



Shari'acracy and Democracy in Political Context: How Compatibility and Incompatibility?

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Abstract

The question of compatibility and incompatibility between Shari'ah and democracy has been persisted for decades. Many Muslim and western scholars have done a lot of research and expressed their opinions regarding either democracy is compatible with Islam or incompatibility. But presently the issue lasted unresolved. This article therefore, intends to attempt to cover all the reasonable arguments which encourage or discourage the compatibility between Islam and democracy. It will look at the definition of the concept of democracy Shari'ah. An enormous amount of literature has been devoted to this topic. The paper reveals that, Islam is not democracy, is neither just a religion, nor a fundamentalist political movement. It is a civilization and a way of life that varies from one Muslim country to another but is animated by a common spirit that is essentially more humane than most Westerners realize. Islamic doctrinal philosophy based on divine origin contrasts with Western discourses based on secular philosophical doctrine. Nevertheless, the basic ingredients of democracy, as a methodology to strive for a peaceful and harmonious society, resemble Islamic doctrinal philosophy. Islamic history has not always been marked by democratic ideals, yet, Islamic political philosophy is conducive to democratic processes in many compelling ways. The obligation of public allegiance (bay'a), the insistence on the equality of all believers, the emphasis on individual responsibility, the encouragement of consultative rule (shura), the stress on consensus (ijma), the open doors of independent reasoning (ijtihad), the requirement of establishing justice and pursuing public interest, and the persistence of tolerance toward other faiths are all strongly indicative of democracy and pluralism. Considering the democratic ideals pertaining to Islam, early modernist scholars, are all in agreement that Islam and democracy are not incompatible.

Keywords: Shari'acracy, Democracy, Political Context, Compatibility, Incompatibility, Shura

1. Introduction

The compatibility and incompatibility of Islam with democracy has become one of the main questions of concern in contemporary Islamic political and social thought. The debate has also been a major issue and a popular topic of serious discussion that has swept through the media, political and scholarly circles worldwide, in the West in particular¹. Moreover, at least two major events in the world history have made the debate more critical. First, the fall of Communism and the collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and the subsequent transition to democracy of socialist states in Eastern Europe and other authoritarian states in Asia and Latin America, which attracted worldwide attention². Second, in the mid-1990s, the publication of *The Clash of Civilizations* by American political scientist and Harvard professor Samuel Huntington, in which he presented a controversial argument about the cultural divide between the West and the Islamic world, popularized the perception that Islamic tradition and values are incompatible with democratic norms and practices³. Huntington's argument further triggered scholars and political and social scientists to enter into a critical and comprehensive debate about the relationship between Islam and democracy throughout the world.

The events in the Arab world in 2011 also put the relationship between Islam and democracy at the heart of global politics. Similarly, the rise of Islamist parties as a result of democratic elections opens the



question of the compatibility and in compatibility of Islam with democracy. There are (mainly) two visions on this theme:

- i. those who deny any connection between Islam and democracy; and
- ii. those who argue that Islamic tradition contains a number of concepts, ideals, institutions and values which are essentially democratic (in nature).

Here we will try to deal with the verses that are claimed to express reincarnation.

2. The Democracy

Like *Shariacry*, democracy is also a system of governance according to some agreed upon Principles and ethos which has been identified by scholars over ages⁴. It is one of the greatest and oldest ideologies in the world. The term democracy is derived from the Greek '*demokratia*' which in turn is coined from two other Greek words '*demos*' (people) and '*kratos*' (rule or power)⁵. Hence, concept of democracy originated from the Greek city-state. The Oxford Pocket Dictionary of Current English⁶ defines democracy as "a system of government by the whole population or all eligible members of a state, typically through elected representatives". Similarly, Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia⁷ regards democracy as "a political government either carried out by the people or the power to govern is granted to elected representatives". According to the American political scientist⁸, modern democracy is a system of governance with specific practices, strategies and rules. The members of that system treat each other as political equals, govern collectively, and have at their disposal rights, resources and institutions that guarantee their capacity for self-government⁹. In this political regime, the rulers are held accountable for what they do in the public sphere by citizens and citizens are political actors who act indirectly through the competition and cooperation of their elected representatives.

The U.S. president Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) also defined democracy as: "Government of the people, by the people, for the people"¹⁰. This is one famous definition of democracy. Democracy is generally defined as a form of government in which all adult citizens have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives. Ideally, this includes equal (and more or less direct) participation in the proposal, development and passage of legislation into law. It can also cover social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political freedom. Democracy is a certain form of government in which Men are counted but not weighed. In short, democracy is a form of government in which people have authority to make laws of their own will as representative of people "Parliament" has authority to make a law depending upon the opinion of majority regardless of standard of knowledge or qualification of any person.

The basic principles of democracy are equality, justice, freedom of expression, rule of law, the right to participate in the political system. The philosophy of democracy is very flexible, and varies according to time, individual and culture. That's why, and one can find a lot of conceptual differences between the oldest Greek city-state democracy and the democracy of modern times. But the basic principles of democracy invariably remain the same. Democracy offers opportunities for participation, equality in voting, the inclusion of common people in government, the guarantee of basic human rights, constitutionalism, free and fair elections, religious and political freedom, rule of law and accountability. In a democracy, sovereignty belongs to people and the people are the only supreme authority of the state. As Abraham Lincoln said, "democracy is the government of the people, for the people and by the people"¹¹.

3. The Concept of *Shari'a* (Islamic law)

Shari'a (The Islamic law) mainly derived from the Glorious Qur'an, is a set of rules and principles guiding the lives of Muslims according to God's will. The word '*Shari'a*' in Arabic literally means 'road', a



road which leads to God¹². The word ' *Shari'a* and the phrase 'Islamic law' have been used interchangeably. However, to Muslim, *Shari'a* is not just a set of Islamic legal precepts. It is, rather, something deeper representing the idea that all human beings should be treated in accordance with justice¹³. *Shari'a* is also the moral basis for developing a political order promoting the principles of justice, equality, and the submission of human beings to a supreme ultimate authority. Therefore, *Shari'a*'s role is similar to that of a constitution in a constitutional order¹⁴. The Almighty Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an (4:59) that: *Obey Allah, obey the Prophet and obey those in authority among you.*

The primary sources of Islamic law are therefore the words and commands of Allah as laid out in the Glorious Qur'an, the sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) (*ahādīth*), and the rulings of political and religious leaders. The Glorious Qur'an is the highest standard by which man can order his life. The Prophet himself stated, "Whoever is chosen by the people after me will be the *Khalifah*, and you must listen to and obey him."¹⁵ Those in authority include the rulers of the nation, its religious scholars and its judges.

1. *Shura*: Consultation and the Adaptability of Islamic Law

According to Islamic Supreme Council of America, the rule in Islam is based on the concept of *shūrā*, a term which has two meanings in Islamic governance:

1. *Shūrā* is a referendum on which the majorities of people agree, and is the basic method for choosing the ruler in Islam. Similarly, it is the means to approve his decisions. Muhammad Abū Zahrā¹⁶, writes: "All the Muslims, agreed that leadership as defined by the Prophet, in the saying "If you are three make one your leader" can only be implemented by election. That is done in every district, (*hays*), at the state level (*wilāyat*) and above that by the federal authority, (*al-idāra al-markazīyya*)."
2. The advisory board (*al-majlis ash-shūrā*), which advises the ruler, is a group of elected experts. The task of such groups is to observe and oversee the ruler (*murāqabat as-sulṭān*)¹⁷. They are in this position to form an opinion of the ruler and his rule and to control any aspirations he may have to override the rights of the people. They must be aware of the variations in these rights within ethnic, cultural and environmental norms.

Everything that impacts human life accounted for in the law and falls under the jurisdiction of the ruler. Yet the ruler himself has no personal choice in ruling, as do contemporary monarchs. The Prophet prohibited the ruler, who has been chosen or appointed, to usurp authority he does not possess. He is tied to the law, which as the ruler is his duty to enforce. The *majlis ash-shūrā* ensures that he does so. In the *Shari'ah* there are laws that are immutable or nearly so, similar to the constitutional basis of Western democracy. However, the remainder of the law is adaptable, changing with:

1. The practical application of the "immutable" law, established in the earlier rulings of judges; ie. case law.
2. Society's evolving needs.

According to them, it is the job of the *Dār al-Iftā*, the Center for Legal Rulings, to form the basis for new laws that will address innovations in technology and custom. The Prophet (s) did not demand that a particular rule be imposed on new innovations, but allowed the people to develop a law as needed, based on the precedent established in his lifetime and by Islamic scholars in succeeding generations. The evolution of the law was left in the care of the people for laws must take into account geography, environment, ethnic and cultural considerations, and variations in belief and understanding.



It was said that, “Everyone varies in their view of individual life.” Each person has a different opinion on every matter, therefore the implementation of *shūrā*, or election by majority, is essential in the formation of a new law that will successfully and effectively govern the people.

4. Democratic Election of Leaders.

From the beginning, Islam has mandated democracy through a *shūrā* (elected council of leaders), a process through which people sit together, consult with one another, and select one person to represent them. A clear example of democracy’s role in Islam is manifest in the Prophet’s passing without appointing a successor to rule the Muslim state. He intentionally left it to the Muslims to come together to make this crucial decision based on what he had taught them.

It was said that: The Prophet never gave a single word or sign indicating who his successor would be... and in the meeting which took place to elect the *Khalifah*, the Companions were in utter disagreement as to who should succeed the Prophet, but in the end were able to choose Abū Bakr AS-Siddīq by the consensus of the majority¹⁸. Essentially, there were three groups who differed in who should succeed the Prophet: The *Ansār*, the Prophet’s supporters in Madinah, who felt the leadership, should fall to one among them as they supported the Prophet when he emigrated from Mecca. Another group led by Abū Bakr and ‘Umar believed that the immigrants (*Muhājirūn*) who came with the Prophet to Madinah should lead, because they were the first to enter in to Islam. The third group called on ‘Alī to lead, due to his familial relationship with the Prophet. The disagreement did not last long, as through *shūrā* the three groups quickly reached the consensus that Abū Bakr had the highest credentials to take the reins of leadership¹⁹. The majority voted for him, and the Islamic precedent for peaceful transition between rulers was introduced. Once the majority had decided, the individual citizens ratified the selection by pledging their allegiance one-by-one to the new head of state. In electing a candidate from among the three parties vying for succession, the first, most exemplary Muslims imprinted their stamp of religious authenticity on the electoral system. The fact that the Companions (*Sahaba*) did not establish a monarchy or a dictatorship irrevocably demonstrates that leadership in Islam is the choice of the people.

Once a selection is made by the *shūrā* council, each individual Muslim has the option to accept their choice or not. This is known as taking a pledge of allegiance (*baya*). If a group feels the choice was made unjustly, they may refuse to accept it and form an opposition party. In the end however, a judge accepted by both sides must make a final arbitration and choose between the two parties based on the validity of their claims. The executive aspect of governance is also conducted through consultation. The ruler, chosen by the *shūrā* and confirmed by the citizen’s individual pledge of allegiance, is obliged to consult on executive decisions. He therefore consults with a council, parliament or advisory group whose specific role is to advise²⁰.

Whenever the Prophet had to make a decision that would affect the Muslim nation in whole or part, he gathered his followers to conduct a *shūrā*. In one instance, before the onset of a battle, one of the companions asked the Prophet if the location of the Muslim camp should be chosen through Divine inspiration or consultation. The Prophet answered that it should be the product of consultation, and proceeded to follow the group’s recommendation to settle beside the nearest water well.

‘Umar the second *Khalif*, said, “Whoever is chosen by the people after me will be the *Kalifah*, and you people must listen to him and obey him”²¹. Upon ‘Umar’s passing, the *shūrā* chose ‘Uthmān, and after ‘Uthmān’s assassination, they chose ‘Alī. With the election of ‘Alī there arose a dispute, and Mu’awīya took over the Khaliphate²². Later the rule went to his son, and the system thereby changed from democracy to a monarchy. Thereafter, the selection of the ruler was dynastic and remained so through the time of the Ottoman Khalifahs Muawiyah separated the political and religious systems. However, he regularly consulted



with Ibn ‘Abbās and Ibn ‘Umar, who possessed vastly greater knowledge. The system thus changed into a political leadership advised by religious leaders.

5. The Constitution of Madinah.

The democratic election of a leader was the model on which the city of Madinah was founded. The Prophet, while invited by Muslims from that city, became its ruler by the choice of all its citizens, which included Jewish and polytheist tribes²³. He then developed a binding social contract, a pact signed by all the tribal leaders naming Muhammad as the leader, and establishing laws binding the tribes to cooperation, assistance in defense of the city, and the protection of its inhabitants. It reads in part:

The Jews of Banu‘Awf is one nation with the Muslims. The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs, their freedmen and their persons shall be protected except those who behave unjustly or sinfully. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. Their condition must be one of mutual advice, consultation and charity. No man is liable for a crime committed by his ally. Support must be given to him who is wronged. To every small group belongs the share which is their due, as members of the larger group which is party to this covenant. This document, The Constitution of Madinah, establishes the importance of consent and cooperation for governance in Islam. According to this pact, Muslims and non-Muslims are equal citizens of the Islamic state, with identical rights and duties. Communities of different religious orientations enjoy religious autonomy, which is essentially wider in scope than the modern idea of religious freedom. The principles of equality, consensual governance and pluralism are beautifully enmeshed in the pact of Madinah.

Since then, this lengthy document has proven an exemplary historical model of a binding social pact in which a multi-religious, multi-cultural society was bound by one law. Note that, in signing the contract, the non-Muslim parties did not accept the Prophet as their religious leader, but rather signed with the conviction that he would provide the leadership needed to build an ideal society. In later centuries, the system of governance in Madinah became the basis of the ideal city, a detailed model developed by al-Fārābī and later scholars²⁴.

A tradition in Islam states: “Whatever the body of Muslims collectively sees as good is also considered good by Allah, and what they see as bad is also considered bad by Allah.” Just as culture, geography and natural circumstances impact our needs, the Prophet recognized the importance to develop a system that would be useful for that time or those circumstances. He stated, “Majority opinion is best.”²⁵

6. The Model City

Despite the change of the system of succession to a dynastic model, the Islamic system of governance established by Prophet Muhammad (saw) evolved rapidly in the fields of law, economics, industry, agriculture and religious understanding²⁶. Later, as the Umayyad dynasty was succeeded by the Abbasid, Islamic theology, philosophy and political theory also flourished, culminating in al-Fārābī’s *The Model City*, and later in the writing of Nasr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭūsī. Dr. ‘Abdul-Wāhid, a scholar of Islamic history at al-Azhar University, writes:

Al-Fārābī as an Islamic scholar versed in the Glorious Qur’ān, *hadith* and the practice of the *Sahaba* (companions), and through his extensive study of previous civilizations... composed a formulation of Islamic political theory in a way that had never been done before him²⁷.

Al-Fārābī defined fifteen characteristics of the ideal leader:

1. Excellent understanding and the ability to quickly observe and grasp what he is told,
2. Possesses the power to recollect what he hears, reads, senses; is not forgetful.
3. Highly intellectual; can understand the direction of a group from which an idea is generated.



4. Eloquence, and ability to express what is in the heart.
5. Passion for education and seeks its benefits for all citizens.
6. Must not tire easily and be exceedingly patient.
7. Not greedy for food and drink.
8. Efficient and effective in addressing the physical needs.
9. A lover of the truth and its supporters; a hater of falsehood and its supporters.
10. Quickly recognizes duplicitous people.
11. Extremely generous, above stinginess.
12. Worldly wealth must not be a factor; whether it is possessed or not should be of no concern.
13. Loves justice and freedom.
14. Rejects oppressors and oppression.
15. Firmly decides the course that will benefit society, despite intense opposition.

7. Incompatibility

It is apposite to examine the argument in support of incompatibility of shari'acracy and democracy in political context with a view to comparing these with the views of its protagonists, to enable us arrive at balanced points. Hence, due to the absence of an Islamic State (*Khilafah*) most of the Muslims considered that democracy is good in corral of dictatorship. So, Muslims adopted the democratic system to avoid dictatorship²⁸. And democracy became standard of politics and government. Democracy is not the name of just voting, elections and to choose political leaders but a system in which law-making authority is in the hands of people. It is a system in which people have right to conform or reject any law depending upon the number of votes. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an, Chapter 12, Yusuf, Verse 67 "Lo! The decision rests only with Allah."

In Islam, besides Allah, no one has the right to make laws. Allah is the Creator; the Lord and he knows well that what is good and what is bad for his creature. It is the responsibility of human to implement the laws of God in his society. So, in Islam, Democracy is *kufar*. It is a *shirk*. Because in Democracy, "Parliament" has right to pass or reject any law whether it is against to Islamic *Shari'a* or not. As one can see that assemblies in this democratic system have passed many anti-Islamic laws like interest (Banking), insurance, stock markets and many other laws against Islamic *Sharia'a*. Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an, Chapter 2, Al Baqara, Verse 275 "Those who eat *Riba* will not stand (on the Day of Resurrection) except like the standing of a person beaten by *Shaytan* leading him to insanity. That is because they say: "Trading is only like *Riba*," whereas Allah has permitted trading and forbidden *Riba*. So, whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and stops eating *Riba*, shall not be punished for the past; his case is for Allah (to judge); but whoever returns (to *Riba*), such are the dwellers of the Fire they will Abide therein." Allah says in the Glorious Qur'an, Chapter 33, Al Ahzaab, Verse 36 "It is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he has indeed strayed into a plain error."

In Islam, besides Allah, no one has the right to make laws. The Parliament and Senate who have authority to make law have no actuality in Islam. No form of democracy is perfect either it is parliamentary democracy or presidential democracy. It is *kufar* either it is Western democracy or a democracy with a label of Islamic democracy, because it gives authority of making laws to people. Democracy in any form has no value in Islam. So, to support or participate in any democratic system is prohibited in Islam without any doubt²⁹.

As far as election or voting is concerned, it is only a style to select a person for performing a specific job. Islamic *Shari'a* permits such kind of selection but within the boundary of *Shari'a*. For example, the selection of a monitor or representative of a class. Similarly, the selection of representative of "*Majlis Shura*" or the selection of *Khalifah* can be done by it. It is the duty of *Khalifah* to impose the laws of God



in society and *Khalifah* is also under the laws of God. So, election or voting itself is not *haram* in Islam but when this style is adopted in a democratic system it is also *haram*³⁰.

Furthermore, Sayyid Qutb³¹, claimed that, "It is Allah and not man who rules. Allah is the source of all authority, including legitimate political authority. Virtue, not freedom, is the highest value. Therefore, Allah's law, not men, should govern the society." Islamic law is based on the Glorious Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*, which are set and fixed. There is no need for addition or correction. Neither is there any room for the law of fallible man (particularly non-Muslims). Nor should it take the place of Allah's perfect law, which tells a man everything he needs to know about daily life (down to which hand he should "hold it in" while urinating). If Allah is not the authority, then anything less is a secular dictatorship, including rule by the Muslim people. As an American-Muslim jurist complained in a recent *fatwa*, "democracy gives free reign to the authority of the Ummah, and puts no ceiling on it."³²

Also, the law of one person, one vote is essential to democracy, but heretical to Islam. According to the Glorious Qur'ān, the testimony of a woman is worth only half that of a man. Reform-minded Muslims prefer to ignore all of this and instead point to Glorious Qur'ān (42:38), where the phrase "[Muslims] who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation" is used as evidence that Islam is compatible with democracy. Also recruited to this end is an oft-repeated *hadith* that has Muhammad saying, "My community will never agree on an error." On this is based the much-ballyhooed concept of³³

Ijma "or consensus among Muslims for determining matters of Islamic law. But *ijma*, has always been controversial and rarely practiced within Islam. Some interpret it to mean "consensus of the scholars" having nothing to do with the opinion of the community at large. Even when its legitimacy is recognized, *ijma*

Is accepted only as a secondary (or tertiary) form of authority, behind the *fiqh* councils. Also, it bears pointing out that *ijma* and consultation are applicable only within the Muslim community (and probably limited to the "consensus" of males)³⁴.

Jamal Badawi says that it is the duty of Muslims to bring about Islamic rule:

"The Glorious Qur'ān is full of direct and indirect, implicit and many times explicit indications that show that the establishment of the Islamic order is a requirement on Muslims whenever possible." He also scoffs at secularism: "If a Muslim believes that there is any human being who has the right to make laws other than Allah then obviously this is total divergence from the path of Islam. Or any person who believes that secularism is superior to the law of Allah; he's violating the basic Qur'ānic tenets"³⁵. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) ruled on Allah's authority and did not submit his decisions to the will of the people. Neither is there any tradition of democracy in the 1400-year history of Islam in the Middle East and Persia. If the entire world became Muslim overnight, it is highly doubtful that democracy would last, since it would be applicable only to the most mundane of matters not already decided by Islamic law. As Sufi Muhammad, put it, "True Islam permits neither elections, nor democracy."³⁶

8. Compatibility

Having examined the argument in support of incompatibility of shari'acracy and democracy in political context, we shall now examine the argument of its compatibility with Islam with a view to determining the areas of incompatibility and compatibility of shari'acracy and democracy in political context. Those who support the compatibility of shari'acracy and democracy argued that, despite the fact that there are some theoretical differences between democracy and Islam, yet, there are some basic principles which are common in both democracy and Islam which are the following.

- All citizens are equal in terms of getting rights.



- All citizens are equal before the law.
- All the matters related to the state are decided with the will of people.
- National treasury belongs to people.
- The head of the state will be elected directly or indirectly with the will of people.
- Accountability.
- Freedom of speech.
- Religious freedom.

Apart from these, there are also certain principles in Islam where all Muslims can, more or less agree on despite the fact that they may entertain different readings about Islam. Abul Ala Maududi argues that three principles are of paramount importance to all Muslims: *Tawhid* (Unity of God), *Risalat* (Prophethood) and *Khilafat* (Caliphate)³⁷

Tawhid is the fundamental principle of Islam. There are several verses in the Glorious Qur'ān referring to the oneness of God and the need for all Muslims to worship the one and only God. Moreover, testifying to the oneness of God is extremely important in Islam. For an individual to become Muslim, he or she has to testify to the oneness of God and the prophethood of Prophet Mohammad³⁸. By oneness of God, some Muslims have concluded that Islam does not accept the sovereignty of anybody except God³⁹, hence the contradiction of Islam with democracy which demonstrates itself in the sovereignty of the people. However, if people's sovereignty is formulated within the framework of *tawhid*, then Islam is not only corresponding to democracy, but also the popular sovereignty provided under Islam can be employed by Muslims in accordance with the Glorious Qur'ān and the Prophet's practices, though it would not be equal to the popular sovereignty practiced in a liberal democracy⁴⁰. Along the same line, it was coined that the term "the democracy" as a divine democratic government under which the Muslims are given popular sovereignty, under the sovereignty of God, to use their will to choose the executive under this system of government or depose it⁴¹.

Risalat is another important principle of Islam. No Muslim has any reservation about the validity of revelation of God's messages to Prophet Mohammad as recorded in the Glorious Qur'ān. Furthermore, no single verse in the Glorious Qur'ān has ever been disputed amongst Muslims. *Khalifa* (Caliph) has two meanings in Islam. The first one refers to the leader of the Islamic community as demonstrated by the appointment of the successors of the Prophet after his demise. The scholars who think that Islam and democracy are compatible focuses more on the core principles of Islam and democracy such as the consultation, peoples will, transparency, accountability and equality⁴².

This optimistic view about the compatibility of Islam and democracy makes a distinction between the core values of Islam and the historical baggage that has been built around it over the centuries. Based on this distinction, they argue that those who reject democracy in the name of Islam are depending on historical baggage rather than the core of Islam. There is nothing in the core of Islam that discourages the establishment of democracy in an Islamic society⁴³. Many Islamic scholars also think that Islam does not give any specific system rather gave some universal principles which can be incorporated in any system. It is on the Muslims of that time to decide which system to adopt but whatever system they choose they have to follow those basic principles of Islam. Yet, the Glorious Qur'ān does not mention any specific system rather it demands justice, equality and prosperity of the people. The basic feature of democracy such as election is encouraged in the Glorious Qur'ān in this way, "So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matters." (3:159) in another verse, He says, "And their system is based on their consultation." (42:38) Javed Ahmad Ghamidi asserts "everyone should get equal constitutional rights to decide matters in a state, and if they find it hard to agree on one point, then the matter should be decided according to the majority's opinion"⁴⁴ he further gives emphasis to the concept of consultation and says "consulting people in state affairs is not an option; it is a necessity." Keeping in view the importance of the



consultation all four Khalifahs established the institution of *Shura* which is considered as the basis of democracy in Islam. The evidence shows that, the compatibility of Islam and democracy is inevitable. Both Islam and democracy share the basic common principle. Islam and democracy both have some basic common principles which are universal, instead of limited to any specific culture, society, region or time⁴⁵.

Early Islamic state witnessed the leadership of *Khalifahs* over the Muslims within the framework of caliphate. The second meaning is taken from Chapter 2, Verse 30 of the Glorious Qur'ān, identifying all humans as the deputies or agents of God on earth. The latter meaning of the *Khalifah* provides a possible role for all humans in politics. This view which has attracted the attention of some contemporary Muslim thinkers, like Maududi, is utilized to find democracy in Islam. Maududi argues that human being as the representative of God and His vicegerent is required to "exercise Divine authority in this world within the limits prescribed by God."⁴⁶ Therefore, in accordance with this interpretation, one can argue that the Muslim community as a whole, not the *Khalifah* alone, has the authority to act in accordance with the conditions of representation and "carries the responsibility of the caliphate as a whole and each one of its individual shares the Divine Caliphate. This is where democracy begins in Islam"⁴⁷. Some analysts make a distinction between liberalism and democracy when it comes to the question of compatibility of Islam and democracy. Joel Hafvenstein⁴⁸ argues that the Islamic laws such as banning alcohol, considered as a restriction of liberties by Western standards, are offensive to liberalism and not against democracy⁴⁹.

9. Conclusions

From the foregoing discussions, it was cleared that, Islam is not democracy, is neither just a religion, nor a fundamentalist political movement. It is a civilization and a way of life that varies from one Muslim country to another but is animated by a common spirit that is essentially more humane than most Westerners realize. Islamic doctrinal philosophy based on divine origin contrasts with Western discourses based on secular philosophical doctrine. Nevertheless, the basic ingredients of democracy, as a methodology to strive for a peaceful and harmonious society, resemble Islamic doctrinal philosophy. Islamic history has not always been marked by democratic ideals, such as openness, competition, tolerance, egalitarianism, and upholding the interests of the masses. Yet, Islamic political philosophy is conducive to democratic processes in many compelling ways. The obligation of public allegiance (*bay'a*), the insistence on the equality of all believers, the emphasis on individual responsibility, the encouragement of consultative rule (*shura*), the stress on consensus (*ijma*), the open doors of independent reasoning (*ijtihad*), the requirement of establishing justice and pursuing public interest, and the persistence of tolerance toward other faiths are all strongly indicative of democracy and pluralism. Considering the democratic ideals pertaining to Islam, early modernist scholars, are all in agreement that Islam and democracy are not incompatible.

Although the Qur'an has not prescribed a certain political order, its established values and principles, along with examples from the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate followers, suggest a political system of the kind that call democracy today. Without an essentialist and monolithic understanding of both Islam and democracy, it is evident that these two concepts are compatible with one another. However, compatibility does not mean identicalness. Islamic values and codes of morality are not always identical to Western values and ethics. Many Muslims perceive democracy to be unbelief (*kufur*), and abhor the word 'democracy' itself. This perception is, in all likelihood, the outcome of Western colonial and imperialist policies, and to some extent the result of 'double standard of morality and ethics typically practiced by Western governments and institutions towards Oriental and especially Muslim societies. There is also a tendency to perceive the notion of democracy itself as entirely 'Western' phenomenon. However, contemporary Muslims' concern for an Islamic democratic discourse based on their values and aspirations and their contempt towards transplantation from the Western world is increasingly gaining momentum in the context of the longstanding heated debate about the relationship between Islam and democracy.



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