CONTENT AND CONTEXT IN POLITICS: A SCHOLARS VIEWS ON DEMOCRACY IN ISLAM

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Abstract

Politics is a set of happenings that are linked with the governance of the people by the people for the people of a nation. Politics as it is an active practice in statements, manifestos, editorials, and philosophical texts, helps draw and redraw conceptual boundaries. To be sure, much of political life consists not in contesting formed concepts or constructing new ones, but in applying agreed-upon and cherished notions in new contexts to render unseen injustices visible or identifying additional examples of virtue, with varying success. Concepts are used in politics and reconfirmed as political concepts when they are mapped onto societal terrains in innovative and controversial ways. This paper aims at defining politics in its content and background in Islamic politics. The research adopted a qualitative approach to carry out this work. Hence, the work concealments the content and framework of politics by some scholars' and Scholars' views on democracy. This work covers how and where Islamic politics started and how politics penetrates Islam. The brief historical background of the Islamic political system, and how democracy infiltrates into Islam had been mentioned, as the scholars' views on Islam and politics, this work is very important to the researchers, especially who wanted to study Islamic politics.

Keywords : *Caliphate, Content, Democracy, Politics, views*

Introduction

Islam as a universal and final message of Allah to humanity covers both the spiritual and temporal life of human beings. It discusses in detail the socio-political and economic activities within the framework of *Shari'ah*. The expression "political concepts" refers to a set of concepts essential to any serious reflection on political life. This set includes authority, democracy, equality, freedom, justice, power and further concepts that represent fundamental political values and principles. Politics is a set of activities associated with the governance of a country or a region. It involves making decisions that are applied to a group of members, or efforts to gain power, the art and essence of living and working with others. Politics is exciting because people disagree; disagree about how they should live. Who should get what? How should power and other resources be distributed? Should society be based on cooperation or

conflict? They also disagree about how such matters should be resolved. How should collective decisions be made? Who should have a say? How much influence should each person have? This work intends to discuss the content and context of politics from the Islamic point of view. The definitions of politics by various scholars and political systems in Islam.

Concept of Politics

Islam is a universal and Divine religion that promotes all institutions and provides guidance on how to operate them. Muslim societies tend to saturate all institutions rather than differentiate them. However, this segment will highlight the meanings and nature of politics from the Western perspective. This can allow a person to at least understand the concept from its makers, it can trace politics from the understanding of early Greek philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and then modern political scientists like David Easton, Harry Laswell and other political thinkers of modern-day politics. The view of a native politician in Northern Nigeria like Mallam Aminu Kano cannot be ignored.

The word politics originated from the Greek word 'polis' meaning a city and confined to the study of the state, it has acquired a confusing variety of meanings. This has led E.E. Schattschneider to call political science 'a mountain of data surrounding a vacuum'.[1] There are several definitions of the word politics, which throw some light on the core meaning of the political scientist's subject matter. Since the word politics emanates from the Greek word, it is good to view the word politics from the Greek philosophers' perceptions. Plato and Aristotle viewed politics predominantly in terms of moral purposes that the decision-makers ought to pursue. The polis of Plato and Aristotle existed to seek the common good, civic virtue and moral perfection. However, Aristotle saw 'the highest good' as 'the end sought by political science'. Although it emphasises the moral commitments that leaders should pursue. Aristotle did not ignore the importance of political structures. He particularly gave emphases on how political leaders were selected to govern the state. He also analyses how their power was determined and the nature of their interest.[2]

Robert A. Dahl considers Aristotle's definition of politics as too restrictive since it is tied to the state organization. He, therefore, reformulates it to read 'any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, power, rule or authority. His definition broadens the political relationships to include patterns of behaviour that are not coextensive with national societies. He does follow Aristotle's concept of politics in defining and observing 'offices' or 'roles' in complex political systems.

Other political scientists view politics with a much more broad approach rather than early thinkers and philosophers. David Easton defines politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values in a society'. Easton's definition of politics centred on values allocation by those in

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[1] Moten, A. *Politics: An Islamic Perspective*, Intellectual Discourse Journal, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1993.P. 28.
[2] Ibid, Moten *Politics: An Islamic Perspective,* P. 29.

power or authority. This has provided many political scientists to describe it as a 'conventional guide'. Like Dahl, he sees politics as a set of human interactions but limits it by emphasizing 'authoritative allocations' for an entire society. Moreover, Easton focuses attention not only on the goals of policy-makers trying to alter the distribution of scarce resources or values in society but also on the authority or power relationships involved in it. As pointed out by Alan C. Isaak, this is a compromise position which is neither too restrictive nor overly broad.[3] Harold Lasswell defines politics as being concerned with 'who gets what, when and how'.[4] Laswell's definition is wide in scope, it enables a person to look for politics in many social settings, including state organization, authoritative relationships and the implication of power and conflict in the distribution process. The difference between Easton and Laswell's conception is largely in emphasis: the former focuses attention on the entire political system while the latter zeroes in on individuals with power.[5]

In the life of men, it is critically observed that two important instruments can be highlighted, as a rule, every man desires to have his way, to think and act, as he likes; and at the same time, not everyone can have his way, because he lives in society. A man desires conflict with those of another. The relations of the individual members of society with one another, therefore, need regulation by the government. When a body of people is organized as a unit for purposes of government, then it is politically organized as a body of politic or State. The essence of such a society is that a group of people called the Government are covered with authority to make laws and enforce them; they claim obedience from the members of the society whom they govern.[6] Hence, Appadorai concludes that politics can be defined as "the science concerned with the State and of the conditions essential to its existence and development". On the other hand, the part of social science treats the foundations of the State and the principles of government.[7]

However, Mallam Aminu Kano, one of the native political thinkers of Northern Nigeria and highest profile politicians of Nigeria's first Republic and the founder of the radical Northern Element Progressive Union define politics as 'Man Management'. Here Malam considers man as the most important factor in politics. The decision-making and distribution of resources shall be for the betterment and management of the man. Considering some of the definitions of politics earlier quoted like David Easton and Laswell's definitions their emphasis is more on the distribution of resources or values in the society, rather than considering man or human beings as the centre of importance.

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[3] Allan C. Isaac, *Scope and Methods of Political Science: An Introduction to the Methodology of Political inquiry,* Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press, 1975, P. 21
[4] Harold Laswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How,* Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1958.
[5] Moten, A. *Politics: An Islamic Perspective*, Intellectual Discourse Journal, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1993.P. 30.
[6] Appadoorai, A. *The Substance of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 3. [7]
Appadoorai, A. *The Substance of Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 4.

Political System in Islam and Caliphate

Throughout Islamic history, empires rose and fell for about 1400 years. The era of prophet hood, where the prophet (p.b.u.h) received direct revelations from Almighty Allah as guidance and interpretations. The era of four rightly guided Caliphs is about thirty years after the demise of the Prophet (p.b.u.h). Then the Political system of Islam was turned into kingship by Umayyads, Abbasids, Mamluks, Mughals, and Ottomans are some of the major dynasties of Islam that rose to prominence and achieved a golden age. Ibn Khaldun, in his brilliant book on historiography, the *Muqaddimah*, states that "dynasties have a natural life span like individuals, it grows up and passes into an age of stagnation and then into retrogression."[7] The collapse of the Umayyad empire, it gives room for the Abbasid to succeed them in the affairs of Muslims. They remain on the mantle of leadership for about five hundred years. After the Abbasid dynasty, the Ottoman took the mantle of leading Muslim affairs in Istanbul.[8]

The word Caliphate is the Arabic word "*half*" which means a person succeeds another person if he comes after him. This is well-known among the predecessors and contemporaries scholars. The word Caliph is he who will succeed, the leader of the *Ummah*, the plural form is *Khala'i*f and *Khulafa'*.[9] The word appears in the Qur'an in its singular and plural forms. The word appears in its literal form in some places in the Glorious Qur'an, like in Suratul Baqarah, Allah says :(Q. 2:30).

$$﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَٰئِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي ٱلْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةًۖ قَالُوٓاْ أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ ٱلدِّمَآءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَۖ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾$$

"And when your Lord said to the Angels: "Verily, I am going to place (mankind) generations after generations on earth" They said: "Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood, while we glorify You with praises and thanks and sanctify You." He (Allah) said: I know that which you do not know."[10]

There are many definitions of Caliphate. Amdiy defines politics as "it is a supreme government that comprises religious and worldly affairs, controlled by a person among them." He also defines it as the "Government of the people by the people of the Messenger of Allah, to implement basic rules of *Shari'ah*, protect Islamic image and follows and obeys by the general public."[11] These definitions recapitulate Caliphate as a supreme government in the Muslim community, which the government obeyed by all Muslims after Prophet Muhammad

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[7] Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah. (an introduction to history),* translated by Franz Rosenthal, Bollingen publishers, P. 259.

[8] Hamisu, A. M, *Muslim without a Caliph which way forward*, Allawh Journal of Islamic Studies,

[9] Ahmad Husariy, *Ad-Daulah wa Siyasatil Hukm fil Fiqhul Islamiy*. Azhariyya Publishers, Cairo. 1987. P.145.

[10] Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din and Muhsin Khan, *Translation of the meanings of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language:* King Fahd Complex, Madinah 1427 A.H. P. 7.

[11] Galush, A.A., *Nizam as Siyasiy fil Islam.* Muassasatul Risalah publishers. Cairo. 2003. P. 12.

(p.b.u.h) The person to be a Caliph could be any person chosen by people among themselves with aim of implementing Islamic law in all their system of life.[12] Ibn Khaldun in his famous book *Al-Muqaddimah* defines the concept of the political system of Islam or Caliphate as "It is a form of organization necessary to mankind, where it requires superiority and force which express the wrathfulness and animalistic (of human nature).[14]

The name Caliph means successor, the one who succeeds somebody in any position or comes after him. Muslims referring to Abu-Bakr al-Siddiq when he succeeded the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) in the year 632 used the term for the first time. Abu-Bakr was called Khalifah Rasul Allah (the successor of the Apostle of Allah) and from that time, the term applied to all heads of the Muslim state.[13] Caliph means any person who leads the affairs of Muslims from the beginning of Islam, based on the allegiance of the people of thought or with the approval of the previous Caliph.[14] In another word, the title Caliph implied the functions of a leader and a judge. His duty was not to give new interpretations in religious matters but to adhere to the Qur'an and Sunnah. The caliphs saddle with the responsibilities of *shari'ah* application to defend it. Hence, the Caliph had spiritual and worldly functions and served as the spiritual and political leaders of the Muslims.

The institution is called 'the caliphate' or 'the imamate,' and the person in charge of it is called 'the caliph' or 'the imam.' In later times, he has called 'the sultan' when there was numerous claimant to the position or when given the distances. The name caliph gave to a leader because he represents the Prophet. When Abubakar was given an oath of allegiance, he was called *khilafat Rasulullah* "representative of the messenger of Allah." However, there is a difference of opinion among the scholars concerning the use of "Allah's representative (*khalifatul Allah),* some consider it as permissible as derived from the general Allah's representative of all the descendent of Adam, implied in the verse of the Glorious Qur'an, "I am making on earth a caliph" (Q.2:30). In general, it is not permissible to use the expression of representative of God. Abubakar (RA) forbade its use; he said, "I am not the representative of God, but the representative of the Messenger of Allah." Furthermore, one can represent someone absent, but not present (Allah the Omnipotent)[17] some scholars are of the view that the word Caliph cannot be given to any Muslim leader that comes after the leadership of AlHassan ibn Ali (R. A).

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[12] Galush, A.A., *Nizam as Siyasiy fil Islam.* Muassasatul Risalah publishers. Cairo. 2003. P. 12P. 12. [14] Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,(an introduction to history),* translated by Franz Rosenthal, Bollingen publishers, P. 256.

[13] Faisal H. Al-Kathiri, *Succession to the Caliphate in Early Islam*, being a Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History, Portland State University, 1980.P. 29.

[14] Ahmad Husariy, *Ad-Daulah wa Siyasatil Hukm fil Fiqhul Islamiy*,Azhariyya Publishers, Cairo. 1987. P. 57. [17] Abdurrahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah,(an introduction to history),* translated by Franz Rosenthal, Bollingen publishers, P. 258.

Scholars' Views On the Status of Democracy

The concept of democracy has been analysed and defined by many political scientists, but, here the main emphasis is to define the concept of democracy and analysed its basic principles. This will help in analysing the basic terms of democracy with principles of Islamic ruling to verify whether it is compatible or incompatible with the religion of Islam. That is can democracy go together with Islam or can never go together? It is difficult to reach a consensus on the definition of democracy. However, the main idea of democracy is widely accepted to have originated in Athens in the 5th century BC.[15] The term originates from the Greek word (Demokratia) "rule of the people" which was coined from (demos) "people" and (Kratos" "power or rule".

The Webster New Encyclopaedia Dictionary defines democracy as a government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through representation. Appodarai defines democracy as "A system of government under which the people exercise the governing power either directly or through representatives periodically elected by themselves."[16] According to Abraham Lincoln, democracy is the government of the people by the people and for the people. Looking at some of these definitions of politics it can be understood the power is vested in the people. The people have absolute rights and freedom to govern their affairs without any consideration of any divine law.

The application of democracy as a system of government became popular in Europe during the renaissance and scientific revolutions. The church lost its power and was replaced by science as a new concept in all ramifications of life. However, democracy became more popular after the French revolution of 1789. Many historians consider the French revolution of 1789 as an important landmark in the history of mankind. A total rejection of the old system of government followed by an attempt to rebuild a new society based on the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.[20]

Muslim have contact with democracy because of colonial domination in the nineteenth century. Colonialism simply means the annexation and subsequent domination of one country by another. In the case of Muslims, all the colonial powers that came from Western Europe is Britain, France, Germany, Portugal, Italy, and Belgium. Domination means total control of the political, economic, and social affairs of the colony by the colonizing powers.[17] The essence of establishing a colonial system in Muslim lands was to overthrow the Islamic system of *Shari'ah*, the only source of political authority and replace it with the European system of

[15] Nwogu, G.A.I. Democracy: *It is Meaning and Dissenting Opinion of the Political Class in Nigeria: A Philosophical Approach,* Journal of Education and Practice, Vol.6, No.4, 2015. P. 131.
[16] Appodarai, A. *The Substance of Politics*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2004, P. 137. [20] Rao, B.V., *History of Europe (1450-1815)*, Sterling Publishers, New Delhi, 2009, p. 256.
[17] Barkindo, B.M et all. *Africa and the wider world*, Book Three, Learn Africa plc, Lagos. P.41

civilization. [18] The British introduced an indirect rule system; The French introduced Assimilation, and later change to Association. The Portuguese adopt a policy of assimilation and the Germans adopts a policy of paternalism. All with the sole aim of integrating Muslim communities to abandon their lifestyles and adopt the modern or western style. Muslim thinkers are divided into two major divisions regarding their point on the status of democracy. The name given to each group is not a matter, but their point of view is the most important. The divisions are as follows:

i. Traditionist Reformist View

According to Sulaiman Jami'u, this group of scholars' view can be traced from Shaikh Muhammad bn Abdul Wahhab (1703-1791) and Shaikh Abdullahi Dan Fodio (1766-1829), whose main goal was to resist the perceived alien and hostile values imported from the West, which according to them had caused the Muslims defeat and degradation. They were fully convinced that Muslims should draw inspiration directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah, which is relevant to every time and place. The Islamic State shall form its political ideology through the comprehensive application of the *Shari'ah*. They held the view that other forms of so-called Western ideas like scientific education can be Islamised.[19] Other scholars who held this view include Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Rashid Rida (1888-1935), Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and Maulana Abu A'la Maududi (1903-1980).[20]

They viewed Islamic State as the only alternative for the salvation of mankind, of its stand on justice, equality and legitimate aspirations and interests of humanity in general. They debunked the western view that religion is incompatible with contemporary politics, science and civilization. They encouraged Muslims to establish the Caliphate instead of parochial nations based on a Western system of government. Furthermore, according to *Shari'ah* a Muslim must live and die under the obligation of an Islamic State. That is with an oath of allegiance to an Islamic ruler, Caliph or Imam. There is an authentic hadith; the Prophet (p.b.u.h) says, "He who dies without any oath of allegiance (to an Imam) dies the death of ignorance".[21]

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[18] Anwar., A. *From Maitatsine Revolts to Boko Haram: Examining the Socio-Economic Circumstances of Religious Crisis in Northern Nigeria.* Paper organized by the Department of History BUK. On Saturday, Feb. 13, 2010, at Musa Abdullahi Auditorium, New Site.

[19] Jami'u Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusion Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam & Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983*, Lavgark Investment Ltd, Ilorin, 2012, Pp. 43-44.

[20] Jami'u Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusion Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam & Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983.* P.43.

[21] Hadith check its takhrij.

ii.   Westernized Reformist View

The people who hold this view imitated the West's view of separating religion from politics. They indirectly accepted the secularist view and tried to inject it into Islam. They argued that Islam should be separated from politics as against the majority view held by the majority of Muslim scholars. Some of the Muslim scholars who held this view are Ali Abd Al-Raziq and his disciple Khalid Muhammad Khalid. Abd Al-Raziq in his treaties *Al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm* criticized the validity of *Khilafa* which he claimed has no basis in Islam. To him Islam is just a religious call, *da'wah* and the theory of *Imamah* is the work of theologians and Jurists. Furthermore, he argued that Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) is the undisputed religious leader, his political activity is not only accidental to his da'awah, but it shares nothing with politics except its name. However, he agreed that some Muslims should be responsible for public affairs ordinarily.[22] Khalid Muhammad Khalid in his treatise called *Min huna nabda'* agreed with his teacher Abd Al-Raziq.

However, the majority of Muslim scholars rejected this view; this is because it contradicted many verses from the Glorious Qur'an, Prophetic Ahadith as well as a practical application of the Messenger Muhammad (p.b.u.h) during his lifetime and his Rightly Guided Caliphs. Most Muslim scholars like Muhammad al-Ghazali one of the disciples of Sheikh Rashid Rida had counter-challenged the view presented by Abd Al-Raziq and Khalid Muhammad. He wrote a book titled *Min hunaNa'allam*, he argued, "Islam must gain political power like the French and Russian Revolutions (1789 and 1917 respectively). He further analysed that, the Prophet started his mission as a preacher, an announcer and a warner, but ended as a judge and ruler *hakim*… his Messenger ship turned from *da'awah* to *dawlah*"[23]

Contemporary Scholars' Views

Scholars who held the view include Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905), Rashid Rida (1888-1935), Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) and Maulana Abu A'la Maududi (1903-1980).[24] They viewed Islamic State as the only alternative for the salvation of mankind, of its stand on justice, equality and legitimate aspirations and interests of humanity in general. They debunked the western view that religion is incompatible with contemporary politics, science and civilization. They encouraged Muslims to establish the Caliphate instead of parochial nations based on a Western system of government.

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[22] Jami'u Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusion Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam & Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983*, Lavgark Investment Ltd, Ilorin, 2012, Pp. 40-41.

[23] Jami'u Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusion Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam & Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983*, P. 43.

[24] Jami'u Sulaiman, *Towards Diffusion Religious Tension in the Polity: Islam & Politics in Nigeria 1903-1983.* P.43.

Perhaps the most bewildering forms of nationalism during the decline of the Ottoman were the nationalistic ideas of the Turks and Arabs. The Turks began to think of the Ottoman Empire as a purely Turkish state.[25] The victory of the Allies in World War I brought about the end of the Ottoman Empire. The war of independence was waged against the Armenian and Greek armies backed up by Russian and Allied powers respectively. The war started in 1919 to 1922. The newly formed Turkish army defeated the Greeks and expelled the colonial Allies by the end of 1922. Mustapha Kamel At-Turk became the new leader of the Republic of Turkey. Kemalists and subsequently the Republic embraced the "universal validity of Western modernity" and started a series of reforms.[26]

The fundamental reforms of the *Kemalist* elite came as a reaction to two fundamental problems: the personal rule of the Sultan and the Islamic ideology as a restraint on progress. Removing the religious school system and establishing a secular educational system, based on the forms and style of Europeans, banning the religious Sharia law, adapting the secular Swiss Civil Code, replacing the Arabic alphabet with Latin, banning the Caliphate, establishing religious affairs to control the power of Islam, changing the old style clothes with the European ones.[27]

The 20th century was a century in which the Muslim world experienced at the hands of the west a dismantling of some of its important institutions. The most significant of them was the total collapse of the Ottoman Empire. For the first time, the collective consciousness of Muslims perished, no Caliph at all in the Muslim world. Muslims attempted to restore and bring back the Caliphate system. Mustapha Kemal Ataturk abolished the Ottoman in 1924. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928 partly as a reaction to the end of the Caliphate. From the beginning, the central aim has been the need towards restoring the Caliphate and recovering the lands that had been lost.[28] Another attempt to restore a Caliphate was in the Indian subregion *Jama'at al-Islamiy* founded by Abul A'ala Maududi.[29]

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[25] Bernard Lewis, *the Arabs in History.* Oxford University Press, New York. 1993, P. 187.
[26] Ayhan Kaya, "*The State of the art: Various paths to modernity*" Turkish Case report. Bilgi University Press, Istanbul. 2009.. *P. 11*
[27] Ibid. P. 12
[28] For an in-depth study of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, consult Ishaq Musa al-Hussein, *Al-Ikhwan alMuslimun.* Bierut. (1955)
[29] Sayyed al-Maududi, *the Message of Jama'at al-Islamiy: A constitution making.* Luck now. 1948

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