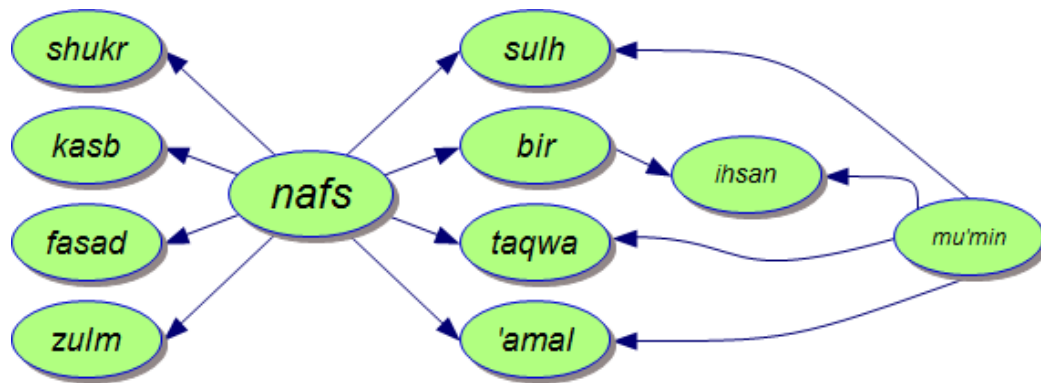


There are also the plural (and general) forms such as *nufūs*, *mu'minūn* (believers) and *'ibād* (servants/slaves) addressing the people (and groups). Other concepts include *banū ādam* (people of Adam), *nās* (people), *umam* (communities), *qawm* (people), *jam'* (collectives), *ḥizb* (group), *sha'b* (nation), *fi'a* (group), *fawj* (people/crowd) and *qabā'il* (tribes).

The semantic field of the individual also overlaps greatly with previous semantic fields which have been analysed in different context including its positive and negative concepts. On the positive side, *shukr* (3:145; 31:12), *ṣulḥ* (6:54), *'amal*, *bir* (2:44), *iḥsān* and *taqwā* (2:48; 2:123) are mentioned with *nafs*, *mu'min* and *'abd*. The concepts on the negative side are *fasād* and *ẓulm* (such as 3:117; 3:135; 4:64; 4:110; 10:44; 10:100)³. As Diagram 14 illustrates:

³ See for example Chapter Four and Five.

Diagram 14: The Semantic and the Thematic Field of *Nafs*



The usefulness of Diagram 13 is that it shows the Qur'ānic semantic usage of related words in addressing mankind. Diagram 14 shows the connectivity of the core-concepts of *nafs* with other key-concepts that would eventually formulate the Qur'ānic *Weltanschauung* and not just its linguistic meanings.

Although it is important to look at each semantic field it is also important to bear in mind that each concept by itself may be a core concept which overlaps and interconnects to other concepts of the Qur'ān in a web of complex connections that is outside the scope of this research. For this reason, these semantic connections are looked at in understanding the meanings of *nafs* and *insān*.⁴

6.2.1 The Morphology of *Nafs*

Often the concept of *nafs* is translated into English as 'soul', 'self', or 'person', such as when the *nafs* is described as *muṭma'ina* (translated as the 'satisfied soul' or the 'tranquil self' in Yusuf Ali and Pickthal) or as *al-nafs al-lawwāma* (translated as the 'self-reproachful soul' or 'blaming self').⁵ However, *nafs* could also come to mean 'the psyche', 'discerning faculty', 'person' and/or 'essence'.⁶ According to Iṣfahānī

⁴ Although each concept is also connected to other semantic fields, if time would have allowed, analysing these concepts would eventually show the close interconnected concepts that comprise the completely the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*.

⁵ Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'ān*, p17.

⁶ *Nafs* comes as a noun 140 times, plural *nufūs* twice and plural of paucity *anfūs* 153 times in the Qur'ān.

nafs denotes 'breath', 'to breath' and 'to breakout'.⁷ Another meaning is 'to yearn for', 'to vie', 'to compete'; and 'striving'.⁸ *Nafs* also comes to mean 'to envy', 'to covet', 'to be sparing' and 'to be niggardly'.⁹ The trilateral root *n-f-s* occurs 298 times in six forms in the Qur'ān.¹⁰

According to Smith, the majority of Muslim scholars have made no real distinction between *nafs* and *rūḥ* (spirit).¹¹ In fact, early on in Muslim tradition the two terms were used interchangeably.¹² However, a close examination of the Qur'ānic definition shows that those two concepts may actually be different. In support, verse 17:85 describes *rūḥ* as ambiguous entity about which one knows very little. Then, from the Qur'ān we know little about the nature of *rūḥ* (other than its direct semantic meaning of spirit) but the description of *nafs* is ample. There is an interesting semantic connection, however between the two words in that both terms are either derived from or connected to the meanings of air, breathing and life. The verb *nafasa* means 'to breath' and its noun *nafas* denotes 'breath'.¹³ This might be the reason why these two concepts in post-Qur'ānic literature have been used interchangeably.¹⁴ As mentioned earlier the Qur'ān provides descriptions of *nafs's* psychological state of mind and its nature whereas *rūḥ* is given a more transcendent reality of the unknown in the realm of the metaphysics.

The meaning of *nafs* according to Hanna Kassis also encompasses the meaning of 'heart', 'mind', 'own', 'each other' and 'one another' (when used in Plural).¹⁵ The self therefore is made out of several components that put together gives us a fuller appreciation of the meaning of *nafs* (the individual) in the Qur'ān.

⁷ In this meaning it occurs once in the Qur'ān as a verb form *tanaffasa*. See Al-Iṣfahānī, Abū Al-Qāsm *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, *nafs*, Dār al-Qalam, Damascus.

⁸ This meaning occurs only once in a plural form as *mutanāfisūn*.

⁹ This meaning occurs once in the imperfect form of the verb *yatanāfas*.

¹⁰ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 954.

¹¹ Smith, J. 'The Understanding of *Nafs* and *Ruh* in Contemporary Muslim Considerations of the Nature of Sleep and Death', *The Muslim World*, vol. 69, issue 3, July 1979, p. 152.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ E Homerin, 'Soul', in McAuliffe, J (ed.) *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 5, 2006, p. 81.

¹⁴ E E Calverley, 'Doctrine of The Soul (*Nafs* and *Ruh*) in Islam', *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol.III, pp. 827-30.

¹⁵ H E Kassis, *A Concordance of the Qur'an*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, p. 824.

The Qur'ān characterises the *nafs* to have several stages or mindsets: that which commands towards evil act (as in verse 12:53 *nafs al-amārah bil sū'*), that which is in constant turmoil (75:2 *nafs al-lawwāma* also translated as 'the blaming self'); 'the tranquil self' (89:27 *nafs al-muṭma'ina*), and that self that transcends above all of the above in becoming the content self (89:28 *nafs al-rāḍiyah*)

The fact that one of the derivative meanings of *nafs* in Arabic is to 'breath' relates to air indicating the lightness of *nafs* and it could indicate *nafs's* changing in its psychological state.¹⁶ The challenge the Qur'ān presents to the *nafs* is to fight its own vices and encourage its own virtues, as in verses 91:7-10

By the Soul, and the proportion and order given to it. And its enlightenment as to its wrong and its right. Truly he succeeds that purifies it. And he fails that corrupts it.¹⁷

Therefore, the Qur'ān connects the self (the person/individual) with both the notions of work ('*amal*) and the non-linguistic field of choice (*khiyār*). The *nafs* is also often associated with *ẓulm*, in fact one could argue it is paralleled with *ẓulm al-nafs* (self-inflicted injustice).

What follows in understanding the *nafs* and its potential free choice is the capacity to be the source of justice, corruption and tyranny. It is these concepts that the Qur'ān warns against. The following section discusses the connection between *nafs* and *ẓulm*.

6.2.1.1 The Connection between *Nafs* and *Ẓulm*

The Qur'ān takes the 'self-adequacy of the commercial individualism' and arrogance as that which is for the human to avoid.¹⁸ This self-adequacy, arrogance and dominance are centred on the repeated concept of *ẓulm al-nafs* (self-oppression). The notion of *ẓulm al-nafs* is found in such passages as 2:57, 3:117, 7:160, 177, 9:70, 10:44, 16:33, 16:116, 20:40, 30:9, 3:135, 4:64, 11:113, 14:45 and 34:19. As discussed in the previous chapters, *ẓulm* denotes the imbalance of the equilibrium of 'putting everything in its appropriate place' or the imbalance against oneself. This means that

¹⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Mufradāt alfāz al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, *nafs*,

¹⁷ Yousuf Ali's translation 91:7-10.

¹⁸ Askari, *Society and State in Islam: an Introduction*, p. 156.

the appropriate balance or state of equilibrium is to be good and to do good in order to achieve a state of non-*ẓulm*.¹⁹ This state of non-*ẓulm* therefore is not achievable with any kind of imposed structure or institution, (or an 'Islamic state' for that matter) but is rather a state of mind, chosen by the individual.

According to Cragg, *ẓulm* is 'to wrong' in the active sense. Therefore, cases of 'injustice, extortion, calumny, tyranny, false witness, bad faith' are all cases of *ẓulm*.²⁰ To deny what is due according to the Qur'ān as we have discussed earlier is something one can do to oneself, which is often described as *ẓulm al-nafs* and *ẓulm* against God. Therefore, it is often mentioned that it was not God that made *ẓulm* but effectively it was mankind.²¹ The *amāna* verse discussed in Chapter Three effectively reiterates that mankind is '*ẓalūman jahūlā*'.

Most translations of the Qur'ān render *ẓulm* as 'wrong-doing',²² and although it has element of that, its fullest meanings comes in relation to the concept of *nafs* (with it the other connective concepts) and according to Izutsu also *jahl* (loosely translates as ignorance).²³ *Jāhiliyah* is an attitude of typical person that would be:

hot-blooded impetuous man, who tends to lose his self-control on the slightest provocation...act recklessly, driven by an uncontrollable blind passion, without reflecting on the disastrous consequence this behaviour might lead to.²⁴

The process of placing *ẓulm* on the self is through self-indulgence, pride, ego, greed and potential for self-destruction. This makes the individual unstable. The Qur'ān describes this in verses 70:19-22

Truly man was created, very impatient. Fretful when evil touches him. And niggardly when good reaches him. Not so those devoted to Prayer.

There is also a constant link between the *nafs* that is doing *ẓulm* and its capacity to accumulate wealth and greed.²⁵

¹⁹ Rahman, *Major themes in the Quran*, p. 25.

²⁰ K Cragg, *Am I not your Lord? Human meaning in Divine Question*, Melisende, London, 2002, p. 51.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Pickthal, Yousif Ali and Abdul Daryabadi.

²³ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 229.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 223. Of course, Izutsu's definition of *jahili* being personal quality and not only a historical age (see p. 219) contradicts his earlier over-emphasis on the *jahili* period in his analysis.

²⁵ For further details see the work of C Turner, 'Wealth as an immortality symbol in the Qur'an: a reconsideration of the mal amwal verses', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2006, pp. 58-83.

This injustice affects 'nations, races, systems, structures, ideologies and other establishments social and political'.²⁶ Therefore, the individual is responsible for the evil of its surrounding, but the only way to change the state or reinforce it is through changing oneself, as in verse 13:11:

Verily never will Allah change the condition of a people until they change it themselves (with their own souls)

It is the view of this author that the frequent mention of *ẓulm* could be significant, not only as an antithesis to 'adl, but also with a meaning that is much more comprehensive. Amina Wadud also shares this view when she argues that the reoccurrence of *ẓulm* much more than 'adl must have some indication or meaning.²⁷ In agreement with this study's proposition, Wadud also suggests that as oppression is human-made, it necessarily then requires humans to alleviate it.²⁸

Bringing together the understanding of the self with *ẓulm* is not a straightforward argument. It has a complex structure, a paradox, a struggle within the inner core of human nature, and to counter *ẓulm al-nafs* is not a simple personal acquittal in isolation, nor is it a mere focus of the self to change what is around oneself (commanding the good). It is a balance between taking responsibility for one's actions (and struggling in changing or diverting one's desires) and between building the character of the self-vigilant, *taqwā*-self and governing-self in doing what is right and righteous within one's capacity.²⁹ This is all accomplished with proactive involvement in 'amal al-ṣāliḥ³⁰ without claiming the 'fruits' of righteousness in society (as they derive from God) and understanding that doom is inevitably personal as in verse 45:15.³¹

This apparent paradox among the individual's responsibility (the dynamic structure of the *nafs* and its struggles), one's societal responsibility (the combination of having faith and actively engaging in good actions) and accepting that personal doom rather

²⁶Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, p. 100.

²⁷ A Wadud, 'Towards a Qur'anic Hermeneutics of Social Justice: Race, Class and Gender', *The Journal of Law and Religion*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1996, p. 44.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 46.

²⁹ See the section on *taqwā* p. 242.

³⁰ *Ṣāliḥ* could mean righteousness it can also come to mean making peace, retribution and bring right.

See p. 237 for further details.

³¹ Also see Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, p. 101.

than society itself could be understood by the verse 13:11 'God does not change the state of people until they change themselves'.

The complexity of human nature, the interaction of the individual in society and the societal influence on the individual are all presented in the Qur'ān as the constant struggle in building, reforming and changing oneself. This reform ultimately aims to avoid corruption (*fasād*).

6.2.1.2 The Connection between *Nafs* and *Fasād*

The trilateral root of *f-s-d* denotes 'to corrupt', 'to spoil', 'to decay', 'to fall into disorder', 'to be perverted', 'to make trouble' and 'to be wicked'.³² Five different forms occur from the root word *f-s-d* and it is mentioned 50 times in the Qur'ān.³³ These forms include *fasada*, 'to become corrupt', 'to fall into disorder'; *afsada* 'to act corruptly', 'to play havoc' and 'to cause damage'. *Fasād* may be defined as 'mischief', 'destruction', 'causing corruption'; and *mufsid* refers to the person that causes or spreads 'mischief', 'disruption' and 'destruction'.³⁴ From the meanings above, the verses that include *f-s-d* refer to those people who spread corruption and mischief and in one description who will not be the heirs of the earth.

Thus, one of the *ẓulm al-nafs* is to either become corrupt or spread corruption, which the Qur'ān warns against. Verses like 2:205; 5:32, 33 and 64; 8:73; 11:116 (also mentions *ẓulm*); 28:77; 28:83 (mentioned *taqwā* as the winners) significantly highlighting the *nafs* to restrain from corruption. Verse 30:41 could be said to summarise the Qur'ānic worldview about the cause of corruption and mischief:

Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return.

Fasad is also linked to exorbitant behaviour that in and of itself is a form of corruption. These verses show the outward manifestation of corruption that the

³² Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 709-710.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

Qur'ān warns against and aims to promote radical change by looking inwardly as discussed earlier.³⁵

In summary, the concept of *nafs* and its semantic field is associated with *ẓulm* and *fasād*. The Qur'ān also refers to concepts such as *insān*, *bashr* and *mar'* to refer to the individual. The following section provides a summary of meaning(s) of these concepts.

6.2.2 The Qur'ānic Usage of *Insān*, *Bashar* and *Mar'*

Insān comes from the root word '-n-s that occurs 97 times in eight different forms.³⁶ The root word denotes 'to tame', 'affable', 'friendly', 'intimate friend', 'to be sociable', 'to detect' and 'to forget'.³⁷ The eight forms are: '*ānas* (mentioned five times meaning 'to perceive', 'to sight from a distance' as in 28:29; 'to conceive' and 'to detect'). *Tasta'nis* (mentioned once – with the meaning of 'draw attention to one's presence'), '*ins* (mentioned 18 times meaning 'human kind' with the plural noun '*unās* - meaning 'a group of people' and its mentioned five times), *insān* denotes 'humankind' and 'human being', occurring 65 times. The form '*insī* comes to mean 'a member of human race' and *musta'nis* denotes 'one that is seeking and desiring conversation'.³⁸

Insān as a concept has the general focus of addressing humanity (as in verse 29:8 and 31:14) and is often described in the Qur'ān as being unjust and ignorant (as in verse 33:72 *ẓalūman jahūlā*), unthankful, ungrateful, impatient, inflected in troubles, in anxiety and in constant restlessness as in verses 36:77; 41:49 and 51; 42:48; 43:15; 70:19-21; 76:3; 89:15-20; 90:4 and 100:6. Furthermore, according to Cragg, the description of *kabad* (toil) refers to a person's interior heart, his capacity for evil and his love of power and wealth.³⁹ It also carries on in verse 96:6-7, which describes the

³⁵ The description is *arḍ* –earth- there is constant connection to *arḍ* see Chapter Four.

³⁶ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage, p. 57.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid. pp. 57-8.

³⁹ Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1973, p. 96.

nature of the human being. In all these verses it shows *insān* to be of a constant rebellious nature with verse 95:4-6 explaining why:

Surely We created man of the best stature (4) Then we reduced him to the lowest of the low, (5) Save those who believe and do good works, and theirs is a reward unfailling. (6)

The word *insān* is interestingly tied with other derivatives which also give secondary meaning to this concept. The root word '-n-s also comes to mean *uns* ('sympathy' 'companionship'; 'familiarity') and *nisyān* denotes 'forgetfulness'. Often the Qur'ān describes the human as one who forgets both his responsibility and his purpose and indulges in vices such as in verse 39:8 and 49. The combination of those meanings imbues the concept of *insān* with the sense of possessing the social capacity to seek companionship as well as to be forgetful.

6.2.2.1 The Morphology of *Bashar*

Another concept in the Qur'ān that refers to the human being and mankind in general is *bashar*. *Bashar* occurs 36 times in the Qur'ān from the root word *b-sh-r*.⁴⁰ What is interesting is that from the root word the meaning also includes 'good news', 'to give good/glad tidings' and 'to be happy/joyful for receiving good news' (as in verses 3:171; 9:111; 10:2; 15:67; 39:17). Often the connection of *bashar* is in connection with the Prophets themselves as being humans and messengers. This includes the following verses: 2:213; 3:79; 4:165; 6:48; 11:27; 14:10-11; 17:93-4, 105; 18:56, 110; 21:3; and 23:24. It is interesting that the word *insān* is not used in all the verses that contextually speak of Prophets addressing their people but rather the word *bashar* is used.

Furthermore, what is interesting in the story of the creation of Adam, the word *bashar* is also used rather than *insān* (in verse 15:28 and 33), yet in the *amāna* verse, *insān* is mentioned. In addition, this concept is also used when the Virgin Mary speaks of her encounter with the angel in the form of a human (19:17-20). This goes hand in hand with the meaning of good tidings as opposed to the connected meaning of

⁴⁰ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage, pp. 93-4.

forgetfulness in the concept of *insān*. Therefore, one may be able to conclude that the description of *insān* is different from the description of *bashar*. In support, in verse 17:9 the Qur'ān describes itself as giving good news to the believers.

In the description of the individual the concept of *mar'* and a more specific description of believers and worshipers are also used in the Qur'ān. The following section elaborates on these concepts briefly.

6.2.2.2 The Morphology of *Mar'*

The Qur'ān also uses the word *mar'* and *imra'* to mean 'a human', 'a person', 'a man', or 'a woman', from the root word *m-r-'*. These two forms are found in 11 verses.⁴¹ Examples include verses 2:102; 8:24; 78:40; 80:34; 70:38; 74:52 and 80:37.

The use of *mar'* seems to be in the neutral sense of the terms 'person', 'human', 'man' or 'woman'. Whereas both *nafs* and *insān* describe the nature of the self in different ways (both its vices and its virtues), *mar'* seems to be a neutral description of a person or a human with a connection to the capacity of *kasb* (as in verses 24:11 and 52:21).

In summary then, the concept of *insān*, *bashr*, and *mar'* are also other descriptions of the individual in the Qur'ān which indicate a general Qur'ānic worldview, in which the human being, not an external structure, is central. There are also more specific concepts used in the Qur'ān to refer to individuals such as 'o believers' and 'o worshipers'. The section below examines the two concepts *mu'min* and *'abd* in connection to the Qur'ānic worldview of the individual.

6.2.3 Other Qur'ānic References to the Individual

The Qur'ān uses the word *'abd*, which derives from the root word *'-b-d* which denotes 'slave,' 'servant', 'obedience', 'submission', 'to worship', 'to enslave', 'to

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 874.

tan camel hide' and 'to tar a boat', of which 11 forms occur 275 times.⁴² 'Abada (meaning 'to worship' occurs 121 times), 'abd (singular noun meaning 'worshiper' or 'servant' in relation to God, a plural form 'ibād occurs 97 times), 'ābid ('one who worships', occurs 97 times), 'ābidūn (plural form) occurs 10 times and the feminine plural form is 'ābidāt (occurs once).⁴³

Often the Qur'ān speaks of lowering one's ego as being a characteristic of those who truly worship God- 'abd, as in verses 2:90 and 186 (in a plural form); 18:1 and 65; 19:2 and 30; 34:9; 38:41; 39:36, 43:59; 50:8; 53:10; 54:9; 57:9; 72:19.

What concerns us here is the Qur'ānic usage of 'abd and mu'min as a description of an individual who has chosen to have a relationship with God. The Qur'ān therefore is not using 'abd to refer to a 'slave' but rather as a worshipper as the person freely chooses to worship whereas a slave has been forced to serve against her/his will.

Furthermore, one of the meanings of 'ibād refers to those who lovingly worship with self-surrender to the Will of God as well as to trust God fully.⁴⁴ The concept of trust again semantically links to the meaning of mu'min – the one who is trustworthy and trusting in God.

6.2.3.1 The Morphology of Mu'min

The trilateral root '-m-n denotes 'to be safe,' 'to be secure'; 'guard', 'keeper'; 'trust', 'faith' and 'believe'. From this root word, 19 forms occur 858 times.⁴⁵ Amina occurs 20 times with the meaning of 'to feel safe,' as in verse 2:283; 'āmana occurs 537 with the meaning of 'faith' and 'to make someone safe' as in verse 106:4.⁴⁶ 'I'tumina occurs once with the meaning 'to be entrusted', as in 2:283; 'āmin occurs 6 times with the meaning of 'safe' or 'secure' as in 16:112; 'āminah is mentioned once as a feminine noun and 'amānāt occurs as a plural form four times with the meaning of

⁴² Ibid. pp. 594-595.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 217.

⁴⁵ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, p. 50.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 51.

'trust' as in verse 33:72; '*āminūn*' is mentioned 10 times; '*amānah*' is mentioned twice; '*amn*' is mentioned five times denoting 'safety' or 'security' as in verse 24:55.

'*Amanah*' occurs twice with the meaning of 'inner calm', 'tranquillity', 'relaxation' and 'peace' as in verse 3:154; '*amīn*' occurs 14 times with the meaning of 'honest' and 'trustworthy' as in verse 26:193; '*imān*' is mentioned 45 times with the meaning of 'faith'; '*ma'man*' is mentioned once as 'a place of safety' and 'a place of security' as in verse 9:6. '*Ma'mūn*' is also mentioned once with the meaning of 'something completely safe' as in verse 70:28; '*mu'min*' occurs 22 times with the meaning of 'the one who believes' as in verse 26:3; '*mu'minayn*' in a dual form occurs once; '*mu'minatun*' is mentioned six times in feminine form and '*mu'minūn*' occurs 179 times in the plural form; '*mu'minān*' also comes in dual form and occurs 22 times.

Although this concept is mentioned in connection with many overlapping fields, it would not be an exaggeration that the most associated parallel concept is with '*amal al-ṣāliḥ*'. This is much so, that the idea of '*imān*' in the Qur'ān has its own Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* outside its semantic meaning.

6.2.3.1.1 The association of *mu'min* with '*amal al-ṣāliḥ*'

'*Amal*' is emphasised with '*mu'min*' over and over again in the Qur'ān. For example the parallelism include the following verses 2:25, 28, 277; 3:57; 4:57, 122, 173; 5:9, 93; 7:42, 10:4, 9; 11:23; 13:29; 14:23, 18:30, 88,107; 19:60, 96; 20:82; 22:14,23,50,56; 25:70; 26:227, 28:67; 28:80; 29:7, 9, 58; 30:15, 45, 31:8, 32:19; 34:4, 37; 35:7; 38:28; 38:24; 40:58; 41:8; 42:22, 23,26; 45:21, 30; 47:2, 12; 48:29; 65:11; 84:25, 85:11; 95:6; 98:7; and 103:3. One possible reason for this might be the nature of belief that motivates action to do good.

In support, Kaneko asserts that the idea of being a believer is that a person who in his outward action aims to do good. Kaneko further suggests:

one who gives up worldliness as a man engaging in holy orders, has already never been a complete believer because he avoids his social responsibilities, even if his

spiritual intention has been the attainment of a higher level.⁴⁷

This balance lies between doing good and being motivated by responsibility as in verse 45:15. This social responsibility, however, is not institutionalised in the Qur'ān.

Conceivably, the realm of the political remains to be within the sphere of the *'amal al-ṣāliḥ*; that is to say, the individual is always aiming for the greater good in society and that his belief in God is not of apathy but of *'amal*. In this sense, this study is arguing that the Qur'ān is not apolitical; it is in fact political because of its principles of seeking and working towards a greater good in one's actions and acknowledging one's responsibilities.

This apparent viewpoint goes hand in hand with the concept of *amr bil ma'rūf wa nahī 'an al-munkar*, that is, to encourage the good and discourage the wrong. What is interesting, *ma'rūf* semantically means 'what is common', 'to know', 'recognised norms', 'goodness' or 'virtues' from the root word *'-r-f*.⁴⁸ In this case it denotes what is commonly good in society. This could mean that an action which aims to do good, is reinforcing the common good and hence fulfilling this *amr bil ma'rūf*.⁴⁹

As seen in Chapter Three there is a wide perception amongst scholars of Islam that the status of the human being is that of a vicegerent on earth. This view is accepted amongst both Shī'ite scholars such as Ṣadr⁵⁰ and Sunnī scholars such as Mohammed 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā.⁵¹ In fact, this idea could go as far as Ibn 'Arabī with his notion of *insān al-kāmil*.⁵² This is based on three points in verses 2:30-31, as discussed in Chapter Three: (1) God describing Adam as *khalīfa*, (2) Adam being able to know the names of all things while the angels were unable to know and (3) the angels bowing down to Adam.

⁴⁷ N Kaneko, *The Network of Islamicity: Ideals, Norms and Human Community in Muslim Society*, Institute of Middle East Studies, Japan, 1990, p. 7.

⁴⁸ See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 613-14

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ See his work M B Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya: Al-tafsīr al-Mawḍū'ī wa al-Tafsīr al-tajzī'ī fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, Dār al-Ta'āruf lil-Maṭbu'āt, 1980.

⁵¹ See Chapter Three p. 69.

⁵² See Ibn 'Arabī, *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya (The Meccan Revelations)*, trans. M Chodkiewicz (et al), Pir Press, New York, 2002.

As Cragg points out '[t]his human competence in identifying, naming, and so managing phenomena is something the angels have to confess they cannot match or attain'.⁵³ Further to this, Cragg argues that Divine lordship is staked in the human role. As discussed earlier this verse is addressing an aspect of Adamic nature; there seems to be a silence on the other aspect of the same nature of spreading corruption and shedding blood. This as we have seen might not be a full reading of the Qur'ān's injunctions of human being *per se* but of a post-Qur'ānic philosophy of the human being. Yet, we may, nevertheless, agree with Cragg's conclusion that '[m]an has no sovereignty *over* the world, except in accountability *under* God'.⁵⁴ It is this point that this chapter reiterates.

The Qur'ānic approach to human nature arguably outlines the duality of the human being. With this duality, many have done one of two things. They have either taken the meaning of Adamic *khilāfa* and made that into a holistic paradigm on how they would read both human nature and the Muslim political entity, or they have seen a more gloomy perception of human nature in the Qur'ān, which again is arguably half of the story.

This brief understanding of the meaning of *nafs* would appear to indicate the complexity and changing of the "self". It also indicates the centrality of the individual in the Qur'ān. Further to this, what is central to the concept of the individual is the non-semantic field of choice, which in turn is thematically connected to action. The following section elaborates on the centrality of these two concepts.

6.3 THE QUR'ĀNIC NOTION OF FREE CHOICE (*KHIYĀR*) AND WORK (*'AMAL*)

There is a constant emphasis made in the Qur'ān between *nafs*, *'amal* and its relationship with God, as in verse 3:30, which emphasises the relationship between God and individual human beings as well as the consequences of human deeds

⁵³ Cragg, *The Privilege of Man*, p. 28.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* p. 40.

(*'amal*).⁵⁵ There is also the constant semantic association between *imān* and *'amal al-ṣāliḥ* as mentioned in the previous section.⁵⁶ It is also worth noting that those verses that mention the self are also saying something about free choice. What runs throughout the Qur'ān is precisely this theme of choice which is vital in determining the consequences for the individual. That is to say that there is a choice to restrain from those impulses that would spread corruption and a choice to encourage virtue. It is this thesis' contention that freedom of choice is one of the major non-semantic fields of the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*, alongside *tawḥīd* and judgement day. In fact, it is necessarily linked to both *tawḥīd* and eschatology. The notion of choice as one of the major non-semantic fields is not only based on the choice of the human but also upon the passages alluding to God's own assertions that He will not do *ẓulm* to any soul.⁵⁷

The Qur'ān appears to possess a radical approach in tackling the roots of the ills found among both individuals and by extension society. It seems to address root causes, rendering the individual political, not in the conventional sense but in the sense of approaching any change from its root cause. In this case, the root cause of conflicts, wars, and corruption lies in the choices man has made himself by neglecting his ethical responsibility or at worst neglecting himself entirely (that is, neglecting his purpose to do good).⁵⁸ For the person's conscious decision to refrain from doing wrong to oneself and to others and the Qur'ān's encouragement to do good indicate that this individual is also aware of the injustices around him/herself. This consciousness and constant awareness of self is the first step towards possessing an awareness of others. It follows that this state of awareness also leads to action because it would appear that the ethical and the political are inseparable. However, the mechanism by which to manifest this awareness is not specified in the Qur'ān. Conceivably the sphere of the political lies not in the sphere of a structure but outside

⁵⁵ The following verses are few examples, in both linguistic associations and thematic: 2:272; 2:286; 3:30, 135; 4:110,111; 6:164.

⁵⁶ In the phrase of *al-ladhīna 'āmanū wa 'amalū al-ṣāliḥāt* (like in 2:25, 28, 277; 3:57; 4:57, 122, 173; 5:9, 93;7:42, 10:4, 9; 11:23; 13:29; 14:23, 18:30, 88,107; 19:60, 96; 20:82; 22:14,23,50,56; 25:70; 26:227, 28:67; 28:80; 29:7, 9, 58; 30:15, 45, 31:8, 32:19; 34:4, 37; 35:7; 38:28; 38:24; 40:58; 41:8; 42:22, 23, 26; 45:21, 30; 47:2, 12; 48:29; 65:11; 84:25, 85:11; 95:6; 98:7; 103:3).

⁵⁷ This point was discussed earlier in p. 239.

⁵⁸ For example, consider these verses: 2:25, 28, 277; 3:57; 4:57, 122, 173; 5:9, 93;7:42, 10:4, 9; 11:23; 13:29; 14:23, 18:30, 88,107; 19:60, 96; 20:82; 22:14,23,50,56; 25:70; 26:227, 28:67; 28:80; 29:7, 9, 58; 30:15, 45, 31:8, 32:19; 34:4, 37; 35:7; 38:28; 38:24; 40:58; 41:8; 42:22, 23, 26; 45:21, 30; 47:2, 12; 48:29; 65:11; 84:25, 85:11; 95:6; 98:7; 103:3.

of it, only as a consequence of individuals making choices can one speak of a 'political' action.

The hierarchy of concepts that this study has put forward indicates that the absence of any structure and systems in the Qur'ān is not arbitrary. The silence could indicate that the core issue is not a political structure but rather the actions of humans themselves.

In support, Fazlur Rahman argues that the fact that God is mentioned more than 1,000 times in relation to human beings shows a particular tension. The tension exists within human nature between the human's innate unruliness, restlessness, un-thankfulness and greed, on one hand, and his capacity of *aḥsanī taqwīm* (the best form) in verses 17:70 and 91:8 on the other hand. It is precisely the human being that Rahman holds to be the central point of revelation that is 'man, and his behaviour, not God'.⁵⁹

When discussing the notion of free choice it is important to bear in mind that our enquiry is only looking at the Qur'ān and not the post-Qur'ānic debate that took place between the Mu'tazilites and the Ash'arites which reflects a theo-philosophical debate that was also been motivated by political events.⁶⁰ As argued earlier this theme is based on the notion of accountability. That is to say, it would not be possible to be judged without having the choice to obey or to turn away. For example, the following verses indicate the consequences of human actions 2:256; 33:72; 53:39-42; 75:13-15; 75:36; 76:3; 76:29; 79:35; 84:6-12; and 95:4-6.

Maḥmūd Moḥammed Ṭāhā explains further that this 'individuality is the essence of the whole endeavour, as it is the basis of responsibility and honor'.⁶¹ Supporting evidence for this argument lies in the fact that the meaning of *islām* itself is 'submission', 'surrender to God', suggesting the element of the individual and not the community.

⁵⁹ See Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, p. xi & pp. 1-3.

⁶⁰ See Chapter Three for further details.

⁶¹ M M Ṭāhā, *The second message of Islam*, p. 62.

According to Ṭāhā, freedom in Islam exists at two levels. The first level is a freedom that is limited by law, and the second level is that of an absolute freedom that goes beyond law.⁶² He goes on to explain that the free person at the first level

is one who thinks as he wishes, speaks in accordance with his thinking, and acts in accordance with his speech, on condition that his exercise of freedom of speech, or action, does not interfere with the freedom of others. If he so interferes, then his freedom is justly limited by laws which are consistent with the constitution.⁶³

At the second level, a free person also does the above in saying what he thinks and acting according to it, but the

consequence of his exercise of all these freedoms is only goodness, blessings, and kindness to all people. The lowest degree of the first level of freedom is fairness, while the lowest degree of the second level is forgiveness. A free man at this second level holds no ill will, even in his hidden conscience, as he knows that any such ill-will begins at the level of conscience, before it will be projected into the realm of speech, and then finally action.⁶⁴

These two levels are not exclusive to each other but rather overlap. The first level is a preparation for the second level. Ṭāhā suggest that the individual reaches the second level through his own endeavours to

observe himself, hold himself to account, and morally educate himself, constantly disciplining himself towards perfection and doing good. Self-observation means awareness of the constant presence of God, so that all senses refrain from acting in a way that displeases God, whether in thought, speech or action. Holding oneself to account means a more profound attention, in case some ill will has escaped observation.⁶⁵

This choice at the second level would also entail that one must earn one's freedom to choose to be at the second level. Ṭāhā is also of the opinion that the developed forms of worship and devotion as well as their laws aim to take the individual to that absolute freedom (at the second level).⁶⁶ This would also mean that worship and legal injunctions are only tools to educate in order to raise communities and individuals 'from crudeness and hostility to refinement and humanity. The cruder and less sensitive the people, the harsher will their law be'.⁶⁷ Ṭāhā argues this in order to explain the Muslim legal system. His understanding of freedom is in line with the outcome of this research.

⁶² Ibid. p. 67.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 68.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

Consequently, only when one masters self-control does one become absolutely free and according to Ṭāhā prohibitions and restrictions disappear. This is the process of the individual learning how to control his tongue and master his thoughts. The Islamic legislation is conceived to enable 'individuals to attain' this level.⁶⁸

The reason for certain seemingly 'harsh' penalties such as capital punishment and cutting the hands of a thief, according to Ṭāhā, is because with great freedom comes great responsibility and therefore 'responsibility is a personal commitment to undertake the consequences of action, whether right or wrong'.⁶⁹ This is because the first principle is that a person is free 'until it is shown, in practice, that he or she is unable to properly discharge the duty of such freedom. Freedom is a natural right corresponding to a duty, namely, its proper exercise'.⁷⁰ Hence, a related point to the conception of free choice is the notion of accountability. Verses on human accountability are also ample such as 2:223, 286; 6:152, 164; 7:42; 17:1; 23:62; 39:7; 53:38 and 65:7. In these verses the Qur'ān repeatedly emphasises that no one bears someone else's burden but himself, suggesting justice and a premise before that, free choice.

The vision of a good society is that 'people are judged according to their intellectual and moral character, as reflected in their public and private lives and demonstrated in the spirit of public service at all times and through every means'.⁷¹

This research also concurs with Ṭāhā's point that the 'peak of religion with respect to politics is illustrated by the verse: 'Then remind them, as you are only a reminder. You have no domination over them' (88:21-22).⁷²

Verse 33:72 is another instance which tells us that the *insān* has the ability to choose and therefore is free. His freedom therefore choice is the core of his being. This conception goes hand in hand with the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* of the role of

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 72.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 106.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 132.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 153.

⁷² Ibid., p. 166.

messengers (and thus revelation). The vision of the Qur'ān cannot be imposed by any institution and cannot be a top-bottom imposition nor can it be a bottom-up imposition as a pure social movement. Rather it is a worldview that is inner (concerning the psyche and the moral framework of the individual) and outer (the individual's responsibility to the 'other' be it family, neighbours, orphan or the poor). It has to be a choice (and therefore freely desired) in wishing to establish, in Rahman's words, 'a just, equitable, free and creative social order in harmony and unison with laws of God'.⁷³ This vision necessarily cannot be imposed by a structure because of the element of choice.

It might even be possible to make the argument that human free will is a core concept in the Qur'ān. This would be the case if one reads into, for example, the five pillars (declaration of faith, prayer, charity, fasting and performing the pilgrimage) as overt actions of free will in which one chooses to do, to restrain, to give, to worship and to affirm. That is to say, the person chooses freely to show God his/her commitment and therefore, the fact that it is chosen freely is vital in the Qur'ānic discourse for judgement.

From this point of view then, it is possible to argue that in the heart of any action is free will and that verse 2:256 manifests as the ultimate consequence of this free will:

Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error; whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things.

To support this view one needs to look no further than the description the Qur'ān presents regarding the Prophets. In verses such as 3:20; 5:92 and 99, 13:40; 16:35; 24:53; 29:18, 36:17; 42: 48 and 64:12, the Qur'ān asserts that its role is only to remind and warn. The entire narrative of the Qur'ān emphasises that the Book exists only as guidance and that the role of the Prophets is only to warn, which also follows that people either choose to follow or choose to deny. This is the heart of human free will.

This argument is similar to Alī 'Abdul Rāziq's assertion that the Qur'ān is silent towards political structures and therefore Muslims are free to choose their own

⁷³ F Rahman, 'The Qur'anic Concept of God, the Universe and Man', *Journal of Islamic Studies*, vol. 1, no.1, 1967, p. 5.

political systems. However, the argument of this study is not that the Qur'ān provisions for 'democracy' or of 'liberty' in the sense of reconciling it with western political notions as 'Abdul Rāziq attempted. Rather this research is suggesting that the silence in the Qur'ān about any specific political structure and its emphasis upon free choice and accountability suggests that any political system is considered acceptable as long as morality integrated in the fabric of the individual and hence part of society. Conceivably, the weakness of 'Abdul Rāziq's assertion lies in his reaction to modernity rather than in examining the actual Qur'ānic discourse. The process in which this internalisation is possible is in the notion of self-vigilance and self-governing (*taqwā*)

The description of the notion of *nafs* is that one should be able to aim at self-purity in order to change oneself. This self-purity is described in one notion as the process of *taqwā*. This concept is also important due its association with the concept of individual. The following section illustrates this connection.

6.4 THE QUR'ĀNIC NOTION OF SELF-GOVERNANCE (*TAQWĀ*)

The notion of *taqwā* is also connected to *nafs* and the concept of the individual in general, which also could highlight the Qur'ānic worldview of the interconnectedness of the purpose of the individual. Translating *taqwā* as fear of God does not do justice to this concept. As Rahman points out, *taqwā* is one of the most important terms in the Qur'an. He further argues that *taqwā*

[a]t its highest, it denotes the fully integrated and whole personality of man, the kind of 'stability' which is formed after all the positive elements are drawn in.⁷⁴

This is because to Rahman, *imān* and *islām* are connected also to the concept of *taqwā*. To him, those three concepts are the basic semantic meanings of safety, peace and integrity. Particularly, one of the derivatives (*wiqāya*) comes to mean 'to take protection' and 'to be careful' (which connects to *amān*).⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Rahman, *Major themes of the Qur'ān*, p. 28.

⁷⁵ See F Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'an', *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, vol. 2, No. 2, 1983, p. 176.

The process of *taqwā* is critical when struggling against vices and encouraging virtues (being in the constant process of struggle). This process is about building the inner consciousness and awareness of God.

In addition, *taqwā* according to Izutsu underwent a semantic shift. In pre-Islamic period the meaning of *taqwā* was the 'self-defensive attitude of a living being, animal or man, against some destructive force coming from outside'.⁷⁶ The basic meaning of this term remains, according to Izutsu, but its overall connectedness to the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* has changed. *Taqwā* comes to connect to the God consciousness, a process of 'pious fear of Divine chastisement on the Day of Judgement'.⁷⁷ This is because the derivative word of *waqā* also comes to mean that God protects the moral person such as in verses 40:9, 45; 52:27 and 76:11.⁷⁸

The trilateral root *w-q-y* denotes 'to protect', 'to shield from', 'to keep safe from' (such as *waqā* as in verse 16:81);⁷⁹ the form *yūqā* denotes 'to be distanced from', 'to be saved from' and 'to be preserved from' (such as in verse 64:16).⁸⁰ The meaning of 'to be conscious of', 'to stay from', 'to guard against', 'to have a thought for' and 'to have care for' is associated with the form *ittaqā* as in verses 59:18; 9:115; 39:24; 73:17; 36:45.⁸¹ The form *atqā* denotes 'more pious' and 'most mindful', as in verse 49:13.⁸² The root word in the form of *wāqī* comes to mean 'protector' or 'defender' as in verse 13:34.⁸³ Another form that is also translated as 'mindful of God' or 'pious' is *taqiyy* as in verse 19:18.⁸⁴ *Taqwā* (as a noun) is also translated as 'mindfulness of God', 'awareness of God' and 'piety' as in verse 91:8 occurring 17 times its plural (*muttaqūn*) occur 49 times. The Qur'ān uses nine forms of *w-q-y* in 258 different verses.⁸⁵ The sheer number of verses shows the centrality of this concept to the Qur'ānic *weltanschauung* as well as the difficult task of arriving at a coherent conceptualisation of this core-concept.

⁷⁶ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 10.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 1042-1043.

⁷⁹ *Waqā* occurs 14 times in the Qur'ān as verb doubly transitive.

⁸⁰ *Yūqā* occurs twice as imperfect passive verb.

⁸¹ *Ittaqā* occurs 166 times, verb viii form.

⁸² *Atqā* occurs twice in the Qur'ān.

⁸³ Occurs three times as active participle.

⁸⁴ Occurs three times in the Qur'an as adjectival active participle.

⁸⁵ Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 1042-1043.

Semantically, Izutsu argues that *waqā* is a description of that person who when harm is approaching uses something in defence of himself (in the meaning of *wiqāya*).⁸⁶ Thus, the meaning indicates ‘to protect’, ‘to defend’ and ‘to cover’. Hence, it is not surprisingly translated as ‘fear of God’.⁸⁷

Izutsu contends that *taqwā* initially connected with eschatological concepts and only later did this concept took the meaning of piety.⁸⁸ However, *taqwā* equally has a meaning that connects both to eschatology and to this world directly. In fact, one could argue that all concepts connect to eschatology and *taqwā* is no exception.

It is not enough merely to perform good deeds for oneself, there must also be an inward struggle for change involving both a constant *purification* of the heart but also a measure of self-restraint in order to develop or raise the *nafs* towards its higher virtues. As 64:16 suggests:

So fear (*itaqū*) Allah as much as ye can; listen and obey; and spend in charity for the benefit of your own souls: And those saved from the covetousness of their own souls— they are the ones that achieve prosperity.

Although *itaqū* is translated as ‘fear’, Rahman’s definition of *taqwā* as ‘a mental state of responsibility from which an agent’s actions proceed but which recognises that the criterion of judgement upon them lies outside him’ is more accurate.⁸⁹ Similar to Rahman, the definition of *taqwā* is critical for emphasising the inner responsibility. Indeed this is the first step in creating an empathetic individual and by extension a community, which seeks to achieve virtue. It is the creation of a value system that builds a moral responsibility within the individual and that keeps the individual’s autonomy with the emphasis on the ‘*amal*’ that would also have a socio-political consequences but recognise change and judgement is beyond the individual (as in verse 13:11).

⁸⁶ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 260.

⁸⁷ See F H Foster, ‘The Fear of God in the Koran’, *The Muslim World*, vol. 21, issue 3, 1931, pp. 244-248.

⁸⁸ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 259.

⁸⁹ F Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1982, p155.

The Qur'ān also describes the characteristic of *taqwā* in 2:177

It is not righteousness that ye turn your faces towards East or West; but it is righteousness—to believe in Allah and the Last Day and the Angels and the Book and the Messengers; to spend of your substance out of love for Him, for your kin, for orphans for the needy, for the wayfarer for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves; to be steadfast in prayer and practise regular charity; to fulfil the contracts which ye have made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering) and adversity and throughout all periods of panic. Such are the people of truth the Allah-fearing (*mutaqūn*).

This description of the righteousness goes hand in hand with the higher level of the *nafs* yet it is also possible to fall into the opposite spectrum, which the Qur'ān warns against.

Rahman elaborates on this lower human condition. He holds that because of human:

native selfishness and narrowness, man is always prone to go to extremes: he is full of pride one moment and a helpless prey to hopelessness the next moment; panicky under trial and thinking he is all but God when out of trial. The Only way he can attain *taqwā* is to recognise both his powers and the limits God has put upon him as his natural condition. He is neither free like God nor helpless like a stone; he is neither omnipotent nor impotent; neither omniscient nor ignorant. Only by staying within this positive framework can he maximise his moral energy and make progress, which is the essence of *taqwā*.⁹⁰

This moral energy Rahman is suggesting is also connected to the ability to keep the limits (*ḥudūd*) and boundaries that God has set. The section bellow elaborates this connection.

6.4.1 The Connection Between *Taqwā* and *Ḥudūd*

Taqwā also connects, as mentioned in Chapter Four, in many verses with the notion of *ḥudūdū-allāh*.⁹¹ This is understandable when *taqwā* denotes 'self-restraint' and 'self-control'. In this context, *taqwā* connotes 'to protect one's self from one's vices', 'to restrain oneself from an evil act' and 'to self-govern'.⁹² The meaning of 'fearing God' in the verses on *taqwā* comes as being conscious that God is watching (knowing) one's self and that the process of *taqwā* or the act of *taqwā* is not and could not be

⁹⁰ Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān', p. 181.

⁹¹ For example in verses 2:187, and 65:1.

⁹² Rahman, *Major themes in the Quran*, p. 29.

enforced by anybody other than the person wishes to go through the struggle to reach a state of *taqwā*. This directly links the private sphere between keeping *ḥudūd allāh* and being conscious that God is all-Knowing.

Again, this mindset cannot be reinforced by a state or any other institution or system; it can only be 'reminded' as the Qur'ān suggests. This also gives humankind a huge responsibility and accountability to God and no other being simply because no other being can fully know one's intentions and one's attempt to strive towards virtue. This also gives the individual freedom. As discussed in Chapter Four, the connection of *taqwā* to *ḥudūdū-allāh* could indicate that the legalistic element cannot be imposed by an institution. Furthermore, cases of what are commonly called *ḥudūd* laws when looked in the Qur'ān are situations which are arguably private in nature, such as the verses concerned with adultery.⁹³ Therefore, *ḥudūd* might have been viewed as a private boundary to keep the limits of God as opposed to what *ḥudūd* has come to mean.

As we have observed, for Rahman, the characterisation of God-consciousness (*taqwā*) is seen as an exclusive ethical socio-political action in the world.⁹⁴ More to the point, Cragg's words describing the meaning of *taqwā* may be the most precise description of *taqwā* as he postulates that there is a:

quality of awareness of the divine precepts by which man is preserved from, cautioned against, and inspired to resist all that contravenes his true being under God. The root sense of preservation, of being guarded, is gathered into the Qur'anic shaping of a human authenticity through 'the limits of God'.⁹⁵

What is significant here is this human authenticity which proceeds through the 'limits of God' – that is *ḥudūdū-allāh*. He further notes that *taqwā* is equated with 'conscience' and that is the full acknowledgement that all guidance is from God.⁹⁶ It is precisely the points Cragg and Rahman raise on the notion of *taqwā* that this section is asserting.

⁹³ See p. 206 in the previous Chapter.

⁹⁴ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*, p. 14.

⁹⁵ K Cragg, *The Pen and the Faith: Eight Modern Muslim Writers and the Qur'an*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1985, p. 102.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

In summary, the *nafs*, this individual that is created with free choice, is thus the centre of the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*. It is capable of changing and challenging corruption but it is also responsible for causing it. This dynamic being, hence, enters the sphere of the political in its possibilities of change and challenge to “power” by looking inwardly in a non-structuralist manner. This process takes place through the inward-outward struggle.

The notion of self-governance which is presented in this chapter is an exploration of the Qur'anic vision of what “ought to be”. The level of *taqwā* is such that people are safe and the restricting of one's actions is such so that it does not infringe on others. This is only possible if one decides freely to do so. Arguably, no external system is able to completely implement true security and safety.

This may seem to be an idealist (or even unachievable) perception of humankind whereas, to many, Islam has a realist approach to societal ills.⁹⁷ This is partly true, because there are many passages in the Qur'ān that seem to present a practical solution to real problems (such as theft, inheritance, war and so on). However, equally there are many passages that speak of virtue and bringing about a good society. The task at hand is to be able to identify possible Qur'anic worldview of an ideal community. Cragg makes this point clear when he asserts that:

[t]here is no power in external relationships to reverse evil and turn men to truth without the inward turning of the will itself where the wrong belongs. The battle for the good in the world must be won in the heart.⁹⁸

This is the notion of self-governance in the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*. It suggests a possible vision of the individual, on the part of the Qur'ān, of the individual. Arguably, the “ideal community” comes about through an inward/outward paradigm rather than a bottom up or top-bottom approach for change. This kind of understanding has freedom and choice as a fundamental element in the Qur'anic *weltanschauung*.

The paradigm of self-governance begs the question of how then this links to the idea of a community in the Qur'ān. If the result of this study is taken to be significant in

⁹⁷ Cragg, *The Mind of the Qur'ān*, p. 109.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 113.

arguing that there is no mention of a political theory in the form of government, structure or institutionalization in the Qur'ān (which makes the silence significant and indicative of a possible worldview), then how can one understand the concept of the community in the Qur'ān? The next section addresses this question.

6.5 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND THE COMMUNITY

The notion of community relates deeply to the choices human beings make and reflects the reality of the individuals themselves. The nature of the individual is dynamic; his or her core nature is in constant turmoil but desires perfection. With the desire for perfection comes the drive towards bettering oneself and one's surroundings.

It is difficult to argue against the view that the central aim of the Qur'ān is to establish a moral community which caters to the socially disadvantaged, is just and merciful.⁹⁹ If the individual is the core aim of the Qur'ān, then it also follows that the notion of the community or society is also a means of helping that individual, and therefore is acting as a facilitator and not to benefit itself.

There is a delicate balance between the individual and his role in the community. It is true that *taqwā* could only have a meaning in a societal setting as Rahman argues;¹⁰⁰ however, the emphasis of the Qur'ān is on the accountability of the individual towards the community. Individuals do not live in a vacuum nor does a society operate in isolation. This correlation has sometimes been misunderstood as emphasising society alone as a unit, thus ignoring the role of the individual. For example, in the following verse 107:2-3; 104:2-3; 96:6; 90:5-6 and 89:15-20 the weight is on the state of the individual who connects by implication to wider society. There is a constant emphasis in the Qur'ān, therefore, on the individual's dual state of mind. This in turn is linked to the third element, that of eschatology.

⁹⁹ Rahman, *Major themes in the Quran*, p. 37.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

There is a strong non-semantic connection therefore between one's action, judgement day and in the belief in One True Sustainer (92:3-21). The societal vices that the Qur'ān discusses are many, including economic exploitation of the poor, widespread corruption (*fasād*), oppression of the weak, widespread stealing, lying and killing, which is included in the meaning of *fasād* and *fisq*.

Arguably, it is difficult to address these inequalities by means of an institution and at times it seems that such inequalities are permanently part of the structure. The human element (the dynamic structure of human nature and its *nafs* as described earlier) runs throughout the Qur'ān, reminding the reader that change is possible. This is found with the attempt to change oneself both by struggling for virtue from within and by holding a dynamic understanding of human nature rather than a deterministic one.

Notwithstanding, it was during the Medinan period that the concept of *umma* came into being.¹⁰¹ Watt suggests that Islam possesses a strong emphasis on communal solidarity, to the extent that the notion of an *umma* is its chief 'contribution...in the political sphere'.¹⁰² *Umma* or community in essence is a group of people that have either shared values, language, religion, history or a combination of those that gives them a common identity.

It has been argued that this concept began by simply referring to a group of different peoples and later acquired a specific meaning referring to the Muslim community. Watt takes this position as does Denny.¹⁰³ It is further conceivable that this concept consolidated further after Medina considering that the Medinan constitution refers to some of the Jewish tribes as part of the *umma*. On the other hand, the Meccan passages refer, as Denny argues, to 'peoples and religious traditions' in general.¹⁰⁴ This gives the notion of *umma* general meaning.

Denny further maintains that the idea of this Muslim *umma* also connects to the middle way as well as to a moral community that upholds *sharī'a*. It is an *umma* that

¹⁰¹ Izutsu, *God and Man*, p. 82.

¹⁰² M W Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, Oxford University Press, London, 1961, p. 29.

¹⁰³ See M W Watt, 'Conditions of Membership of the Islamic Community', *Studia Islamica*, No. 21, 1964, pp. 5-12. Also see Denny, F. M. 'The Meaning of "Ummah" in the Qur'ān', *History of Religions*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1975, pp. 34-70.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* p. 68.

is formed and virtuous, a community that encourages the common good and discourages the bad.¹⁰⁵ Although Denny suggests a shift in meaning of the word of *umma* from Meccan to Medinan, it remains conceivable that the meaning of the *umma* remains consistent with the idea of “human collectivity” particularly when taking the premise that every human collectivity is a group that God created and willed. The religious aspect of any concept according to the worldview of the Qur'ān is created by the Divine and does not only include Muslims but also includes the people of the past that also had Prophets. For example, the following verses: 5:48; 10:19; 11:118; 16:93; 21:92; 23:52; 42:8 and 43:33 support this assertion. In support, even Denny postulates there is no single homogeneous definition of *umma*, particularly in the Qur'ān as it covers many aspects. This would mean that one cannot read the word *umma* to mean the Muslim community exclusively as it often refers to other peoples, past peoples and Prophets.¹⁰⁶

More particularly, Fārūqī suggests that the Qur'ānic vision of the *umma* is a ‘society where actionism is totalist, not totalitarian, authoritative but not authoritarian’.¹⁰⁷ From this observation, one can see how the concept of the *umma* has been misunderstood as authoritarian rather than authoritative. Furthermore, for a community to be authoritative the individuals need to internalised the moral message and elevate to the higher level of *nafs al-muṭma'ina* as the Qur'ān describes it. Having said that, Fārūqī goes further, arguing for an “Islamic state”. He postulates that it is

God Who instituted the state and the political order, and participation in the political process is therefore a religious duty. The ruler is to execute the law of God; and the ruled is to obey the law, and to advise the ruler and help him in upholding the law.¹⁰⁸

His point is valid in principle, however, as this study has suggested, once one asks what is God's law the answer is far from clear. As discussed in Chapter Four 'law' with lower case refers to prohibition and commands available in the Qur'ān, which are few, suggesting that God's Law (with upper case) cannot be implemented by a state but by the conviction of the individual; therein lies the idea of self-governance that this research is suggesting.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 69.

¹⁰⁶ See F M Denny, ‘Ummah in the Constitution of Medina’, in A Saeed, (ed.) *Islamic Political Thought and Governance*, vol. 1, 2001, p. 83.

¹⁰⁷ I R al-Faruqi, ‘The principles of Ethics’, in B S Turner, (ed.) *Islam As Religion and Law*, Routledge, London, 2003, p. 173.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 176.

The social dimension of *taqwā* is therefore the process of encouraging the good and forbidding the evil (3:104, 110; 9:71). In support, Rahman maintains that the opposite of *taqwā* is moral apathy.¹⁰⁹ Thus, it may be apathy that the Qur'ān warns against.

Rahman argues that the community described within the Qur'ān essentially has a commitment to morality and once it loses this status – that is *taqwā*- it ceases to exist as an envisioned community. Without this component of *imān* and *taqwā*, such an ideal community is unthinkable and indeed impossible within the vision of the Qur'ān. This is because as Rahman himself argues

Islam aims necessarily and centrally...at the creation of a world order wherein its imperatives and principles will be embodied in such a way that the “earth shall be formed”.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, Askari states that this relationship between religion and society is common to all religions and of all societies. What makes one society different from another and what makes one religion different from another is the 'mode' of 'identity' between religion and society.¹¹¹ By mode of identity, Askari means a specific relationship between the specific religion and its religious context and the socio-political content. He argues that '[t]his mode is another way of becoming conscious of the actual challenges to which a religion is a response'.¹¹²

Askari observes the relationship between religion and society as that which

swings from one emphasis to another, from meaning to function, or from function to meaning. If meaning is the centre of emphasis, religion is then a critical content of society; and if function is the centre of emphasis, society turns religion into one among many of its functions.¹¹³

Religion can also take on complex forms. For example, according to Askari, Islam aims to unify both function and meaning, to the point that they are so interrelated that neither overpowers the other and neither can exist without the other.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Rahman, *Major themes in the Qur'an*, p. 56.

¹¹⁰ Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān', pp. 182-183.

¹¹¹ Askari, *Society and State in Islam*, p. 1.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid. p.4.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

This unity of meaning and function also operates within a paradoxical relationship or more accurately, a dialectical one in terms of looking at society and history.¹¹⁵ Askari's point might be the most accurate description of the Qur'ānic worldview of community and history as an entity. None of these concepts of community has a prescription of a particular structure in the Qur'ān. The vital question for us here is how would this relationship of meaning and the function look once it becomes contingent and temporal.

The answer provided by some "Islamists" was the confusion of the contingent and the temporal with the unity of meaning and function that was present in the first Muslim generation after the death of the Prophet.

In support, Rahman suggests "fundamentalist movements" in the Muslim world make the mistake of attempting to establish political power without the social order, thinking that by being in power the society will achieve the Islamic vision of a moral community. With this kind of approach, Rahman asserts, 'their Islam proves to be no more than a broken reed'.¹¹⁶

The Qur'ān seeks to encourage human beings to reach a level of consciousness in which human kind fully realize their absolute dependence upon God, believing in God truly. With this in mind, every concept reflects this ultimate understanding. This political theory in its essence encompasses one's emancipation from wants of the world, the realisation of the true authorship of our actions and ultimately challenging power and oppression itself.

With this definition, Askari rightly clarifies the nature of oppression and connects it to eschatology. He suggest that the

Qur'anic discourses regarding oppression have different levels of abstraction related to different levels of perception, sometimes purely psychological, sometimes sociological and at other times historical, but all through them runs a unity of approach that is basically spiritual and eschatological.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ See al-Ṣadr, *Al-Madrasah al-Qur'āniya*.

¹¹⁶ Rahman, 'Some Key Ethical Concepts of the Qur'ān', p. 183.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 166.

This in turn would lead to a realm of order which exists on the basis of the principle of the individual being the centre of the paradigm encouraged to realise his/her essence of *'amal* –good work. This would also mean that the totality of the social order is assumed wherein both with the oppressed and the oppressors are responsible for the continuation of injustice and oppression.¹¹⁸

Shariati puts this duality in terms of human beings, who are always compelled towards motion. The Human self is a 'stage for a battle between two forces that results in a continuous evolution toward perfection'.¹¹⁹ Shariati further describes this battle as 'an infinite migration, a migration within himself, from clay to God; he is a migrant within his own soul'.¹²⁰

There is a tension or paradox between being an individual and belonging to the collective and between living in the mundane but believing in the sacred. This tension (or paradox) could be solved by means of a constant relationship between refining oneself (looking inward) and projecting outward with the *taqwā* that is developed. It is this kind of tension that scholars such as Rahman and Shariati speak of.

The paradox in developing an 'Islamic' political theory is the denial of the politics as it is, Askari postulates it is about 'transforming the political man into the natural man in harmony with his genuine existence', that is, to be a true worshiper of God.¹²¹

6.6 THE NOTION OF THE SELF AND THE COMMUNITY: THE DUALITY OF HUMANKIND

Within the above narrative, the concepts of free will regarding human understanding, choice, and accountability, doing the right thing (both *iṣlāḥ* and *iḥsān*) are rooted deeply in the hierarchy or paradigm of the vision of an elevated community. This is a vision that reinforces community co-operation, not for the sake of the community but instead for the sake of the moral principle of responsibility and accountability. The

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.171.

¹¹⁹ Shariati, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 92.

¹²⁰ Ibid. p. 93.

¹²¹ Askari, *Society and State in Islam*, p. 120.

Qur'ānic individual is not understood as fashioned by a structure but by choice. Self-governing oneself from vices such as anger, greed, stealing, excessive consumption and reinforcing virtues such as forgiveness, mercy, rights and justice constitute this worldview. The structure is open and undefined.

At this point, bearing all that this study has presented, it is useful to look at examples of application of such vision. One well known example is 'Umar bin al-Khaṭāb who when he was appointed, was noted to have said that 'the weak among you shall be strong in my eyes until I will secure his right, and the strong shall be weak in my eyes until I wrest the right from him'.¹²²

Similarly one reads in 'Alī ibn abī Ṭālib's lengthy letter to Mālik Al-Ashtar when Ṭālib appointed Mālik as a governor :

[...] You must know that a good and virtuous man is known and recognized by the good that is said about him and the praise which Allah has destined him to receive from others. Therefore, make your mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds. This can only be attained by keeping a strict control on your desires and yearnings, however much they may try to incite and coerce you. Remember that the best way to do justice to your inner self and to keep it out of harm is to restrain it from vice and from things which the 'self' inordinately and irrationally desires.

[...] Mālik! You must create in your mind kindness, compassion and love for your subjects. Do not behave towards them as if you are a voracious and ravenous beast and as if your success lies in devouring them.

Remember, Mālik, that amongst your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who have the same religion as you have; they are brothers to you, and those who have religions other than that of yours, they are human beings like you. Men of either category suffer from the same weaknesses and disabilities that human beings are inclined to, they commit sins, indulge in vices either intentionally or foolishly and unintentionally without realizing the enormity of their deeds. Let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue and help in the same way and to the same extent that you expect Allah to show mercy and forgiveness to you.

[...] Be fair, impartial and just in your dealings with all, individually and collectively and be careful not to make your person, position and favours act as sources of malice.

[...] Select honest, truthful and pious people as your companions. Train them not to flatter you and not to seek your favour by false praises because flattery and false

¹²² Cited in M S 'Awwā, *On the political system of the Islamic state*, American Trust Publications, Indianapolis, 1980, p. 112.

praises create vanity and conceit and they make a man lose sight of his real self and ignore his duties.¹²³

These passages, although lengthy, reflect, if anything, the role of internalising these moral principles. From as early as the 1st Muslim century the emphasis of change has been internal when, for example 'Alī says 'make your mind the source and fountain-head of good thoughts, good intentions and good deeds'. One loses sight of one's real self if one has the wrong companionships. Ibn Abī Ṭālib advises Mālik to train his companions not to praise him as it creates 'vanity and conceit and they make a man lose sight of his real self and ignore his duties'. However, when both structure and principles have been merged together, that which is temporal, historical and contextual loses its particularity and becomes universal, sacred and ahistorical.

The description of the Qur'ān of *nafs*, *insān* and 'abd and their semantic connection to concepts such as *taqwā* on one hand, and *ẓulm*, *fasād* on the other highlights this duality of man. Thus the way to escape these two extreme is by building a *taqwā* oriented mind set, which develops a self-governed individual based upon a high moral imperative. This also means, according to Rahman, that God bestows meaningfulness upon human beings and integrates them into a moral order.¹²⁴

The duality also includes the fact that the human being could either be reckless, haughty, boastful and independent or desperate and hopeless. The solution lies in the delicate balance between having hope in God's mercy and having humility. As a result, when a man achieves goodness he then shares it with the less advantaged so that they might learn self-control of the *nafs* and have hope. The aim, as Rahman advocates, is to develop a moral life which seeks to achieve a balance between 'certain antithetical poles which constitute the "tensions"' of man's moral life.¹²⁵ The balance that the Qur'ān brings about could only be seen as that of a state of self-control (*taqwā*) and trust (*imān*) as discussed above. Rahman summarises this

¹²³ A Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, letter 53, Dār al-Hijra, Qum, Iran, pp. 426-445. This letter is a very long one and only few relevant parts are quoted. The English translation is taken from <<http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul/letters/letter53.htm>>

¹²⁴ Rahman, 'The Qur'anic Concept of God', p. 2.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 10.

dialectical movement when he says 'man actively gropes, God gives perception; man searches, God grants discovery; man prays...God brings result'.¹²⁶

The process of self-reflection ensures that self-control or self-governing takes place which in turn would protect the individual ('be shielded' using Qur'ānic language) from self-destruction, (which lead to *fasād*) or self-righteousness (which would lead to *ẓulm al-nafs*). Both of these are societal ills which the Qur'ān repeatedly warns against. While this study argues against the macro politics as part of development of individual Muslim, it is essential to point out here that the individual's development through the axiomatic approach is essentialised in the Qur'ān in reinforcing concepts such as *ihsān*, *taqwā*, justice, equality, *ḥaqq* and so on as the essential axes through which a micro-foundational development is considered with the objective of developing and reaching eschatological success.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Considering the findings of this investigation that the Qur'ān seems uninterested in structures and institutions in the political sense, yet emphasizes change and self-purification in the sense of self-restraint, one could wonder if the Qur'ān's vision actually empowers human beings to reach their full potential by doing good but not within a particular structure. Instead, it might do so by emphasising the accountability of human action in linking together the physical and the metaphysical, particularly by emphasising the eschatological consequences.

Starting from the individual as the basic unit of analysis, the Qur'ān describes the condition and nature of the human being in an attempt to construct a moral individual. Such a construction would have a ripple affect upon the development of a society based on *taqwā*, which is in turn based on self-governance, motivated to serve that which is good ('*amal*) and would lead to the process of *ihsān* and *iṣlāḥ*. This process ensures that the individual would not fall into the extremes that the Qur'ān warns against. This is the Qur'ānic notion of self-governance. Fundamentally the notion of

¹²⁶ Ibid. p. 11.

human free choice ensuring accountability and responsibility is essential but is also the social responsibility of the human towards his fellow human beings.

The central discourse of the Qur'ān is that the individual is a free agent in history and that history, although possessing its own *sunan* (laws), is based upon the dynamic of human agency. Human agency, as the Qurān sees it, possesses a duality and within the center of this duality lies free will.

The Qur'ānic *weltanschauung*'s recognition of human nature and its proposition of possible solutions to the state of *insān*, however, connect strongly with its eschatological worldview.

The premise on which this study is based on is that the Qur'ān does not set out a political system but rather an ethical/moral system that encompasses the individual and community. Again, similar to 'Alī 'Abdul Rāziq, this investigation postulates that there is no clear prescribed political blueprint in the Qur'ān. This study departs however from Abdul Rāziq as mentioned earlier in that it is not advocating the adoption of a western democratic model or western notions of democracy. It seems the approach of the Qur'ān is neither bottom-up nor top-bottom, but is rather an 'inward outward' paradigm as discussed earlier. Once the focus is upon the self, the Qur'ān suggests that the society will move towards the state of virtue (with *ihsān* being seen as one of the states of virtue).

The description of the Qur'ān of the *nafs*, *insān*, *mu'min* and 'abd refers to human-to-human conduct that moves away from the western definition of the political as *power*-centric and moves towards the foundation of the political in ethics or Qur'ānic moral theory on how a person *ought* to be and therefore how a community *ought* to be in general sense and not in a structuralist sense. With it comes a multiplicity of concepts of accountability and responsibility.

The Qur'ān radically moves away from such a structuralist approach towards a paradoxically individualistic (humanistic) against systemic approaches. This means that the Qur'ān is not concerned with the position of power in a structure "power" *per se* but rather the concern is for the wellbeing of the human, virtue, justice, rights,

equality and the greater good in society. Thus, the political is conceivably not equated with “power” but rather challenges power and the status quo without seeking “power” itself.

THESIS CONCLUSION

A civilized man does not confuse ends with means, and he does not sacrifice ends for the sake of means. He is a man of principles and of moral values, one who has achieved a complete intellectual and emotional life.¹

It is only fair to begin the introduction of the conclusion of this study with Ṭāhā's words as it reflects the Qur'ānic outlook of the moral imperative. Our journey into the tentative meanings of verses that deal with the human being in particular and community at large is closely linked with human development so that the ends are neither confused with means nor are they compromised. This research suggests that the Qur'ānic worldview of an ideal political affair lies in the journey of a human being who struggles towards righteousness with a strong connection of purpose of being. Society itself becomes the means by which the individual is enriched and not the end by itself. This study does not argue that there are no political concepts present in the Qur'ān. Rather it claims that what appears to be a political theory therein is in fact a moral "theory" that has political implications.

This thesis has demonstrated in agreement with the hypothesis in the Introduction that there was no clear prescription for a unique system of government in the Qur'ān whether in terms of an "Islamic state" or in terms of a political system or government.

Although the assertion above is not new, most arguments arise from a secularist point of view that promotes and encourages a democratic political system. The study has argued that from the Qur'ānic point of view, no political system is unique. No political theory is encouraged; one is merely charged to be righteous in all one's dealings by being good and fair, to be just and to have an outward commitment for the betterment of society as a whole and to be a responsible and conscious person to all of humanity. Of course there are many discussions and questions that can rise from this position, a few of which are related to definition of concepts such as what does it mean to be righteous, good, just, conscience and so on. However, from the Qur'ānic point of view the definitions seem to be taken for granted. That is to say, it is assumed that the reader would understand what good, right, wrong, thinking, pondering, justice

¹ Ṭāhā, *The second message of Islam*, p. 51.

and righteousness all mean. In some cases, there are more specific descriptions of what it means to be a good person. For instance, in some cases the characteristics of a believer (*mu'min*) is defined as those who give charity and are honest, the same is the case with *taqwā*.

The debates and discussions themselves are sufficient indications that there is no clear prescribed theory in the Qur'an. At the same time, this is not to say there was no political discussions, but that they might not be as clear as some have suggested.

It is vital to bear in mind that this study has not argued that there is no political thought in Muslim history, or that Muslims should not engage in political life. It rather highlights that although there were fundamental principles of rights, justice and equality reinforced within the Qur'anic message, the mechanism with which to achieve this ideal society has not been prescribed. What Muslims inherited from the early Muslim community could not be substantiated as 'binding' and therefore the question of its universality, applicability in all times for all places in all circumstances is questionable.

This study demonstrated that as early as the Umayyads, the concept of *khalīfa* in the Qur'an became manipulated to be equated with the historical caliphate system. The idea of a state system being equivalent to a caliphate system has been challenged. Further confusion arose when Abū Bakr was given the title of *khalīfa*. Both the Qur'anic *khalīfa* and the title Abū Bakr inherited had the sense of 'replacing', 'inhabiting' and 'succeeding' rather than connoting a caliphate system or a caliphate theory, as postulated by some modern writers. The notion of *khalīfatullah*, however did not take precedence amongst the classical and medieval Sunnī scholars.

One interesting observation this thesis came across is that it seems that the concept *khilāfa* or *khalīfa* used by the classical and medieval Sunnī scholars is categorically different from modern/contemporary usage and the meaning that has been attached to it. Contemporary usage may instead be the result of the early Orientalist writing since the early 18th and later in the 19th century, in which the word *khilāfa* was interpreted not as "replacing" or "succeeding" but a categorically an "Islamic" entity or system.

This would in turn lead to the idea of a “Sunnī caliphate theory” and that the caliphate system is unique, a position which would be adopted by a generation of writers.

Furthermore, the Qur’ānic *ḥukm*, *ḥudūd* and *sharī‘a* acquired additional meaning in post-Qur’ānic period. There was also a distinction made between the object of the punishment and the punishment itself.

It was further argued that the Qur’ān does not possess *apolitical* understanding of the individual or society. This research has suggested that within the Qur’ānic framework there is a vision of society that calls for increased accountability, justice and individual responsibility, which are political by their nature. Encouraging what is good in society and discouraging what is evil, the Qur’ān seems to be speaking of general concepts of freedom and accountability, not of a particular political structure. Unfortunately, some Muslim thinkers have interpreted past events in such a way that what was a temporary situation becomes elevated into a trans-historical sacred fact. This, the thesis argues, has been one reason for the incorrect view that a clearly delineated “Islamic” political system and theory exists in the Qur’ān defended as ‘ordained by God’.

Remarkably, throughout Muslim history there is an incessant search for a clearly prescribed political theory, indicating that the search for a clear answer is far from evident. This study has suggested that such a search in and of itself is an indication of uncertainty amongst early scholars. In support, other religious issues are not disputed, such as the number of prayers a believer is supposed to perform each day, even though the exact number of prayers is not been mentioned explicitly in the Qur’ān. This example illustrates that if the issue of governance were clear there would have been reliable and unquestionable method concerning it about which early Muslims would have not disagreed.

This research has shown that verses which are usually quoted to be a clear evidence for a prescribed form of government in fact possess more tentative meanings. It suggests that the initial Muslim political writings arose in reaction to an absence of anything clearly prescribed. Strikingly, the possible success in keeping the integrity of

the ideal (the moral values) occurred despite the early bloody history. This is close to Mohammed Iqbal's point

the ideal and the real are not two opposing forces which cannot be reconciled. The life of the ideal consists, not in a total breach with the real which would tend to shatter the organic wholeness of life into painful oppositions, but in the perpetual endeavour of the ideal to appropriate the real with a view eventually to absorb it, to convert it into itself and to illuminate its whole being.²

In order to show just how tentative the meanings of the verses are, and that no one verse stands in isolation from a whole message, a combination of semantic and thematic approaches was adopted. It involved gathering all the verses that mention a concept itself, its derivatives, its parallels, and its associations to draw a more complete picture of the meaning(s) of the concept in its own right. Such methods make this study a linguistic investigation.

For instance, the concept of *ḥukm* arose within early Muslim political theology particularly by the Khārājī'ite. The word was examined from its roots, its derivatives, its parallel and its associations. The frequency of the concept and its relation to other concepts was also noted.

One fundamental assumption of this methodology was to acknowledge Izutsu's point that language conveys a *weltanschauung*. This worldview is expressed both semantically and non-semantically. In order to understand the Qur'ānic worldview then, this research also looked at the non-semantic associations the Qur'ān makes with each Qur'ānic concept such as the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*), the last day (*'ākhira*), which connects to accountability (*ḥisāb*), action (*'amal*) and free choice (*khiyār*). Given that the different concepts in the Qur'ān vary in their frequency, one may be justified in assuming that the differences in frequency are not arbitrary, but rather suggest a hierarchy of concepts. This hierarchy is important in examining the Qur'ānic worldview and understanding it. The hierarchy of concepts has also helped in examining values in the Qur'ān and with respect to their hierarchy.

As this study seeks to determine whether there is any kind of political theory within the Qur'ān, this research has focussed upon analysing the Qur'ān as a primary source,

² M Iqbāl, *The reconstruction of religious thought in Islam*, Ashraf, Lahore, 1954, p. 9.

with the aid of exegetical works, an Arabic English dictionary of Qur'ānic usage, and early semanticists such as al-Iṣfahānī. This study is thus a predominantly epistemological endeavour.

This study highlighted the importance of the early political events for the development of Muslim political theology. The first Muslim civil war in 35-40/656-661 resulted in particular kinds of question which demanded specific answers. At that time, it was not only the development of questions that framed the debate, but also the distinctive groups that were formed in an attempt to make sense of the bloody events of that period. The questions that arose included: what constitutes a leader, who has the right to rulership, what constitutes good rulership and when would it be obligatory to rebel. The questions of the boundaries of belief were also raised as a response to the killing of 'Uthmān bin 'Affān.

The shift from the early Muslim history to the medieval period was filled with polemical discussions arising from the first Muslim civil war among a clearly demarcated set of sects. Although writers such as Māwardī, Ghazālī and Ibn Taymiyya are often referenced as the earliest thinkers who developed Muslim political theory, this study has argued that their work was a response to the polemical discussions between the Shī'ites (the Ismā'ilite particularly), the Mu'tazilites and the Kkārāji'ites, making the medieval writings highly polemical.

This study also suggested that the general orientation of the modern period, insofar as Muslim political thought is concerned, is characterised by a reaction against colonial experiences, the fall of the Ottoman Empire and decolonization that led to the formation of the nation-state, something relatively new to Muslim experience. The study concludes that the development of "political Islam", "Islamism" and the entire Muslim theo-political thought is in fact an attempt to deal with the absence of a clear prescribed way of governing in the Qur'ān and the *sunna*. The disagreement between sects, if anything, suggests just how much uncertainty there exists as to what the Qur'ān says about political governance.

The Contribution of This Research

This research contributes by using a combination of Qur'ānic hermeneutical methods to showing that verses related to political concepts are pluralistic in nature.

Adopting Izutsian semantic-field analysis with its thematic approach helped make it possible to examine the Qur'ānic worldview independent of any post-Qur'ānic theology. Thus, this study had to detach itself from two extremes: (1) the obsessive attempt to reconcile Islam with democratic thought, linked with those who hold that the Qur'ān does not possess any political theory and (2) the theo-philosophical lenses of the medieval scholars. Furthermore, this analysis attempts to bring into light the Qur'ānic narrative independent of the Muslim post-enlightenment reaction to modernity.

From an examination of the themes in the Qur'ān also arises the idea of a hierarchy of concepts based on their frequency of occurrence, which could potentially indicate a hierarchy of values in the Qur'ān. This makes it quite clear that single verses do not stand in isolation, independent of the entirety of the Qur'ān itself.

With a predominant focus upon the Qur'ān, it is much easier to see how greatly there has been a shift in emphasis of a given Qur'ānic theme in comparison to post-Qur'ānic literature that developed in relation to that theme. The existing orthodox understanding of *ḥukm*, *sharī'a*, *fiqh* and *ḥudūd*, for example, might require an epistemological paradigm shift as Thomas Kuhn termed it.³ The paradigm is not a theory but rather a worldview. Although Kuhn specifically referred to scientific paradigms as opposed to the social science and the humanities, the same argument seems to apply to religious orthodoxies. A particular kind of understanding becomes an orthodoxy marginalising particular aspects, as discussed above. These aspects are not dismissed as anomalies as Kuhn terms it, but as 'dangerous' arguments.

³ See his valuable work T Kuhn, *The structure of scientific revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996.

For example, law was not codified by the companions after the death of the Prophet nor were there jurists in the sense of *fuqahā'* as we know them today, although there were judges to judge between people.⁴ The companions of the Prophet also seemed disinterested in codifying and documenting historiography, and in some accounts made sure that those that narrated *ḥadīth* did not do so excessively and expressed serious concern about the chain of narration (*sanad*) even before the *ḥadīth* was documented in writing.⁵ This example highlights the shift of emphasis.

The Challenges Faced

Given the nature of this investigation and the formation of its leading question, it could be claimed that the investigation itself is in fact a modern reaction to the highly polemical debate in modern Muslim political theology. Without denying that there is some measure of truth to this claim, it must be reiterated that the methodology was itself developed with as much of a holistic outlook as possible. No question arises in a vacuum; the main concern of this investigation was to identify the Qur'ānic worldview independent of post-Qur'ānic influences with respect to theo-philosophical and the jurisprudential premises.

This project however, proved even more complex and time-consuming than anticipated due to the intricacies of the analysis, thus showing the need for such kind of analysis. Due to the novelty of the research methodology, it took much trial and error on the part of the researcher to test and develop it. Even at the end, the researcher is still aware of its tentative nature. In addition, two clear anomalies arose in the course of this research.

The first is the concept of *qabā'il*, denoting a plural form of 'tribe'.⁶ However, this form is mentioned once, whereas its root word is mentioned 313 times. Were the methodology applied to this concept, one would mistakenly assume that the concept

⁴ A point that Ovamir Anjum makes in his book *Politics, Law and Community in Islamic Thought: The Taymiyyan Moment*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2012.

⁵ See Y Muḥammad, *Mushkilat al-ḥadīth*, Mu'assasat al-Intishār al-'Arabī, Beirut, 2007.

⁶ See Badawi & Abdel Haleem, *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage*, pp. 733-5.

of *tribe* is central to the Qur'ānic worldview, whereas the word also comes to mean 'before' in the form of *qabl* that is mentioned 261 times.

Another anomaly is the concept of *jumu'a*, which is mentioned only once in the Qur'ān in this form. It does not mean, however, that the Friday prayer is not prescribed or central to Muslim life. The root word is mentioned 129 times also meaning *jamī'* and *ajma'in*

With the methodology introduced in this study the interpretation of these two notions would be misleading. However, by recognising these anomalies and by reiterating that this study remains work in progress, one could still substantiate the findings of this study.

Future Research

Contemporary Muslim intellectuals and thinkers need to develop into ethicist thinkers to avoid both the atomistic approach to the Qur'ān and the overly legalistic understanding of the Qur'ān. The idea of the hierarchy of values may provide a stepping-stone for identifying Qur'ānic values independent of theo-philosophies developed in the medieval period. Further research in this field is important. A related point here is development of a Qur'ānic moral theory that moves away from the Mu'tazilite-Ash'arite debates towards moral imperatives such as *hal jazā'ū al-Iḥsān ilā al-Iḥsān* (55:60), which would have an implication on the political.

Further research needs to be conducted at a conceptual level on how one reads the *sunna*. It depends on how one takes the nature of revelation in relation to other spheres of knowledge, such as human experience, intuition, consciousness. These questions are very important and further conceptual study is required to shed further light upon them. Although the question of the normativity of the *sunna* and its authority is a very important one, it remains outside the scope of this study. This is due to the sheer amount of research involved in analyzing history, methodology and the questions of authenticity in seeking a political theory. Nevertheless, future research is necessary to investigate the role of the *sunna*.

The significant emphasis on the moral accountability highlights the critical need to return to a holistic understanding of our surroundings especially with the conditions of our world. Moral imperatives have been divorced largely from science, economics, law, politics and our general environment with the consequence of neglecting serious world poverty, social inequalities and the terrible destruction of our planet due to this ‘modern’ project, which includes the state’s apparatus. Writers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Charles Larmore argue for this comprehensiveness of moral attitude to all aspect of the modern life. This is what the Qur’an indicates in terms of accountability and the rights of others. Muslim scholars are encouraged to investigate the defects of this ‘modern project’ and to move away from the Eurocentric notions that the modern project has produced. This is the strength of Muslim proposition of moral economy, moral science, moral environment and moral politics.

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