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Islamic Concept of Shura and Western Democracy: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

This paper examines how the Islamic concept of Shura is closely linked to Western democratic ideologies, employing an analytical comparative lens grounded in religious texts, political philosophy, and contemporary modes of governance. It examines the philosophical, ethical, and procedural foundations of the two systems to determine areas of convergence and divergence, particularly in leadership accountability, decision-making processes, and citizen participation. Shura is based on Islamic divine sovereignty, moral responsibility, justice (adl), social good (maslaha), and representative government in accordance with the will of the many. This doctrine is grounded in Quranic injunctions and the practices of the Prophets, in which the community was usually consulted in government decision-making. Western democracy, in its turn, is based on the principle of popular sovereignty, which is reflected in institutionalised democracy, namely, through electoral representation, majority rule, and the law as written in the constitution. It emphasises procedural justice, inclusiveness, and civic liberties to hold power accountable and safeguard the rights of minorities. Although the foundations are different, i.e. divine and popular sovereignty, the paper reveals that the two systems share values such as consultation, equity, and the public interest. The comparative analysis provides insight into how Shura is geared towards ethical assent when making decisions, while democracy uses the process to promote political pluralism and flexibility. Inclusiveness in such systems, especially in terms of including minorities and women, whether by divine direction or law, is also discussed in the paper. The research is also extended to real life in

Muslim-dominated states such as Indonesia, Tunisia, and Malaysia, which strive to mediate Shura with the notion of democracy and consequently establish hybrid forms of governance. These cases explain how the institutional authority of contemporary democracy and the Islamic moral imperatives can be harmonised to meet the demands of governance in pluralistic societies. Nevertheless, even in modern nation states, there are still practical obstacles to Shura, including political authoritarianism, cultural reticence, and institutional backwardness. This qualitative thematic research is based on sources of Islamic jurisprudence and classical political philosophy and relies on contemporary case studies. It concludes that a sound and practical combination of Shura, ethical governance, and the procedural mechanisms of democracy can provide an inclusive model of governance. These in-between forms can play a major role in solving the present-day governance paradox in both Islamic and secular societies, as they ensure a symbiotic relationship between tradition and modernity, morality and law, and divine will and popular sovereignty.

Introduction:

The Islamic concept of Shura and Western democracy are compared to show a subtle correlation between traditional Islamic principles of governance and modern democracies. Shura is based on the sovereignty of God, and its primary features are consultation, justice, and accountability. Leaders are expected to exercise ethical and moral uprightness in line with Quranic injunctions and the example of the Prophet Muhammad. By comparison, democracy is founded on popular sovereignty, whereby authority is grounded in the will of the people and typified by inclusiveness, representation, and flexibility. It emphasises justice, the common good, and stakeholder representation. The modalities for realising these values, however, vary. Whereas Shura is grounded in ethical deliberation and consensus, democracy is grounded in due process and voting. Shura remains weak in contemporary states due to political, cultural, and structural factors. Muslim nations have adopted democracy to varying degrees, and Islamic democracy combines democratic practices with Islamic values. This

discussion demonstrates that both Shura and democracy can be employed in tandem to address contemporary governance challenges. Policymakers can adopt the best of Islamic values and democracy by formulating systems that are both culturally appropriate and progressive.

Literature Review:

Shura is a principle of Islamic governance derived from an Arabic word meaning consultation. The basis of this principle is primarily Islamic, with the Quran and the Hadith as the most important sources. The importance of collective decision-making is highlighted in Quranic verses such as and those who have answered their master and have fixed prayer and whose business is [determined by] consultation among them.¹ Examples of consultation among the companions prior to making decisions are found in the Hadith collections on the Prophet of Islam Muhammad. These practices show that consultation was not a showy activity but a government act.

Al Mawardi described the governmental institutions in *Al Ahkam Al Sultaniyah* and emphasised the role of shura in administering justice. Ibn Taymiyyah, in his works on government, also emphasised the importance of consulting experts and community members to prevent authoritarianism. Kamali² investigated the relationship between Shura and democratic practises and suggested that the principle can be applied in a modern context. The book of Kamali, titled *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, examines the compatibility of consultation and justice, public responsibility, and collective responsibility.

¹ Qur'an 42:38.

² Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991).

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The Western democratic political system has undergone various historical phases. Ancient Athens was the first to establish direct democracy, in which citizens participated fully in decision-making. Ober³ describes Athenian democracy as founded on the idea of citizens being informed and of decision-making in groups. It is claimed that representative democracy has been fostered by the Roman Republic, where the concept of an elected official as a representative of the people was conceived.⁴

The Spirit of the Laws by Montesquieu provided philosophical foundations for modern democracies, particularly through the separation of powers, which helps prevent tyranny. The idea of popular sovereignty was developed by Enlightenment philosophers, including Rousseau in *The Social Contract*, who argued that a legitimate ruler was one chosen by the will of the people.⁵ His writings, including Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, provide an analytical account of how democracy functions in the United States. Tocqueville emphasised equality and freedom, as well as the necessity of preserving democracy.⁶ In his *Models of Democracy*, Held⁷ traces the transition from classical to modern forms, emphasising the need to strike a balance between inclusiveness and efficiency.

³ Josiah Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge: Innovation and Learning in Classical Athens* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

⁴ Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*.

⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole (1762).

⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

⁷ David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

The comparison and analysis of Shura and Western democracy are conducted in terms of their theoretical and normative bases, values, and organisational systems. According to El-Affendi⁸, Shura, in essence, is a moral and consultative form of government and decision-making, unlike the process-oriented Western democracy. According to him, in contrast to democracy, which is based on majority rule, Shura is interested in the rules of right and justice and in the search of consensus.⁹

Rahman and Bakar¹⁰ posit that Islamic governance can be combined with democracy; accountability, justice, and the public interest are principles common to both systems. In the article "Shura and Democracy: Comparative Analysis," the authors observe that the two systems are intended to empower communities by providing checks on this power.¹¹ Khan¹² also addresses the difference between sovereignty in the two systems, namely, the sovereignty of the divine under Islamic government and popular sovereignty under democracy. Yet he also highlights similarities at a more practical level, such as the emphasis on consultation and representation.¹³ Publications such as UNDP¹⁴, *Democratic Governance and Sharia: Challenges and*

⁸Abdelwahab El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?* (London: Malaysian Think Tank, 2008).

⁹El-Affendi, *Who Needs an Islamic State?*

¹⁰Fazlur Rahman and Osman Bakar, "Shura and Democracy: A Shared Vision for Governance," *Journal of Islamic Governance* 7, no. 3 (2015): 56–72.

¹¹ Rahman and Bakar, "Shura and Democracy."

¹² F. Khan, *Islamic Governance and Democracy: A Comparative Analysis* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 2019).

¹³ F. Khan, *Islamic Governance and Democracy*.

¹⁴ United Nations Development Programme, *Democratic Governance and Sharia: Challenges and Opportunities* (2018), <https://www.undp.org/publications/democratic-governance-and-sharia>.

Opportunities, demonstrate how Shura principles can be applied to promote democratic processes in participatory governance.

Methodology

The research is conducted within a qualitative paradigm, and descriptive and analytical approaches are used to compare Islamic interpretations of Shura with Western democracy. It is based on comparative political theory to examine the philosophical, ethical and practical aspects of both governing systems. Islamic values are discussed using Islamic texts and history, whereas Western democracy is discussed using philosophical treatises and examples from contemporary societies.

The two systems are compared thematically to identify similarities and differences. The discussed areas of discourse include decision-making, management, leadership responsibility, diversity, and ethics. It is achieved by critically analysing the main sources of Islam: the Quran, the Hadith, and the works of classical and modern Islamic scholars. Similarly, the fundamentals of Western political philosophy, such as those of Locke, Rousseau, and Mill, are examined to achieve the goal.

Primary sources include verses from the Quran, Hadiths, and historical accounts of the practice of shura. Secondary sources include articles, books, and case studies on democratic governance. Themes will be determined through content analysis in relation to the research question, and comparative tables and frameworks will help organise the work and provide a systematic overview of the two systems.

Islamic Concept of Shura

The Quran has developed the concept of Shura, which emphasises consultation in governance. The verse "...whose business [is] consultation

among themselves..."¹⁵ emphasises the significance of collective decision-making. Another verse tells the Prophet Muhammad to consult the people he follows: "...ask them in things. Then, when you are determined, have trust in Allah....."¹⁶ These verses demonstrate that consultation is not only advisable but a prerequisite of a moral government.

Shura, as a practice, can be illustrated by the example of the Prophet Muhammad. An example would be when the Prophet Muhammad applied the majority vote as a decision-making model in the Battle of Uhud, and the decision was approved even though the Prophet himself did not favour it. On the same note, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was also the result of consultation with the companions, indicating that Shura will never disregard the interests of the community and will take into account the efforts of others.¹⁷ These examples demonstrate that consultation is a key component of developing a governance system grounded in Islamic ethics of participation.

Another Shura principle is inclusion, which entails that the opinions of all stakeholders are taken into account. History indicates that several significant events in the early Islamic era involved women and consultation. This is consistent with the Quran, which advocates the virtue of justice, particularly in leadership.¹⁸

The second rule is that consultation must yield decisions beneficial to the rest of the population (Maslaha). Shura is associated with justice (Adl)

¹⁵ Qur'an 42:38.

¹⁶ Qur'an 3:159.

Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity: Transformation of an Intellectual Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

¹⁸ Al-Ghazali, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 2000).

in decision-making, as employed in the early Islamic polity to ensure that the good of the majority prevails without jeopardising ethical values. The latter is referred to as consensus (Ijma), which helps collect the opinions of the population and lend credibility to the decision-making process. Some other philosophers, such as Al-Ghazali, recognised the significance of consensus, which binds the community and enables decisions about governance to be made in a friendly manner.¹⁹

Transparency and accountability are other crucial aspects of Shura, as leaders must be answerable to the people and accountable for their actions. The consultative council (Majlis al-Shura) of the Rashidun Caliphate exemplified this principle, operating through consultations with representatives. This rendered governance more participatory and leaders accountable for their actions.²⁰

The case of Shura in government may be explained by referring to the Rashidun Caliphate. The first caliph was chosen by the major companions as Abu Bakr. In the same vein, Umar ibn al-Khattab formalised consultative councils to meet the needs of an increasingly large Islamic state and to ensure that decisions reflected collective input.²¹ Shura also changed practise with the coming and establishment of Islamic empires. Professional councils and consultants were part of the administrative apparatus during the Abbasid period, and Shura was adapted to suit the needs of larger and more

¹⁹ Al-Ghazali, *Incoherence of the Philosophers*.

²⁰ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

²¹ George Saliba, *Islamic Science and the Making of the European Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).

complex institutions. This evolution demonstrated that Shura was not rigid, despite the absence of the principles of consultation and moral leadership.²²

More recent discourses have been on Shura as an aspect of consultative decision-making. It has been equated with democratic processes, and various scholars have joined the debate to explain how this practise can be implemented to achieve a balance between tradition and the necessity of modernising governance. Shura is a generalised model that can be utilised to reach moral and egalitarian judgments in most situations.²³

Western Democracy: An Overview

The history of Western democracy traces its roots to ancient Greece, where the city-state of Athens embraced direct democracy. Individuals participated in decision-making that promoted democratic values of equality and deliberation. The Roman Republic subsequently developed the concept of representation, whereby representatives could represent the people. Such advances enabled governance to accommodate more people, and citizens were not left behind.²⁴

The Enlightenment was an era of discoveries in the field of democracy. Popular sovereignty, individualism and checks and balances were among the tenets of government championed by political philosophers. These concepts were intended to eliminate authoritarianism and introduce accountability, which characterise current democratic constitutions. The rationality of government, coupled with citizens' rights, formed the

²² UNDP, *Democratic Governance and Sharia*.

²³ Rahman, *Islam and Modernity*.

²⁴ Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*.

theoretical basis of modern democracies.²⁵ These principles constitute the framework of the democratic regimes observed worldwide to date.²⁶

In large and pluralistic societies, representation is critical to the democratic process. It gives the people the opportunity to entrust decision-making to elected representatives who are expected to act on their behalf. Elections should be held regularly to hold leaders accountable and to allow citizens to choose their leaders. This is what enhances efficiency and democracy in contemporary political systems.²⁷

The majority rule is another crucial tenet of democracy that upholds decision-making without violating minority rights. This ensures that everyone's contributions are taken into account, thereby promoting fairness in leadership. It is one of the methodological systems for resolving conflicts and maintaining social order. Democracy and decision-making, on the other hand, must ensure that the majority vote determines most decisions while upholding order and fairness.²⁸ These mechanisms have now become inalienable components of democracies in various cultural and institutional contexts.²⁹

This has led democracy to take diverse forms to fit the different societies in which it is practised. Constitutional monarchies (including that of the United Kingdom) have legislative and executive arms of government. In such systems, governments are formed by the majority party in the legislature, a feature that fosters cooperation in decision-making and good

²⁵ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

²⁶ UNDP, *Democratic Governance and Sharia*.

²⁷ Held, *Models of Democracy*.

²⁸ Ober, *Democracy and Knowledge*.

²⁹ UNDP, *Democratic Governance and Sharia*.

management.³⁰ Presidential systems, such as that of the United States, emphasise the separation of powers. Checks and balances are ensured by this system because the executive and legislative powers are not in the same hands. These models are ideal, and the practical implementation of some principles may involve a blend of the two, as in the semi-presidential system of the French Republic. These adjustments demonstrate how the ideals of democracy may be applied to different political systems.³¹ In all these models, the core principles of accountability, representation, and inclusiveness remain the same.³²

Comparative Analysis:

The philosophical concept of sovereignty, on which both Shura and democracy are founded, is one of the most significant differences between the two. In Islamic governance, only Allah is sovereign, and other human leaders are custodians who carry out divine guidance. The Quran emphasises justice and righteous leadership, demanding that leaders be ethical in every decision they make. Based on historical precedent, the Rashidun Caliphate was ruled by leaders who were answerable to Allah and the community.³³ Divine sovereignty in administration is the sole means by which a decision can be made without contravening the moral laws that do not change with society's evolving tastes.

On the other hand, democracy is based on the principle of popular sovereignty, in which the power rests with the people. Government is influenced by citizens through elections, and legislation can be modified as

³⁰ Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*.

³¹ Held, *Models of Democracy*.

³² UNDP, *Democratic Governance and Sharia*.

³³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001).

new societal demands emerge. This is seen as a strength, but critics have suggested that it will lead to moral relativism because decisions are not made based on moral values that apply to all people, but rather on the likes of the majority. Democracies preserve their responsiveness while avoiding the abuse of the popular will by institutionalising it through constitutions.³⁴ These differences in philosophy indicate that Shura was intended to be God-centred, whereas democracy was intended to be people-centred.

Shura is centred on consensus decision-making, where unity and moral leadership are emphasised. Consultation is a process that is important to the Quran, and the verse shows this: "...those who make their affairs through mutual consultation".³⁵ In the treaty of Hudaibiyyah, however, we can observe that the folk followed the agreement, and it led to the integration of the society and reduction of rivalry. This assists in making sure that the decisions made are the best of the community and they are ethical.³⁶

In a democracy, majority rule is responsible for making decisions as expeditiously as possible. Although this approach yields clear results, it also has disadvantages: minority opinions can be overlooked. Democracies mitigate this through constitutional provisions and other checks and balances, such as the judiciary, to ensure that no group is neglected. Consensus and majority rule indicate that the former is oriented toward cooperation, whereas the latter is oriented toward decision-making. Whereas Shura emphasises the importance of unity and ethics, democracy is more

³⁴ Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

³⁵ Qur'an 42:38.

³⁶ Jasser Auda, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

concerned with procedural justice and rationality.³⁷ Nevertheless, both systems are primarily aimed at preventing autocratic decision-making and distributing responsibility among the group.

The problem of leadership responsibility in Shura is also intertwined with ethical standards. Leaders are expected to represent the populace and are bound by divine principles and moral obligations. A clear example is the Prophet Muhammad, who always sought to consult the people and ensured that, in whatever he decided, justice was done. One of the early leaders of Islam, Umar ibn Al-Khattab, formalised the concept of accountability by consulting and ensuring that decisions were made in accordance with Islamic law.³⁸ This ethical system emphasises transparency and spiritual responsibility regarding the material and moral dimensions of life.

Democratic systems have institutional mechanisms for monitoring individuals and holding them accountable. Accountability of power is ensured through free, fair, and frequent elections, an independent judiciary, and a free press that enables the public to hold their leaders accountable. Democracy is associated with a rigorous process and legal oversight, in contrast to the ethical framework of Shura. This brings it closer to the light, yet it does not always incorporate ethical considerations itself. Shura is grounded in religious accountability, whereas democracy is grounded in secular institutional processes to ensure that governance is pure.³⁹

Shura and democracy both pursue the value of inclusion, albeit in different ways. Islamic rule emphasises justice (Adl) and equity and affirms

³⁷ Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

³⁸ Nasr, *Heart of Islam*.

³⁹ Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*.

the rights of minorities. A good example is the Constitution of Medina, which offers self-governance and prohibits discrimination against non-Muslims in an Islamic nation. Women also participated in consultations on political and social matters during the Prophet's time. These practices demonstrate the initial egalitarianism of Shura, which has been blocked at certain times by culture and politics in the modern world.⁴⁰

Democracy institutionalises the protection of minorities and gender equality through laws that safeguard minority rights and ensure equality between women and men. Affirmative action policies and constitutional rights and freedoms serve to rectify previous imbalances and ensure that these groups are included in the political system. The struggle of women to secure the right to vote and to participate in the democratic process has been long, yet barriers persist, including structural oppression. Whereas Shura bases its inclusiveness on divine provisions, democracy bases its inclusiveness on social and legal provisions that evolve.⁴¹ Since the two systems' value integration, their methods differ due to their cultural and philosophical orientations.

Points of Convergence and Divergence

Shura and democracy share the principles of justice, the protection of the general population's interests, and consultation, but they are grounded in different principles. Both systems emphasise equality and fairness, and justice is an essential element of each. In Shura, justice is grounded in the divine, and leaders in this region are expected to discharge their

⁴⁰ Auda, *Maqasid al-Shari'ah*.

⁴¹ Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*.

responsibilities in a moral and just manner, as per the Quran. The governance of Umar ibn al-Khattab and other early leaders of the Islamic religion also provides examples of how justice was taken into account when decisions were made on social and economic matters.⁴²

Democracy, on the other hand, applies to laws and constitutions to promote justice, and all citizens are equal before the law. Mechanisms such as independent judiciaries and legislative checks and balances protect justice as a system by preventing abuses of power against citizens.⁴³ The Maslaha in Shura is a divine duty that seeks to fulfil the physical, moral and spiritual needs of the masses. Democratic systems enable people to have a say in their welfare and in the policies developed to meet societal needs, such as those in health and education, which are enacted in accordance with the will of the voters.⁴⁴

Both systems share the feature of consultation. It is an ethical requirement in the Quran: “And those who do their affairs through mutual consultation....⁴⁵ Equally, democracy focuses on consultation through parliamentary debate and civic engagement, resulting in inclusivity and representation.⁴⁶ Although the consultation of Shura is dictated by ethical requirements, democracy enables it to adapt to the changing dynamics in society.

⁴² Wael B. Hallaq, *Shari'ah: Theory, Practice, Transformations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁴³ John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁴⁴ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000).

⁴⁵ Qur'an 42:38.

⁴⁶ David Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999).

The distinction between Shura and democracy is best understood through their ethical assumptions and the concept of sovereignty. Shura is founded on the Islamic sovereignty of Allah in the governance of society, and the Islamic rule of law is grounded in the Quran and Sunnah. These values hold leaders accountable for their policies, as they serve as custodians of the organisation.⁴⁷ According to this framework, the ethical view is higher than popular opinion, and morality is the key to decisions.

Whereas authoritarianism is founded on the idea of the divine right to rule, democracy is based on the idea of the sovereignty of the people. Decentralisation of power and the right to make decisions about laws and political systems are enjoyed by most of the population. Although this can be an advocate of flexibility, it can also lead to the problem of ethical relativism, where ethical standards are established based on what society feels. For example, constitutional changes and legislative deliberations can be shaped more by changes in cultural norms than by unchanging ethical principles.⁴⁸ This contrast highlights the inflexibility of Shura in her divine morality, in comparison with the flexibility of the people-centred system of democracy.

As a matter of fact, Shura and democracy prove to be compatible in promoting inclusive rule, but not in their practice. The model of consultation that Shura adopted is the inclusion of religious scholars, community representatives, and advisors in the decision-making process, so that there is a balance between expertise and representation. This inclusivity is meant to

⁴⁷ Hallaq, *Shari'a*.

⁴⁸ Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*.

establish consensus-based policies that follow ethical guidelines whilst satisfying the needs of the people.⁴⁹

Democracy institutionalises inclusiveness through electoral procedures, legislative bodies, and referenda. Elected representatives represent the interests of various constituencies, and public participation is enhanced by the free media and civil society organisations.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, the majority-rule principle of democracy can lead the majority to ignore minority opinions, and therefore it requires constitutional safeguarding. Although Shura has a higher likelihood of a polarised decision-making process, it is less likely to be as quick as a vote-based decision.

The second distinction concerns accountability measures. The leaders in Shura are accountable to the community and to Allah, and the morality of the leaders is emphasised. Checks and balances in a democracy are provided through the independence of the judiciary and term limits on heads of state.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the two systems seek to realise effective governance that is just and in the common good, albeit differently.

Contemporary Applications:

In modern states, however, Shura faces several challenges in its implementation due to structural, cultural, and political factors. The key difficulty lies in the discrepancy between the postulates of the Shura system and the realities of modern state functioning. Shura places a strong focus on

⁴⁹ Farid Esack, *Qur'an, Liberation, and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1997).

⁵⁰ Beetham, *Democracy and Human Rights*.

⁵¹ Sen, *Development as Freedom*.

transparency, accountability, and ethical principles, but most modern states struggle with corruption, the concentration of power, and the absence of direct public engagement. These issues effectively bar the implementation of Shura values.⁵²

The use of Shura is challenged by the state of authoritarian politics in certain Muslim-majority states. In these states, the ruling elites take centre stage in decision-making, and the population has little or no say or influence in the process. This is contrary to the principles of Shura, which hold that everyone in the community is meant to be part of the decision-making process.⁵³

There are also cultural barriers, such as tribalism and male dominance over women. These social systems may violate the rights of women and minorities, and it is not easy for everyone to exercise Shura. Moreover, the pace of globalisation has compelled the integration of Western forms of governance, thus relegating traditional indigenous forms of governance, such as Shura, to more internationally acceptable forms, such as democracy.⁵⁴

Muslim nations have adopted various forms of democracy in practice and have made them coexist with Islamic and cultural practices. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Tunisia are democratic yet Islamic states. For example, Indonesia's notion of Pancasila incorporates Islamic principles

⁵² Louay Safi, *The Foundation of Islamic Governance: A Systems Approach* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

⁵³ M. A. Khan, *Islamic Governance in the Contemporary World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).

⁵⁴ A. Zaman, *Islamic Political Systems: Past and Present* (Islamabad: Islamic Research Institute, 2018).

into democracy and emphasises togetherness, social justice and religious freedom. This model shows that Islamic values are not incompatible with democratic practices.⁵⁵

The Malay government is a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system of government that takes the form of Shura. Islamic political parties, such as the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS), are present, indicating that Islam is involved in the democratic process. Similarly, Tunisia's Arab Spring constitution is a blend of secularism and Islamic law, which affords equal respect to both democracy and Sharia as sources of law.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, certain problems remain to be overcome. Corruption, political instability and external pressure remain factors that are stalling the realisation of democracy in states with a Muslim majority. In addition, it is still hard to combine religion with secular roles in the modern world. These experiences demonstrate that democracy can be compatible with Islamic practices and that further progress remains necessary.

Shura and democracy have been the focal point of interest as potential modes of governance in Muslim-majority nations. Consequently, hybrid models aim to preserve the ethical and consultative character of Shura while also incorporating the procedural benefits of democracy. In Morocco, the monarchy maintains Shura-type consultative bodies that complement the

⁵⁵ Greg Fealy, *Islamic Democracy and Its Challenges in Indonesia* (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Asia Institute, 2008).

⁵⁶ Monica L. Marks, *Ennahda's Balance: Tunisia's Democratic Experiment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

parliamentary system. These councils enable discussion of religious, social and political matters.⁵⁷

A case in point is Turkey, where democratic institutions operate within a system that recognises Islamic principles. Although secularism is the dominant political system in Turkey, some political parties, including the Justice and Development Party (AKP), have incorporated Islamic values into their decision-making processes and thus practise both Shura and democracy.⁵⁸

Among the problems that hybrid models face are the conflict between religious authority and democracy, the differing understanding of Shura, and others.

Conclusion:

Comparing the Shura and democracy, the principles, decision-making, and implementation of the two can be seen as both similar and different. The divine authority and moral responsibility stressed by Shura could provide a moral foundation to complement modern governance structures, and the democratic focus on representation and disability could support societal needs. The case of mixed systems in Tunisia and Malaysia shows that mixed systems can coexist and accommodate not only Islamic ethics but also democratic principles to meet the demands of the present day. As global governance emerges, a combination of the ethical component of Shura and the procedural gains of democracy can be used to create

⁵⁷ M. Buehler, *Political Islam in Tunisia: The History of Ennahda* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

⁵⁸ M. Hakan Yavuz, *Secularism and Muslim Democracy in Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

sustainable and inclusive governance. It promotes justice and the common good, and fosters citizen involvement in decision-making, while meeting the needs of diverse societies without undermining their cultural and religious beliefs. By doing so, it is possible to examine the best practises of both traditions and develop models of governance in countries that embrace traditional values while meeting the demands of the modern world and offering moral, inclusive, and efficient leadership.

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