

# The Political Thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri in its Islamic Context: Understanding the Concept of Khilafa and its Relevance to Modern Society in Light of Medieval Islamic Teachings

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### ZOFSHAN TAJ

Zofshan Taj originated from the small town of Slough in southeast England. She received her B.A. in History and Politics at Queen Mary University of London and has begun her M.A. in Near and Middle Eastern Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) this September. This, she hopes, will

enable her to pursue her desire of becoming a lecturer and forming a career in the field of academia. Upon completion of her M.A., she intends to continue towards PhD studies; her main subject interest being the Islamic State, its political and historical dimensions, and Islamic theology with a particular interest in the 11th century theologian Al-Ghazzali. She takes a keen interest in Middle Eastern religion and society and is also interested in the history of the region, especially regarding the early development and formative period of the medieval Islamic world. Her studies, thus far, have enabled her to gain an insight into the existing political situation of the Islamic world within the Middle East, and how or to what extent history has molded contemporary events.

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## *Zofshan Taj*

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# THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF TAHIR-UL-QADRI IN ITS ISLAMIC CONTEXT: UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF KHILAFAT AND ITS RELEVANCE TO MODERN SOCIETY IN LIGHT OF MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC TEACHINGS

## INTRODUCTION

*Juda ho deen siyasat se, tau reh jati ha changazi* (If governmental rule becomes devoid of religious righteousness<sup>1</sup> then that which remains is *changazi* [ruthlessness/tyranny, referring to the time of Genghis Khan's rule]). The above aphorism, as expressed by the distinguished Pakistani poet and philosopher Allama Iqbal, accurately summarizes the political thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri,<sup>2</sup> a leading Islamic thinker from Pakistan, whose work I intend to critically explore within this paper. The present work is therefore essentially an analysis of the Islamic political thought of Tahir-ul-Qadri on the concept of Islamic *khilafat* (rule/government) and its relevance to modern society, in comparison to medieval Islamic political thought.

The need for an Islamic state within the modern era emerged due to the

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1. Righteousness here means moral and ethical justice.
  2. Tahir-ul-Qadri was born in 1951 in Jhang, Pakistan, to Farid ud-Din Qadri who was known to be a prominent Pakistani scholar of his time. Qadri is the founding leader of Minhaj-ul-Quran International (MQI), established in 1980, "an organization with branches and centres in more than ninety countries around the globe." (Minhaj-ul-Qur'an International, "A Profile of Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri," Minhaj-ul-Qur'an International, <http://www.minhaj.org/english/tid/8718/A-Profile-of-Shaykh-ul-Islam-Dr-Muhammad-Tahir-ul-Qadri.html> (accessed September 18, 2009).

dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the rise of Arab nationalism, which triggered a galvanizing reaction across the Muslim world especially in the Indian subcontinent, thus introducing the idea of establishing an Islamic state which would solely cater for Islamic ideals of social justice.<sup>3</sup> The impact of expansionist Europe was pivotal in how it shaped the thoughts and aims of both Islamic modernism and fundamentalism, for both were driven by the same experience of Europe's technical and military superiority.<sup>4</sup> The negative impact of colonialism created fertile ground for the growth of radical Islamist movements such as the *Jamaat-e-Islami* and the Muslim Brotherhood.

This development within the Islamic world has summoned modern Muslim intellectuals like Tahir-ul-Qadri to explore the debate over the future role of the Islamic state, that is, how Islam has become a state-centric political ideology fit for radicals to exploit by dispossessing Islam of its moral content and disdaining its role as a *dīn* (a system of life which encompasses both religious and secular aspects). What makes Qadri's political thought unique from that of any other modern thinker such as Sayyid Qutb (who also has much to contribute on the topic of *khilafa* and Islamic rule), is the unyielding and resolute austerity of his viewpoint and his ability to deploy a vast array of traditional Islamic authorities across the spectrum of medieval Islamic political thought, to legitimize his notion of Islamic rule, and yet simultaneously hold the ability to portray Islam as a progressive religion able to effectively function in the modern era. Qadri is engaging in an intellectual debate not only with Muslims of Pakistan and Muslim youth in the West, but also with Western academia. In doing so, he has challenged their views on the out-datedness of *khilafa* and its inability to adapt to contemporary society.

This paper shall seek to relate Qadri's modern political thought on the Islamic state to the historical view of *khilafa* and assess how the socio-political

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3. L.F. Rushbrook Williams, *The State of Pakistan* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 127.

4. Antony Black, *The History of Islamic Political Thought: From the Prophet to the Present* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), 279.



Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri  
(Minhaj-ul-Quran International)

context, which he was exposed to in Pakistan, influenced his political thought, and to what extent Western political thought has affected his view on the future role of the Islamic state. To this extent, the present work may challenge the notion that modern Islamic political thought on *khilafa* is solely based on medieval Islamic teachings. To the contrary, it may be the present global world order and influence of the Western state system which has more so affected modern Islamic political thought.

### **A MODERN INTERPRETATION OF KHILAFAT: UNDERSTANDING TERMINOLOGY AND ERADICATING MISCONCEPTIONS**

There is no one specific vision of the Islamic state and this is very much apparent in the views of both medieval and modern Islamic political thinkers, most obviously because there is no common consensus among them on the general structure and role of the Islamic state. The reason for such disparity may be due to the nature of Shari'a (Islamic law based on the Qur'an and Sunnah), which is perceived to be like a vast ocean that knows no bounds, and the Islamic state itself is alleged to be an ideological state; its main purpose being the implementation of the will of God. How one goes about fulfilling this task will vary because Shari'a is an open system of law which has no conceptual or theoretical closure; it is constantly evolving due to the use of *ijtihad* (a methodological term within the context of Shari'a which describes the process of independently

interpreting the Qur'an and Sunnah in order to make a legal decision or ruling.

Consequently it may be argued that Shari'a takes the role of an overarching umbrella which determines the characteristics of the Islamic state. The advantage of this is that the Islamic state can change and adapt to circumstance. A plausible disadvantage may be that within the same time period, more than one concept of the Islamic state could arise.<sup>5</sup> Such discrepancy is evident in the writings of many medieval Islamic thinkers. Analyzing the thoughts of thinkers like Mawardi, Ibn Khaldun and Ibn Taymiyya<sup>6</sup> upon the concept of *khilafa* will consequently enable one to understand the affect medieval Islamic political thought has had on modern scholars such as Tahir-ul-Qadri, thereby forming a comparison between modern and medieval Islamic political thought on the Islamic state.

Before moving on to explore Tahir-ul-Qadri's view of the Islamic state, it is worth pausing for a moment to consider and briefly shed some light on his political career (essentially based in Pakistan), for this, to some extent, would have influenced his thoughts on *khilafa* and the role of the Islamic state in the contemporary era. Qadri's political career began in 1989 when he founded the Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), his own political party, and was elected as a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan, representing his constituency of Lahore, Pakistan. However, after many years of working as an opposition leader in the National Assembly, Qadri decided to issue his resignation from the As-

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5. Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, trans. Carol Volk (London: I.B. Taurus, 1994), 9. Employing more than one concept of the Islamic state is different from having a plurality of co-existing states. While the latter may not cause conflict, separate outlooks on the role and purpose of a single Islamic state can.

6. While there are many medieval Muslim scholars who have written on the Islamic state, the focal point of interest for the present work shall lay in the teachings of the above mentioned three scholars, essentially because they reflect the broad spectrum of varying opinion on the Islamic state which was prevalent within the tradition of medieval Islamic political thought, and all three scholars were from different time periods within the medieval era and thus reflect the changing trend of Islamic political thought.

sembly in 2004.<sup>7</sup>

This resignation was issued in the form of a comprehensive critique of the Pakistani political system. He declared in his resignation statement that “in my understanding, this Assembly is no longer an assembly. The role which the Pakistani constitution has given to the Assembly is not exercised by it. This Assembly does not have its own agenda; it works for the personal agendas of the originators of this Assembly.”<sup>8</sup> It was not made clear during his interview with the Pakistani news channel PTV of whom precisely Tahir-ul-Qadri was referring when he spoke of the “originators.”<sup>9</sup> Yet as Qadri explained in his resignation statement, the essential function of an assembly is to discuss the domestic and international issues of a nation and make decisions in accordance with the needs of that nation. Such functions, according to Qadri, are not being carried out by the Pakistani government. He makes a very important point regarding the internal functioning of the Pakistani government in stating that there has been no significant discussion on important geopolitical and regional issues such as eliminating terrorism or Pakistan’s international relations. What has been discussed is the simple and meaningless drafting of legislation which will inevitably be passed without one’s consent; in other words, handling small issues of no affect. No doubt the obvious implication which Qadri has made here is a lack of sovereignty.

One of the fundamental root causes, as noted by Tahir-ul-Qadri, which has led to such situations as described above and has hindered so-called modern Islamic states like Pakistan from effectively governing their populace is a basic inability to understand the very nature of Islam as a *dīn* as opposed to a religion

7. Tahir-ul-Qadri, “Statement of Resignation from Pakistan National Assembly,” Minhaj-ul-Quran Publications, <http://www.minhaj.org/images-db/resignation-eng.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2011).

8. “Dr. Tahir ul Qadri’s Interview with Dr. Moeed Pirzada on PTV Prime’s World (1/6),” YouTube video, 8:56, from an interview with Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri hosted by Dr. Moeed Pirzada and televised on PTV Prime’s World Today (Pakistan Television), uploaded by minhajorg, March 5, 2009, [http://youtu.be/HEeipfjH5\\_o](http://youtu.be/HEeipfjH5_o) (accessed April 15, 2010).

9. Ibid.

in the Western sense of the term. On being questioned regarding his motive behind the formation of the Minhaj-ul-Quran movement in 1980, Tahir-ul-Qadri mentioned in an interview, that the fundamental reason for his establishing this organization was a need to address and correct the misconception of Islam as a religion, in the Western sense of the term's meaning, as opposed to *dīn*.<sup>10</sup>

*Dīn* is a concept alien to Western political policy due to the almost uniform separation of state and church. Many Islamic organizations, in Qadri's view, make the mistake of limiting their aim to focusing only on the religious aspects of life. There is consequently no emphasis on secular education or development. Thus, the global perspective of Islam is seen as being grounded in religious aspects of Shari'a only. This has caused problems in understanding what Islamic knowledge consists of and what the basic role of the Islamic state should be. Those who have extensive knowledge on Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) and other religious aspects of life are sometimes ignorant of modern subjects such as political science, economics, and so on. They are, therefore, often unqualified for providing the direction and leadership necessary to resolve political or socio-economic predicaments, even in light of their knowledge of Islam. This evaluation can also be applied in the case of those who do possess secular knowledge and are aware of today's political issues and circumstance, but are ignorant of the Islamic position in such matters. They do not know how to view current issues from a religious point of view; their knowledge is based in non-Islamic, Western teaching.

Tahir-ul-Qadri believes that *deeni taleem* (*dīn* education) and *mazhabi taleem* (religious education) are two different concepts. *Mazhabi taleem* essentially concentrates on education which concerns the study of classical Islamic texts, Hadith and Quranic studies, Islamic theology, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), and so forth, without placing much emphasis on the implications of such studies upon the secular aspects of life. *Deeni taleem*, on the other hand, is an all-encom-

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10. Ibid.



passing totality which incorporates both *mazhabi taleem* (religious education) and *dunyavi taleem* (secular education).<sup>11</sup> It implements Shari'a into one's practical life by integrating teachings taken from classical Islamic texts and making them applicable to present social, economic, and political circumstances. In this way, Qadri argues that Islam is unlike Christianity and Judaism; it is a *din*. This is important to take into consideration when contemplating the fundamental format and functions of the Islamic state. The message which Qadri is trying to convey is plain: a true Islamic state cannot be formed with a misconception of the basic nature of the Islamic system. Islam must first be understood for what it truly is – a *din* as opposed to a religion.

In viewing the modern perception of Islam, that is, how the Islamic state would function in modern society, in light of this concept of *din*, Tahir-ul-Qadri emphasizes the practicality of Islam as a functioning system, applicable to all times. He views Shari'a as a system with no conceptual closure due to its constant evolution over time. Qadri explains that there are two aspects to Islam: First, the basic structure and fundamental principles of Islam, which are constant and unchanging. In this he makes reference to the Qur'an and Sunnah, which are an *abadi hidaayat* (eternal guidance). The second, he claims, is man-made law which, with the graduation of time, becomes outdated due to man's inability to perceive and envision the changes which society shall face.<sup>12</sup> In society, man-made laws change with circumstance in order for man to survive and meet the changes encountered. He thinks Islamic knowledge has been able to fulfill man's needs to date due to *ijtihad*, the adaptable element in Islamic law. Legislation through *ijtihad* permits new interpretations according to changing circumstance, which is supported by the Qur'an and Sunnah.

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11. Ibid.

12. "Dr. Tahir-ul-Qadri Interview: What is the Modern Perception of Islam," YouTube video, 6:57, from an interview with Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri, uploaded by islamicmultimedia, October 21, 2008, <http://youtu.be/uPjBE17Xpns> (accessed April 11, 2010).

Qadri gives the example of the “four schools of thought,”<sup>13</sup> each of which lays its foundation in Shari‘a. Consequently, any rules made within the different schools will not conflict the integral law of Shari‘a. Hence the same basic principles can be used and interpreted in different ways to seek and fulfill the different needs in society according to the philosophies of each school. Qadri describes *ijtihad* as a device which allows for a “reconstructive spirit” to be prevalent within Shari‘a, while preventing Islam from becoming an outdated *dīn* in the future.

Explaining this concept of *dīn* and its relevance to modernity is vital for understanding Qadri’s definition of *khilafa*, since the latter could only be made clear when explained in light of the correct understanding of *dīn*. When explaining the true concept of *khilafa*, Tahir-ul-Qadri clarifies that “the political authority of the Muslim Ummah (community) whatever the shape or form has been given the nomenclature of *khilafa*.”<sup>14</sup> So, *khilafa* denotes Islamic rule or government. However, when taken in its most literal sense the term *khilafa* may be defined as *niyaabah* (trusteeship) and *amaanah* (vicegerency).

This form of vicegerency is not restricted to the political sense, as is evident in the varying references made to the term *khilafa* within the Qur’an. In Surah Hadid (Qur’an 57:7), the economic sense of the term is used: “Believe in Allah and His Messenger (blessings and peace be upon him) and spend (in His cause) out of that (wealth) in which He has made you His vicegerents (and trustees).”<sup>15</sup> This, according to Tahir-ul-Qadri, is “*istikhlaaf fil-‘maal*” (economic vicegerency); being a trustee or *khalifa* of God’s wealth or *maal* (to spend it in the right way and use it for good deeds).<sup>16</sup> In Surah Nur (Qur’an 24:55) reference to the political sense of leadership and government is made, which Qadri refers

13. These are the four schools of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) within Sunni Islam (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi‘i and Hanbali); each named after a medieval scholar who began that specific school of jurisprudence.

14. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State: True Concept and Eradication of Misconceptions*, DVD, English (Lahore: Minhaj-ul-Quran International, 2010).

15. Qur’an 57:7 (Irfan-ul-Quran: English translation of Qur’an by Tahir-ul-Qadri).

16. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

to as “*istikhlāf fil-Siyasah*” (political vicegerency): “He will surely bestow upon them *Khilafa* (the trust of right to rule) as He granted (the right to) rule to those who were before them.”<sup>17</sup> *Khilafa* in relation to government (political vicegerency) would therefore indicate the rule of man on earth as God’s vicegerent. The varying economic and political usages of the term *khilafa* confirm that the underlying concept of *khilafa* as vicegerency is applicable in all aspects of life; hence, supporting the definition of Islam as an all-encompassing *dīn*.

In agreement with the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyya,<sup>18</sup> Qadri views *khilafa* as an underlying concept with no specific form. Although Ibn Taymiyya did not express concern over the need to establish an ideological Islamic state, he did however disagree with the belief that the Qur’an has issued a given constitution which outlines the precise format of the ideal Islamic state. In doing so, Tamiyya removed Quranic legitimacy from the traditional claim of the theory of *khilafa*. The state was only significant in that it institutionalized the preeminence of Islam by establishing religious norms in society. For Ibn Taymiyya, the Islamic state need not be visualized in a specific form with particular physical characteristics, on the condition that the state put into practice the fundamental principle of implementing God’s will.

Likewise, Qadri agrees that there have been many changes over time in the basic nature of political rule (monarchic, aristocratic, democratic) and this has resulted in many political developments in human society (federations, unitary governments, presidential systems, parliamentary systems, and so on). In light of this, any state can be an Islamic state, on the condition that the policy made by the state and the principles upon which it is governed are positively in accordance with Shari’a law. In pursuit of this, all state policies must be made under

17. Qur’an 24:55 (Irfan-ul-Quran).

18. Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328 CE) lived in the time period during which the Mongols invaded the Muslim world. Having to flee his homeland as a refugee Ibn Taymiyya naturally felt hostility towards the Mongol rulers who eventually embraced Islam. He however denounced the Mongols as unbelievers by asserting that they still followed parts of the Yasa code, which were non-Islamic, and had therefore not adopted Shari’a in its entirety.

the shade of Islamic supremacy, and must be subservient to Shari'a . Qadri explains that "the different forms of government are just various mechanisms and suitabilities."<sup>19</sup> These are *ijtihaadi*, that is, matters with no specific law or ruling on them, which may change with circumstance.

Qadri thus defines *khilafa* as a system with an open structure, and refers to this system of Islamic rule as "*khilafat-e-Illahi*," for which the English equivalent is *theocracy*. However, he also notes that there is a fundamental difference between Islamic theocracy and the Western theocracy of the past. The form of theocracy which is known to Islam is fundamentally different from the theocracy of medieval Europe, wherein a religious priestly class exercised unchecked authority by implementing and legalizing laws in God's name. Islamic theocracy, on the other hand, is not governed by a particular group of religious elites; the input of the entire Islamic community is required for it to function. The Islamic state system can, therefore, be termed a 'theo-democracy' due to the element of divine legislation, which attributes the Islamic state with a limited popular sovereignty. The Islamic government is a democracy in the sense that all such issues, in which there is no direct ruling of divine law, can be resolved through *ijtihad*. However, on those issues for which there is a specific law, it must be obeyed. This mandate reveals its theocratic nature in the sense that this rule or law either in the Qur'an or Sunnah cannot be repealed or overruled by man-made law, whether the latter is formed by a learned jurist or a common man.

While this may be seen as an infringement upon one's freedom and liberty, one may argue that God has taken the right to legislate law not to restrict man's freedom, but to safeguard and protect it. Hence God has imposed divine limits in certain cases which may be regulated according to circumstance, but not overruled. The commonality between Islamic *jamuriyya* (democracy) and non-Islamic *jamuriyya* is that the majority opinion is respected in both cases. The difference is that in Islamic *jamuriyya* the majority opinion cannot amend,

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19. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

appeal, or abrogate Shari'a law . Sanctity of the vote does not mean abrogation of Shari'a . This is the condition; this is *khilafa*.

The deliberate ambiguity in the structural nature of Islamic government and rule is further reflected in the example of the prophet, Muhammad, who decided to leave the appointment of the next *khalifa* (leader of Islamic community) open to the ummah rather than nominating the next leader himself. This, according to Qadri, was so that the opportunity for political development would not be lost and the doors opened to *ijtihad* would not be closed. This also shows that the specific format of leadership was not so important for Muhammad to give a precise one; he left this open to the ummah, and consequently declared this to be an "ijtahaadi matter."<sup>20</sup>

Tahir-ul-Qadri sees this as evident in the different methods of election or appointment experienced during the time of rule of the *Khulfa-e-rashideen* (four rightly-guided khalifas)<sup>21</sup>. In a similar manner to the medieval theologian Ibn Khaldun,<sup>22</sup> Qadri attributes a democratic significance to the medieval methods of election and nomination, by introducing the concept of *bay'a* as a form of vote.<sup>23</sup> Ibn Khaldun in his *Muqaddimah* explained the concept of *bay'a* (an oath of allegiance to the ruler) as a means to formalize one's contract with one's ruler; "they put their hands into his hand to confirm the contract."<sup>24</sup> In a similar way, taking the example of the election of Uthman (the third khalifa), Qadri describes how there was a difference of opinion on who should be the next khalifa and many had directly approached Ali to do *bay'a* on his hands, yet he refused,

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20. Ibid.

21. The four rightly-guided khalifas were the successors of the Prophet Muhammad and representatives of the Muslim community after him; namely Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan, and Ali ibn Abi Talib.

22. Born in 1332 CE, Khaldun was a medieval Islamic scholar and theologian who lived in a North African tribal society during a period of decline for Islam.

23. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

24. Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 428.

stating that this matter is the right of the *shura* (Parliament) to decide.

Two points are to be noted here: First, *bay'a* is giving your opinion, casting your vote, consenting to choose or appoint someone as your representative or as head of the state. At that time there was no procedure involving ballot papers or ballot boxes. So the people would express their opinion and consent in the form of *bay'a*, which was not just a process or part of *khilafa*, but rather was a common method of declaring your intention, will, and commitment to something or someone. In the political sense, *bay'a* was an expression of opinion on a potential leader. Qadri thus considers voting to be the modern form of *bay'a*.<sup>25</sup>

Secondly, the *shura* during the life of Muhammad was a parliament consisting of representatives for the community, from the community, who discussed issues related to the community. It was divided between two houses: *shura-e-khaas* (special house) and *shura-e-a'am* (general house). Of course, one must mention here that *parliament* is an English word, which cannot be found in any translation of the Qur'an or Sunnah. The fundamental point to remember is that the *shura* is a house of representatives comprised of senior community members who have been elected or appointed by the community.

In the case of Uthman's election, both the *shura-e-khaas* and *shura-e-a'am* seemed to be equally divided on the issue of whether to elect Uthman or Ali. Hence, a final decision was to be made by the general approval of the community. This, according to Qadri, was done in the form of a referendum by the "chief election commissioner," Abdul Rahman bin Auf. Again, although this specific title is not mentioned in any Hadith,<sup>26</sup> Qadri explains that one might find the title *chief election commission* helpful considering the responsibilities of Abdul Rahman bin Auf, which were to conduct the election, get the opinions of the people, and obtain their votes by consulting them. It is important to place

25. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

26. Hadith are narrative compilations of the words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad, and are extensively used within Islamic jurisprudence and to get a better understanding of the teachings of the Qur'an.

emphasis upon the function, not the specific term itself, for the difference in Arabic and English cannot render the concept Islamic or un-Islamic. He was appointed for *istiswab-ul-a'am*, which Tahir-ul-Qadri interprets to mean 'general election' or referendum, since every sane and senior member was consulted from the community. Through this referendum, Uthman was appointed as the third khalifa. He was not appointed with the *bay'a* of the *shura*, he was appointed by the direct vote and opinion of the citizens, on the basis of adult franchise (common vote of the people).

This interpretation of Qadri's can be seen as contrasting that of Mawardi's,<sup>27</sup> whose theory of *khilafa* required that only those authorized to elect could do so, for Abu Bakr was initially elected only by five persons.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to note that Mawardi has used Abu Bakr's election method as a means to condone the need for popular consent. In contrast to Mawardi, Tahir-ul-Qadri sees the elective method of Uthman as signifying how important it was to consult the *jamhoor* (majority opinion). Qadri has therefore used the very same examples of the elective methods of the *khulafa-e-rashideen* to support approval of the use of popular consent.

Regarding the notion that there should be one khalifa and Islamic head for the whole world, Qadri agrees with Ibn Khaldun who approved of the simultaneous existence of more than one imam (who need not be of *Qureshi*<sup>29</sup> descent), on the condition that they administer in different and vastly separated

27. Mawardi, a native of Basra, born in 972 CE, was a judge by profession in Baghdad. He belonged to the Sunni Shaf'ai School of jurisprudence, although he was often known to play the devil's advocate when disputes arose between the Shi'ite Buwayhids and the Abbasids. The bulk of his Islamic political thought is found in his *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyah* (Ordinances of Government), which were written with the intent of re-asserting the lost authority of the Abbasid Khilafa. About this latter point, see Erwin, I.J. Rosenthal, *Political thought in Medieval Islam* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1958), 27.

28. Qamaruddin Khan, *Al-Mawardi's Theory of the State* (Lahore: Islamic Book Foundation, 1983), iv. Mawardi also believed that the imam (ruler) must be of "Qureshi" descent. See Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, 428.

29. The Qureshi people were members of the Qureish Tribe, the leading tribe of Makkah during the appearance and rise of Islam.

geographical territories, thus making communication difficult between provinces. One may thus conclude that Ibn Khaldun approved of the *nation-state*: an independent territorially bound province consisting of a community bound by the unifying force of *asabiyya*.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Qadri also explains that if the Muslim ummah unite anywhere, create a society and install a head from among them, this would be *khilafa*. He further explains that the inability of Muslims to establish *khilafa* is due to their persistence on wrongly interpreting the concept of ummah. For Qadri the basic reason for the establishment of the Islamic state is so as to maintain *iltizam al-jam'mah* (organized collectivity), be it one state or a plurality of states. To this extent he again agrees with Ibn Khaldun on the necessity of maintaining *asabiyya* within the community to keep it intact, for which a social contract—although established in theory by Western thinkers such as Rousseau, Hobbes and Locke—is a common need for all humans, be they citizens of a Muslim or non-Muslim country. An organized society fulfilling certain conditions with certain characteristics is a state.<sup>31</sup>

Muhammad is purported to have said that if there are three Muslims traveling together, they should appoint one of them as their *amir* (leader). This hadith was used by Ibn Taymiyya to legitimize submission to tyrannical rule, for despite his antagonism towards the Mongols, Ibn Taymiyya believed in the importance of obeying a ruler in order to maintain stability in society.<sup>32</sup> He granted

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30. See Ibn Khaldun, *Muqaddimah*, 372. Khaldun describes *asabiyya* in his *Muqaddimah* as a cohesive force or a feeling of group solidarity which is narrowed into one particular person from that group, who takes the position of authority and moves towards kingship. He saw dynasties as having a cycle of growth and decline which lasts for three generations. Dynasties are strongest when the feeling of *asabiyya* is at its peak in the first generation. In the second generation this group feeling is diluted to some extent due to “proud superiority” on the part of the ruler, who is living under the illusion that the conditions of *asabiyya* are the same, yet a gradual shift of loyalty is noticed. In the third generation, the dynasty faces complete annihilation due to the absence of *asabiyya* and the reliance on external support rather than support from within the group or community itself.

31. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *The Islamic State*, DVD.

32. Emmanuel Sivan, “Ibn Taymiyya: Father of the Islamic Revolution, Medieval Theology and Modern Politics,” *Encounter* 60, no.3 (1989): 41–4.



his approval for the need to follow the ruler no matter what his political temperament and reasons for holding power may be and defended this rather despotic view by exploiting the hadith that “sixty years of rule under a tyrant Imam is better than a night without an Imam.”<sup>33</sup> He also supported this claim by making reference to the above mentioned Hadith regarding the three travellers.

Qadri on the other hand, uses this Hadith to make an altogether different claim: that by stating this, Muhammad never declared that there should only be one amir, imam, sultan or *khalifa* in the entire world. In light of this interpretation, Muhammad’s philosophy was the establishment of *khalifa* wherever one is. Since the basic reason for the state is to protect its citizens, neither law nor order could be established if all Muslims, who live thousands of miles away from one another, were under worldwide leadership; that is, the basic needs and necessities of citizens could not be fulfilled. Practically, there should be one khalifa in each place, and one khalifa for each society, thus providing an alternate meaning of the word *one* in the Hadith regarding the three travelers.

Tahir-ul-Qadri provides, as an example, the first state established by Muhammad in Madinah (Medina), which was a state established solely for Madinah, thereby supporting the notion of a territorial state. Since this state excluded the people of Thul Hulaifa, who were an independent Muslim community situated between Madinah and Makkah (Mecca), the former did not fall under Muhammad’s authority in the same way as the latter and had its own independent political entity. Furthermore, the Treaty of *Hudaybiyyah*<sup>34</sup> did not bind the people of Thul Hulaifa nor even apply to them. One may consequently infer from this that Tahir-ul-Qadri, in agreement with Ibn Khaldun, understands the concept of nation-state, or to the idea of having more than one Islamic leader, as

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33. Qamar-ud Din Khan, *The Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyya* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 1973), 31.

34. After a series of lengthy battles between the Muslims led by the Prophet Muhammad and the Pagans of Makkah, a treaty for peaceful coexistence was signed between the Muslims and the Tribe of Qureish (who were Pagans at the time and still ruled the City of Makkah) for ten years.

fundamental in Islam.

A contrasting view to this perspective would be that of Mawardi who did not agree with there being more than one imam, and was thus against the view that Islam can undergo a geographical divide. He argued that two imams cannot rule simultaneously and thus held to a pan-Islamic global view of *khilafa*. It is possible that Mawardi held to this view in order to declare unlawful the Buwayhid rule, as well as what remained of the Umayyad dynasty in Spain during his era. The idea that there may be a separate Turkish Islam, Iranian Islam, and Arab Islam as we have today would thus have been implausible for Mawardi.

### **CONCLUSION: A PLAUSIBLE WAY FORWARD**

As mentioned earlier, there is no one specific perception of the Islamic state in terms of its role and functioning. From among the works of the medieval theologians/scholars analyzed within this paper, one could argue that Mawardi's view of the Islamic state could be likened to that of a despotic-aristocracy, whereas Ibn Khaldun took a more democratic approach to the monarchical system of rule, and Ibn Taymiyya, although not declaring any preference, did suggest the need for popular consent. However, if taken to the extreme his views can also be seen as anarchical and somewhat despotic. The reason for such differences is essentially due to the socio-political and historical contexts which each of the medieval thinkers were exposed to. For Mawardi, it was a case of balancing authority between the two poles of Sunnism and Shi'ism, whereas for Ibn Khaldun it was a matter of reviving lost morale and power of the North African tribal system and for Ibn Taymiyya, it was neither an issue of balance nor revival, but rather that of rebellion against external influence and control from the Mongols. However, one commonality which is seen in the thoughts of all three scholars and which united their ultimate purpose for the establishment of the Islamic state was the need to implement the will of God by enforcing Shari'a into one's practical life.

It is precisely this aim which unites Qadri's view of the Islamic State to the views of the medieval theologians; to implement Shari'a into one's life as a *din*. Qadri has consequently proposed a plausible way forward in order for the Islamic state to survive and progress in modern society. He believes that the failed Islamic states of today are in need of *fikri-inkilaab* (intellectual or ideational revolution). Giving the example of Pakistan as one among many failed Islamic states of the contemporary era, Qadri believes that Pakistani culture and people as yet have not adopted the culture of democracy, and so it is necessary for the institutions to have power rather than the politicians, in order to avoid corruption. A similar observation can also be made for other Islamic states primarily within the near and Middle East, such as Egypt and Sudan. Qadri argues that there is no democracy in the societies of such states, whether in homes, at school or in the functioning of the government. Democracy has not been established in the state as a psyche and culture. This intellectual revolution, therefore, needs to be approached from various angles: educational, theological and ideational, in order to establish a moderate peaceful view of Islam and a culture of democracy.<sup>35</sup>

This is why Qadri has called for the need of socio-economic developments to remove poverty in Pakistan, and make education inexpensive and accessible to all. Education has unfortunately become an industry, a trade in Pakistan. The poor have no access to good quality education even in state institutions, and private education is too expensive. The only means of education available to them is through the *madrassa*,<sup>36</sup> where a student is given free food and clothing in order to reduce expenses. The poor do not care about where their children's education will lead them, as long as they have food and clothing. Whether one is being trained to become a peaceful citizen or a terrorist is not significant; for

35. Tahir-ul-Qadri, *My Life, My Mission*, DVD (lecture, February 18, 2004, Lahore, Pakistan: Minhaj ul-Quran Publications, 2004).

36. The term *madrassa* generally means "school." However, in this context the term is specifically referring to the religious schools within Islamic countries such as Pakistan which solely cater for Islamic education.

them their economic deadlock has been resolved.

Qadri has consequently proposed a system similar to that which is common in the Western welfare state systems in order to eliminate poverty and reduce extremism. He explains how the Islamic *dīn* has become enclosed within the bounds of religion and handed over to the *madrassa*. It was not always like this, he says, worldly and religious knowledge were given equal importance and from this same fountain of knowledge dispersed the Ghazalis, Ibn Rushds, scientists and scholars. Now the division between the two has created two different and separate perceptions of life. There is, therefore, a fundamental need to amalgamate the two and to end the hatred of modern secular thinkers towards Islam, by putting an end to this religious stereotype of Islam.<sup>37</sup>

According to Bernard Lewis, foreign policy being a product of the European imagination is alien to the Islamic world, due to the distinction Islam makes between the *Dar al-Islam* (abode of Islamic territorial world) and *Dar al-Harb* (abode of the non-Islamic territorial world).<sup>38</sup> This is further emphasized by Ehteshami, who argues that Islam has a minimal role to play within the global world order and international relations, since the international order is dominated by secular states who exclude religion from any active participation in the political governing of state relations.<sup>39</sup>

In light of such views, Qadri, seeing the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) as ineffective and an inadequate representative of Muslim states within the global arena, has proposed a plausible solution to improving the role of the Islamic state in international relations. He proposes that the future success of the Muslim ummah can be achieved through the means of a union similar to

37. "Dr. Tahir ul Qadri's Interview with Dr. Moeed Pirzada on PTV Prime's World (1/6)," YouTube video, 8:56, March 5, 2009, [http://youtu.be/HEeipfjH5\\_o](http://youtu.be/HEeipfjH5_o) (accessed April 20, 2010).

38. James P. Piscatori, *Islam in a World of Nation-states* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 42.

39. A. Ehteshami and A. S. Sidahmed, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996), 76.

that of the European Union. Qadri stresses that there is a need to progress towards the idea of a Muslim economic community by opening trade zones within the international Muslim ummah and creating a world Islamic bank (or global Muslim bank), and wherever cooperation within regions is possible, forming common defense alliances. Whoever is able among a few leading states in Muslim countries can lead into this development and form a global funding system for the creation of this type of international community by opening up markets to each other in order to help strengthen one another's economies, social statuses, and to bring democracy into their societies.<sup>40</sup> This may be accomplished by binding the nations under the umbrella figure of the Muslim ummah, with the Islamic states ultimately retaining their separate identities.

Consensus is at the heart of Islamic doctrine and the circumstance in which we find ourselves today as a result of globalization has made it all the more easy for Islam to achieve its goal of creating a truly global community of independent Islamic states. Similar to Qadri's theory of a global Muslim ummah, El-Affendi in *Who Needs an Islamic State?* suggests that "an Islamic territory must be governed by a pluralistic polity of coexisting but independent communities, governed by treaties rather than a constitution."<sup>41</sup> This, he argues, "is less ambitious than a *khilafat* and falls well short of the building of an EU-type union of Muslim states, but could lead to it eventually."<sup>42</sup>

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40. "1/7: Terrorism & Foreign Policy of Pakistan by Dr Tahir-ul-Qadri - Interview with PJ Mir of ARY-News," YouTube video, 10:47, an interview with Shaykh-ul-Islam Dr Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri on terrorism and foreign policy of Pakistan hosted by PJ Mir on Ary News on Pakistani Television, February 1, 2010, uploaded by minhajorg, February 2, 2010, <http://youtu.be/nz1SU9ZQ0Yw> (accessed April 20, 2010).

41. Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?* 2nd ed. (London: Malaysia Think Tank, 2008), 138.

42. *Ibid.*, 33.