

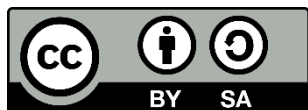


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THEO-DEMOCRACY: Al-Maududi's Vision Of Islamic Governance In The Modern Era

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Abstract: This paper explores Abul A'la Al-Maududi's concept of Theo-Democracy as a distinctive model of Islamic governance that seeks to reconcile divine sovereignty with participatory political processes. Unlike Western liberal democracies, which prioritize popular sovereignty, Maududi asserts that ultimate authority resides solely with Allah. Within this framework, human beings function not as sovereign rulers but as trustees tasked with implementing divine law through mechanisms such as *shūrā* (mutual consultation). The study critically examines the philosophical foundations, institutional structures, and functional dynamics of Maududi's theo-democratic vision. It further investigates the practical challenges and prospects of applying this model in contemporary Muslim-majority societies, where pluralism and complex political landscapes pose significant hurdles. Employing a descriptive-analytical methodology grounded in Maududi's primary texts, the paper contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic political thought and assesses the contemporary relevance of theo-democracy as a normative framework for governance.

Keywords: Theo-Democracy, Islamic Governance, Abul A'la Al-Maududi, Divine Sovereignty.

Abstrak: Makalah ini mengkaji konsep teo-demokrasi Abul A'la Al-Maududi sebagai model tata kelola pemerintahan Islam yang khas, yang berupaya memadukan kedaulatan ilahi dengan proses politik partisipatif. Berbeda dengan demokrasi liberal Barat yang mengutamakan kedaulatan rakyat, Maududi menegaskan bahwa otoritas tertinggi sepenuhnya berada di tangan Allah. Dalam kerangka ini, manusia tidak berperan sebagai penguasa yang berdaulat, melainkan sebagai pemegang amanah yang bertugas menerapkan hukum ilahi melalui mekanisme seperti **shūrā** (musyawarah). Studi ini menelaah secara kritis landasan filosofis, struktur kelembagaan, dan dinamika fungsional dari visi teo-demokrasi Maududi. Lebih jauh, makalah ini menyelidiki tantangan praktis dan prospek penerapan model tersebut dalam masyarakat Muslim kontemporer, di mana pluralisme dan lanskap politik yang kompleks menghadirkan hambatan yang signifikan. Dengan menggunakan metodologi deskriptif-analitis yang bersumber pada teks-teks utama karya Maududi, makalah ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap diskursus yang lebih luas mengenai pemikiran politik Islam serta mengevaluasi relevansi kontemporer teo-demokrasi sebagai kerangka normatif bagi tata kelola pemerintahan..

Kata Kunci: Teo-Demokrasi, Pemerintahan Islam, Abul A'la Al-Maududi, Kedaulatan Ilahi.

Introduction

The collapse of the Caliphate in the early 20th century and the subsequent rise of secular nation-states across the Muslim world triggered profound debates among Islamic scholars regarding the ideal system of governance compatible with Islamic teachings. In this context, Abul A'la Al-Maududi (1903–1979) emerged as a leading voice, offering a unique theoretical framework that sought to bridge divine authority with modern concepts of public participation. His proposition, which he termed “theo-democracy,” rejects both autocratic theocracy and Western-style secular liberal democracy, proposing instead a political system rooted in the Qur'an and Sunnah while incorporating consultative and representative mechanisms.

Maududi's theo-democracy envisions a state where sovereignty belongs solely to Allah, and human governance functions as a trust to execute divine law (Shari'ah). Unlike traditional theocratic models, his theory affirms the role of the ummah (Muslim community) in selecting leaders and participating in governance through *shūrā* (consultation), all within the ethical boundaries set by revelation.¹ This integration of divine sovereignty and limited popular representation marks Maududi's work as a major contribution to Islamic political thought in the modern era.

This paper explores the intellectual foundation, core principles, and structural design of theo-democracy as articulated by Maududi. It further evaluates the relevance and challenges of implementing this system in contemporary Muslim-majority societies, focusing particularly on Iran and Pakistan as case studies. By situating theo-democracy within the larger discourse of Islamic political reform and revivalism, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing search for an Islamic governance model that is both theologically sound and practically applicable in a modern context.

Method

This research employs a qualitative method using a descriptive-analytical approach. The primary data are drawn from the original writings of Abul A'la Al-Maududi, including *The Islamic Law and Constitution* and *Towards Understanding Islam*. These are supported by secondary sources such as academic analyses, biographies, journal articles, and Qur'anic exegesis by classical and contemporary scholars on verses related to the concept of governance.

The method involves textual analysis to examine key themes in Maududi's works, focusing on the concept of divine sovereignty, the role of the ummah, and the implementation of Shari'ah in governance. In addition, the research adopts a comparative perspective by analyzing the partial application of theo-democratic principles in modern nation-states, specifically Iran and Pakistan. These case studies are used to assess the practical feasibility, benefits, and limitations of theo-democracy in diverse political and cultural contexts.

By integrating classical Islamic sources with modern political theory, this methodological approach seeks to offer a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of

¹ Sayyid Abūla'lā Maudūdī, *Islamic Law and Constitution* (Islamic Publications, 1955). p 138.

theo-democracy not only as a theoretical construct but also as a living discourse in the evolving political landscape of the Muslim world.

Abul A'la Al-Maududi

1. The Biography of Abul A'la Al-Maududi

Abul A'la Al-Maududi was born on 3 Rajab 1321 AH (September 25, 1903 CE) in Aurangabad, India. He came from a respected North Indian Muslim family, known as the Sharifs of Delhi, and was the youngest of three children. Maududi was a Sayyid, tracing his lineage to the Prophet Muhammad (SAW), a title that carried both religious and social significance.²

His father, Sayyid Ahmad Hasan, a lawyer and graduate of Aligarh University, provided Maududi with a rich Islamic environment. Strongly opposed to Western cultural influence, Ahmad Hasan ensured that his son received an education rooted in Islamic values.³ Maududi began his education at home, learning Arabic, Persian, and English, and later continued at Fayqaniyah School a blend of traditional and modern educational methods where he studied both religious and secular sciences.⁴

Though he enrolled at Dar al-Ulum, Hyderabad, financial hardship and his father's illness forced him to discontinue formal education. Despite these setbacks, Maududi became a committed autodidact, utilizing his proficiency in multiple languages to continue his studies in Islamic jurisprudence, philosophy, and politics. Maududi embarked on a journalistic career at the age of fifteen. In 1920, he became editor of an Urdu newspaper in Jabalpur. He later led other notable publications such as *Muslim* and *al-Jam'iyat 'Ulama al-Hind*. His editorial role at *al-Jam'iyat* significantly raised his profile in intellectual circles across India.

In 1927, he published *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam* (Holy War in Islam), a pioneering work comparing Islamic concepts of war and peace with modern international law. This work laid the foundation for his later political philosophy, especially his ideas on statehood and Islamic governance. In 1932, he moved to Hyderabad and began publishing *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, a journal that became the main vehicle for his Islamic thought.⁵

2. Engagement with Islamic Revival and Political Activism

In 1937, Maududi met the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, who invited him to settle in Punjab to help establish an Islamic intellectual center, Dar al-Islam. Their collaboration aimed to nurture Islamic scholars capable of developing Islamic jurisprudence suited for the modern world.⁶ However, the project dissolved due to ideological conflicts and Iqbal's death.

² H A Mukti Ali, *Alam Pikiran Islam Modern Di India Dan Pakistan* (Penerbit Mizan, 1993). p. 238.

³ Agustina Damanik, 'Konsep Negara Menurut Abu A'la Al-Maududi', *Jurnal AL-MAQASID: Jurnal Ilmu Kesyariahan Dan Keperdataan*, 5.1 (2019), 95–110. p. 97.

⁴ Sjadzali Munawir, 'Islam Dan Tata Negara', *Jakarta: Universitas Indonesia*, 1993. *Islam Dan Tata Negara*, p. 158.

⁵ Mohammad Salik, *Konsep Negara Islam Menurut Abul A'la Al Maududi*, 1st edn (Surabaya: Edufutura Press, 2009). *Konsep Negara Islam Menurut Abul A'la Al-Maududi*, p. 52.

⁶ Ali. *Alam Pikiran Islam Modern Di India Dan Pakistan*, p. 240.

In 1941, Maududi founded Jama'at al-Islami, a movement oriented toward ideological transformation rather than immediate political power. Unlike other political organizations, Jama'at focused on educating a committed cadre grounded in Islamic principles. However, following the partition of India in 1947, the group increasingly participated in Pakistan's political development.⁷

Maududi advocated for the establishment of Pakistan as a truly Islamic state. In 1948, Jama'at al-Islami co-hosted the Akbar Conference to push for an Islamic constitution.⁸ As a result, the group presented four fundamental demands to Pakistan's Constituent Assembly: (1) Sovereignty belongs to Allah alone; (2) Islamic Shari'ah must serve as the law of the land; (3) All contradictory laws must be annulled; and (4) the government must operate within the bounds of Islamic principles.⁹

3. Struggles, Imprisonment, and Legacy

Maududi's confrontations with the state intensified over time. He was sentenced to death in 1953 for his opposition to the Qadiyani sect, which he considered heretical. His sentence was later commuted due to domestic and international pressure. He was also imprisoned during General Ayub Khan's regime, particularly for challenging the state-sanctioned Eid celebrations that ignored the traditional moon sighting.

Despite these challenges, Maududi remained resilient, advocating for an Islamic system of governance that integrates divine sovereignty with public participation. He called this model "theo-democracy," a framework that rejected both Western secularism and traditional autocracy. For Maududi, only Islam could provide a comprehensive solution to the moral, social, and political crises of the modern world.

Over six decades of active involvement, Maududi became a prolific thinker and writer. His works addressed theology, law, politics, economics, and tafsir. Among his most influential contributions are: *Tafhim al-Qur'an* (a six-volume Qur'anic commentary), *The Islamic Law and Constitution*, *Al-Jihad fi al-Islam*, and *Towards Understanding Islam*. His writings were translated into several languages, reaching audiences far beyond South Asia.

Maududi passed away on September 22, 1979, in Buffalo, New York, and was buried in Ichhra, Lahore. His intellectual legacy remains influential, especially in movements advocating Islamic revivalism in countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Abul A'la Al-Maududi's life was a testament to intellectual rigor, religious commitment, and political perseverance. Despite facing imprisonment, ideological opposition, and political suppression, he never abandoned his vision of Islam as a complete system governing both private and public life. As one of the key architects of Islamic modernism in the 20th century, Maududi's legacy continues to inspire debates on the nature of Islamic governance and the role of religion in the modern state.

⁷ Abuzar Umar, 'Konsep Moh. Natsir Dan AbuAl-a'la Al-Maududi Tentang Negara Dan Pemerintahan: Studi Analisis Komparatif', pp. 73-74.

⁸ Salik. *Konsep Negara Islam Menurut Abul A'la Al-Maududi*, p. 55.

⁹ Munawir. *Islam Dan Tata Negara*, p. 164.

Definition and Basic Assumption of Theo-Democracy

Abul A'la al-Maududi's concept of theo-democracy represents a significant and original contribution to the development of modern Islamic political thought. Firmly grounded in the Qur'anic worldview, this concept envisions a system of governance that seeks to reconcile divine sovereignty with meaningful public participation. Contrary to secular democratic models, which derive legitimacy from the will of the people, Maududi asserts that ultimate sovereignty belongs solely to Allah. Accordingly, any form of political authority is only legitimate when exercised within the framework of divine law (Shari'ah), which he regards as the supreme legal and moral foundation of the Islamic state.

Importantly, Maududi does not advocate for theocratic rule in the conventional sense. Instead, he highlights the necessity of civic involvement, emphasizing that members of the Muslim ummah possess both the right and the obligation to select their leaders, engage in public affairs, and hold those in power accountable. However, such participation must remain within the bounds prescribed by revelation, ensuring that no human decision contradicts divine commandments.

Theo-democracy, as formulated by Maududi, emerges as a critical response to what he perceived as the ideological deficiencies and ethical shortcomings of both autocratic regimes and liberal secular democracies. He condemned authoritarian systems for excluding the role of the people in governance and criticized secular democracies for marginalizing divine guidance in favor of human-made laws. In his view, any political system that disregards religious principles is not only spiritually void but also susceptible to moral decline. Consequently, Maududi viewed secularism particularly the rigid separation of religion and state as incompatible with the Islamic worldview. He warned that such a model could erode the moral foundations of Muslim societies and marginalize Islam's comprehensive role in public life.¹⁰

At the core of Maududi's theory lies the foundational belief that the ideal Islamic state must be built upon the primary sources of Islam: the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These sources, in Maududi's assessment, offer a complete and divinely sanctioned framework for governance that includes legal, political, ethical, and social dimensions. Furthermore, he emphasizes the integration of key governance principles such as *shūrā* (consultation), *'adl* (justice), and *mas'ūliyyah* (public accountability), which collectively illustrate the dynamic interaction between divine will and human agency—serving as the pillars of his theo-democratic vision.

Maududi's intellectual formation and life experiences profoundly shaped his political ideas. As a journalist, theologian, and founder of the Jamaat-e-Islami movement, he was not merely a theorist but also an engaged actor in the political and religious discourse of his time. His experience during British colonial rule in India, along with the major political and religious transformations surrounding the partition and establishment of Pakistan, informed his understanding of the socio-political challenges faced by Muslim societies. These historical contexts underscored the necessity for a

¹⁰ Maudūdī. *Islamic Law and Constitution*, p. 5.

political model that could resist colonial influences while simultaneously preserving Islamic identity and values.

In sum, Maududi's writings reflect a determined effort to harmonize classical Islamic teachings with the institutional realities of the modern nation-state. While he remained steadfast in upholding religious principles, he also proposed a model of governance capable of functioning within contemporary political settings. His theo-democracy is therefore not merely a theoretical ideal, but a serious proposition for a political system that seeks to be both theologically grounded and socially responsive.

Following an in-depth examination of several Qur'anic verses related to the state and governance as interpreted by Maududi, it becomes evident that his theo-democratic framework is deeply rooted in classical Islamic exegesis while simultaneously oriented toward the political realities of the modern state. Maududi's readings resonate with, and at times expand upon, the interpretations offered by leading exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī, whose works collectively underscore the theological and moral underpinnings of just governance, consultative decision-making, equality, peace, and moral oversight.

For instance, in the matter of justice (*'adl*), as articulated in Surah al-Naḥl (16:90) and Surah al-Nisā' (4:135), al-Ṭabarī interprets *justice* as first and foremost the recognition of divine sovereignty acknowledging that gratitude and obedience are due solely to Allah, and that this testimony forms the basis of all moral order.¹¹ Ibn Kathīr complements this by emphasizing the alignment of inward intentions with outward actions, ensuring that all deeds are sincerely devoted to Allah.¹² Wahbah al-Zuhaylī regards these verses as encapsulating one of the most comprehensive moral directives in the Qur'an, uniting ethical, social, and legal norms under the principle of justice.¹³

In relation to consultation (*syūrā*), as mentioned in Surah al-Shūrā (42:38) and Surah Āl 'Imrān (3:159), Ibn Kathīr explains that *syūrā* entails genuine deliberation among community members before finalizing decisions, following the Prophetic example in matters such as military strategy.¹⁴ Al-Ṭabarī highlights *syūrā* as a remedy for division,¹⁵ while al-Zuhaylī frames it as a binding principle of governance ensuring inclusivity, cooperation, and moral accountability in public affairs.¹⁶

The principle of equality, grounded in Surah al-Ḥujurāt (49:13), is presented by al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr as a reminder of humanity's shared origin, with true honor

¹¹ Thabary. *'Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami'ul Bayaan 'an Ta'wil Ayyu Al Qur'an'*, volume 14, 2003, pp. 334-335.

¹² Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. *'Tafsir Al- Qur'an Al- 'Azhim'* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 4, pp. 595-596.

¹³ Az-Zuhaili, *'Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 7'*. Gema Insani, 7 (2018), p. 462.

¹⁴ Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. *'Tafsir Al- Qur'an Al- 'Azhim'* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 7, p. 211.

¹⁵ Thabary. *'Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami'ul Bayaan 'an Ta'wil Ayyu Al Qur'an'*, volume 20, 2003, p. 523.

¹⁶ Az-Zuhaili, *'Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 13 (Juz 25 & 26)'*. (Gema Insani, 2013), 19. p. 96.

determined solely by *taqwā* (piety), not lineage or wealth.¹⁷¹⁸ Al-Zuhaylī underscores the universal address of the verse, portraying human diversity as a divine sign meant to encourage mutual recognition, intercultural understanding, and the rejection of racial or tribal superiority.¹⁹

Regarding peace, as commanded in Surah al-Anfāl (8:61), al-Ṭabarī specifies that even in the midst of warfare, inclining to peace whether through conversion, treaty, or cessation of hostilities is a Qur’anic imperative.²⁰ Ibn Kathīr supports this with the example of the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyyah,²¹ while al-Zuhaylī stresses that peace is the normative aim of Islam, with war permitted only in exceptional cases such as self-defense.²²

Finally, oversight and accountability (*amr bi al-ma’rūf wa nahy ‘an al-munkar*), as expressed in Surah Āl ‘Imrān (3:104), is interpreted by al-Ṭabarī as a communal duty to call people to Islam and uphold divine commands.²³ Ibn Kathīr emphasizes the need for a dedicated group within the community to carry out this mission systematically,²⁴ while al-Zuhaylī frames it as a *farḍ kifāyah* (collective obligation) essential to maintaining moral order and preventing societal decline.²⁵

By engaging these exegetical traditions, Maududi situates theo-democracy not as a novel innovation but as an applied extension of Qur’anic principles long recognized in the tafsīr heritage. His contribution lies in systematizing these principles into a coherent political model retaining their theological essence while adapting them to the institutional structures of the modern state.

Structure of the Theo-Democratic State

Abul A’la Maududi’s theo-democracy offers a distinct political model that integrates divine sovereignty with participatory governance. Positioned as a middle path between secular democracy and theocracy, it rests on several foundational pillars: the supremacy of God, consultative decision-making (*shūrā*), public accountability, the rule of Shari’ah-based law, and institutional checks and balances.²⁶

¹⁷ Thabary. *‘Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami’ul Bayaan ‘an Ta’wiil Ayyu Al Qur’an’*, volume 21, 2003, pp. 382-386.

¹⁸ Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. *‘Tafsir Al- Qur’an Al- ‘Azhim’* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 7, pp. 385-386.

¹⁹ Az-Zuhaili, *‘Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 13 (Juz 25 & 26)’*. p. 486-487.

²⁰ Thabary. *‘Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami’ul Bayaan ‘an Ta’wiil Ayyu Al Qur’an’*, volume 11, 2003, pp. 251-253.

²¹ Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. *‘Tafsir Al- Qur’an Al- ‘Azhim’* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 4, pp. 83.

²² Az Zuhaili, IX. *Tafsir Al Munir Jilid 5 (Juz 9&10)*, Gema Insani, 2013, IX. p. 345.

²³ Thabary. *‘Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami’ul Bayaan ‘an Ta’wiil Ayyu Al Qur’an’*, volume 5, 2003, p. 661.

²⁴ Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. *‘Tafsir Al- Qur’an Al- ‘Azhim’* (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 2, pp. 91.

²⁵ Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir Jilid 2*. (Depok: Gema Insani, 2013). p. 365.

²⁶ Humeira Iqtidar, ‘Theorizing Popular Sovereignty in the Colony: Abul A’la Maududi’s “Theodemocracy”’, *The Review of Politics*, 82.4 (2020), 595–617 <<https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S0034670520000595>>. pp. 595-617.

1. Sovereignty of God (*Hakimiyyatullah*)

Abul A'la Maududi's theo-democratic framework is anchored in the uncompromising principle of *Hakimiyyatullah*—the absolute sovereignty of God. In this paradigm, political authority is not derived from the will of the people, as in secular democracies, but from divine command. Human beings, including rulers and legislators, are not sovereign agents but *khulafā'* (vicegerents) entrusted with the implementation of divine law. This stewardship is not symbolic; it imposes a binding obligation to govern strictly within the parameters of Shari'ah. Any human legislation that contravenes divine injunctions is deemed illegitimate and void.

Maududi's articulation of this principle was not merely theoretical—it had tangible political ramifications. His intellectual leadership significantly influenced the drafting of Pakistan's 1949 Objectives Resolution, which declared that "sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone," thereby embedding the theological foundation of state authority into the constitutional framework of a modern nation-state. This marked a decisive departure from secular constitutionalism and underscored Maududi's vision of a polity where divine law supersedes all man-made statutes.

As Maududi himself asserted, "No one can regard any human being as the ultimate lawgiver. The authority to make laws belongs to God alone, and those who exercise political power are bound to do so within the limits prescribed by Him."²⁷ This theological stance redefines the role of governance from one of autonomous rule to one of divine trusteeship, setting the stage for a political order that is both theocentric and participatory.²⁸

2. *Syūrā* (Consultation)

While affirming the exclusive sovereignty of God, Maududi places *syūrā*—mutual consultation—at the heart of his theo-democratic vision, grounding it in Qur'anic injunctions such as QS. Al-Shūrā (42:38).²⁹ For him, *syūrā* must be genuine, institutionalized, and oriented toward the public good, enabling the Muslim community to participate in policy-making, conflict resolution, and the preservation of Islamic values.³⁰ Although its mechanisms may adapt to historical and cultural contexts, they must remain transparent, ethically sound, and within the bounds of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Maududi views *syūrā* as both a religious duty and a political necessity, serving as a safeguard against authoritarianism and fostering collective responsibility. This stance aligns with exegetical consensus: Al-Ṭabarī regards consultation as the remedy for communal division,³¹ Ibn Kathīr highlights the Prophet's practice of genuine consultation

²⁷ Abul A'la Maududi, *Political Theory of Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 13.

²⁸ Amjad. *Nation-State and Sovereignty in Contemporary Political Discourse: Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi's Concept of God's Sovereignty*, p. 68.

²⁹ Md Golam Mohiuddin, 'Decision Making Style in Islam: A Study of Superiority of Shura (Participative Management) and Examples from Early Era of Islam', *Decision Making*, 8.4 (2016), pp. 79–88.

³⁰ Iqtidar. *Theorizing Popular Sovereignty in the Colony: Abul A 'la Maududi's "Theodemocracy"*, pp. 595–617.

³¹ Thabary. '*Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami'ul Bayaan 'an Ta'wiil Ayyu Al Qur'an'*, volume 20, 2003, p. 523.

with his Companions,³² and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī affirms it as a binding process to secure truth, justice, and the common good.³³

3. Accountability (*Mas'uliyah*)

In Maududi's theo-democracy, leadership is a sacred trust (*amānah*) exercised under the dual accountability to God and the people. Rulers are bound by law, subject to moral scrutiny, and obliged to govern with justice, humility, and transparency, while citizens carry the religious duty to uphold justice through counsel (*naṣīḥah*), constructive criticism, and, when necessary, lawful removal of corrupt leaders.³⁴ This principle links divine sovereignty to collective responsibility, making every public official a custodian of the Shari'ah under community oversight. Qur'anic guidance, particularly QS. Āl 'Imrān (3:104), anchors this ethic: Al-Ṭabarī views it as an obligation to promote good and forbid wrong;³⁵ Ibn Kathīr affirms the need for an organized group to fulfill it;³⁶ and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī classifies it as *farḍ kifāyah*, the neglect of which incurs collective sin.³⁷ In this way, accountability in theo-democracy is both an institutional safeguard and a spiritual imperative.

4. Rule of Law: Supremacy of Shari'ah and the Role of *Ijtihād*

A central tenet of Maududi's theo-democracy is the primacy of Shari'ah as the ultimate source of legal and moral authority. In this model, all legislation must conform to the immutable principles of divine law, which serve as the bedrock of societal order and justice. However, Maududi does not advocate for a static or rigid application of Islamic law. Instead, he emphasizes the dynamic role of *ijtihād*—independent juristic reasoning—as a mechanism for interpreting and applying Shari'ah in light of changing social, political, and technological realities.

This dual commitment to scriptural fidelity and contextual adaptability allows theo-democracy to function as a living system of governance. It ensures that while the core tenets of Islam remain inviolable, their implementation can evolve to meet the needs of contemporary society. Maududi's approach thus resists both the ossification of legal thought and the relativism of secular lawmaking. He writes, "The door of *ijtihād* is not closed. It is open for all ages, and it is through *ijtihād* that the Shari'ah can be applied to new problems and conditions without violating its basic principles."³⁸

³² Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. '*Tafsir Al- Qur'an Al- 'Azhim*' (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 7, p. 211.

³³ Az-Zuhaili, '*Tafsir Al-Munir* Jilid 13 (Juz 25 & 26)'. Gema Insani, 9 (2013), 19. p. 96.

³⁴ Rafiu Ibrahim Adebayo, 'The Political Thought of Mawdudi as a Template for Democratic Sustainability in Nigeria', *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 54.1 (2016), pp. 147–173.

³⁵ Thabary. '*Tafsir Ath Thabary Jaami'ul Bayaan 'an Ta'wil Ayyu Al Qur'an*', volume 5, 2003, p. 661.

³⁶ Ibnu Umar Ibnu Katsir. '*Tafsir Al- Qur'an Al- 'Azhim*' (Riyadh: Dar Thoyyibah, 1999), volume 2, pp. 91.

³⁷ Az-Zuhaili, *Tafsir Al-Munir* Jilid 2. (Depok: Gema Insani, 2013). p. 365.

³⁸ Abul A'la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans. and ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 200.

By institutionalizing *ijtihād* within a framework governed by divine sovereignty, Maududi envisions a legal order that is both principled and pragmatic—anchored in revelation yet responsive to human experience.

5. Institutional Design

Maududi's theo-democratic vision encompasses a tripartite state structure—legislative, executive, and judicial—each operating under the overarching supremacy of Shari'ah. This institutional arrangement reflects his commitment to both functional governance and Islamic legal integrity. The legislative body is tasked not with creating laws *ex nihilo*, as in secular systems, but with interpreting and codifying divine injunctions for contemporary application. This process is guided by *ijtihād* and must remain within the bounds of revealed principles.

The executive branch, in Maududi's model, is responsible for implementing these laws with moral integrity and administrative efficiency. It is not an autonomous power center but a servant of divine law and public welfare. The judiciary, meanwhile, functions as an independent arbiter, ensuring that justice is administered in accordance with Shari'ah and that all branches of government remain accountable to divine norms.

Maududi favored a presidential system of governance, wherein the head of state is elected but constrained by the authority of a *Majlis al-Shūrā* (consultative council). This body serves as a check on executive power and a forum for collective deliberation. Importantly, Maududi also recognized the rights of non-Muslim minorities, affirming their civil liberties and protection under Islamic law, provided they did not challenge the Islamic character of the state.

As he explained, "The Islamic state guarantees to the non-Muslim citizens all those fundamental rights which are given to the Muslims. They will enjoy full freedom of conscience and belief and will have the right to perform their religious rites and ceremonies."³⁹ This inclusive yet principled stance reflects Maududi's attempt to balance Islamic orthodoxy with pluralistic coexistence, embedding minority rights within the moral fabric of the Islamic polity.⁴⁰

6. Public Participation

In Maududi's theo-democratic framework, political participation is not merely a civic privilege but a religious obligation. Every citizen, as a moral agent and trustee of divine law, bears the responsibility to uphold justice and ensure that governance remains aligned with Islamic principles. This participatory ethos transforms the political sphere into a domain of collective moral accountability, where the governed are not passive recipients of authority but active contributors to its ethical exercise.

Maududi affirms that holding rulers accountable is integral to the Islamic conception of governance. Citizens are expected to monitor leadership, voice dissent when necessary, and advocate for justice through lawful means. This emphasis on accountability is complemented by a qualified endorsement of political pluralism. While

³⁹ Abul A'la Maududi, *The Islamic Way of Life* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), 52.

⁴⁰ Abul'ala Al-Maududi, 'Hukum Dan Konstitusi Sistem Politik Islam', *Terjemahan Oleh Asep Hikmat Dari The Islamic Law and Constitution*, 1995. pp. 245-254.

Maududi rejects secularism and ideologies that contravene Islamic values, he permits ideological diversity and opposition within the bounds of Islamic ethics. Free expression, public debate, and constructive criticism are not only tolerated but encouraged as mechanisms for ensuring transparency and preventing tyranny.

As Maududi explains, “In an Islamic state, every citizen has the right to criticize the government and point out its errors. This is not only a right but a duty, for the establishment of justice and the prevention of wrongdoing are collective responsibilities.”⁴¹ This vision positions the Islamic polity as a morally engaged society, where governance is a shared enterprise rooted in divine accountability and communal vigilance.⁴²

7. Relevance and Challenges

Despite its normative coherence and theological appeal, the practical implementation of Maududi’s theo-democracy encounters significant challenges. Chief among these is the pluralistic nature of contemporary Muslim societies, which encompass diverse sectarian, ethnic, and ideological constituencies. The theo-democratic model, while grounded in a unified vision of divine sovereignty, must contend with competing interpretations of Islamic law and varying degrees of religious observance. This interpretive diversity complicates the task of codifying a universally accepted Shari’ah-based legal framework.

Moreover, the geopolitical landscape presents additional obstacles. Many Muslim-majority states operate within global systems shaped by secular legal norms, international treaties, and strategic alliances that may conflict with the theo-democratic ethos. Internal political dynamics—such as authoritarianism, sectarian tensions, and institutional fragility—further hinder the realization of Maududi’s vision.

Nevertheless, his ideas continue to exert a profound influence on constitutional debates and legal reforms in the Muslim world, particularly in contexts where Islamic law is formally recognized as a source of legislation. Maududi’s theo-democracy remains a touchstone for scholars, jurists, and political movements seeking to reconcile divine authority with participatory governance. As he observed, “The real objective of the Islamic state is to enforce the laws of God and to establish justice and righteousness in the world.”⁴³ This enduring aspiration ensures that his model remains relevant in ongoing efforts to harmonize Islamic principles with the demands of modern statehood.

In essence, theo-democracy offers a principled yet adaptable framework, blending God’s ultimate authority with meaningful civic engagement. It proposes a comprehensive political order rooted in Islamic values, distinct from both secular liberalism and clerical rule.

Similarities and Differences with Western Democracy

⁴¹ Abul A’la Maududi, *First Principles of the Islamic State*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 45.

⁴² Al-Maududi. pp. 273-274.

⁴³ Abul A’la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1971), 125.

Abul A'la Maududi introduced theo-democracy as a model that unites divine sovereignty with public participation, offering a religious alternative to both secular democracy and authoritarian rule. This section outlines the core similarities and differences between theo-democracy and modern democratic systems, particularly in structure, principles, and practice.

1. Similarities

1.1. Public Participation

While theo-democracy and liberal democracy emerge from distinct philosophical foundations, both systems converge on the importance of citizen participation in governance. In liberal democracy, political engagement is rooted in the principle of popular sovereignty, where the legitimacy of authority derives from the consent of the governed. Participation is framed as a civic right and duty, enabling citizens to influence policy, elect representatives, and hold institutions accountable. This model emphasizes procedural mechanisms such as voting, party competition, and freedom of expression as essential to democratic legitimacy.

In contrast, theo-democracy grounds participation in a theological imperative. The Qur'anic principle of *shūrā* (mutual consultation) mandates that rulers consult the community in matters of public concern, thereby institutionalizing participation as a religious obligation rather than a secular entitlement. For Maududi, *shūrā* is not merely advisory but a binding process that reflects the collective responsibility of the *ummah* to uphold divine law and promote justice. Despite differing ontological premises—divine sovereignty versus popular sovereignty—both systems recognize that inclusive deliberation and public accountability are vital to just governance. As Maududi affirms, “The Islamic system of government is based on consultation and cooperation. It is neither autocratic nor dictatorial, but consultative and democratic in the real sense of the term.”⁴⁴ This shared commitment to participatory governance underscores the potential for dialogue between Islamic and liberal political traditions, particularly in contexts seeking to reconcile faith with modern statecraft.⁴⁵

1.2. Accountability and Rule of Law

Both theo-democracy and liberal democracy underscore the imperative of holding political leaders accountable, though they do so through different normative frameworks. In theo-democracy, accountability is dual in nature: rulers are answerable not only to the people but ultimately to God. This vertical dimension of responsibility reinforces the moral seriousness of governance, as leaders are bound by Shari'ah, which functions as the supreme legal and ethical standard. The ruler is not a sovereign lawmaker but a trustee (*amīn*) who must govern within the parameters of divine law. Institutions such as the *Majlis al-Shūrā* and an independent judiciary serve as mechanisms to ensure that rulers do not transgress these boundaries, thereby institutionalizing accountability within a sacred legal order.

⁴⁴ Abul A'la Maududi, *Political Theory of Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 21.

⁴⁵ Jaan Islam, ‘Abul A'la Maududi: Innovator or Restorer of the Islamic Caliphate?’, 2018. p. 7.

In liberal democracies, accountability is primarily horizontal, enforced through constitutional checks and balances, separation of powers, and the rule of secular law. Elected officials are subject to legal scrutiny, public oversight, and institutional constraints designed to prevent the concentration and abuse of power. Despite their differing foundations—divine versus popular sovereignty—both systems converge on the principle that no individual or institution should be above the law. As Maududi emphasized, “The ruler is not above the law; he is bound to act within the limits prescribed by the Shari’ah and is accountable to God and the people for all his actions.”⁴⁶ This shared commitment to legal restraint and moral responsibility reflects a common aspiration: to ensure justice, prevent tyranny, and uphold the integrity of governance.

1.3. Elections and Legislation

Despite their divergent philosophical underpinnings, both theo-democracy and liberal democracy incorporate elections and legislative institutions as mechanisms of governance. In liberal democracies, elections are the cornerstone of political legitimacy, reflecting the will of the people and enabling the formation of representative bodies that legislate autonomously. Lawmaking in this context is a secular and dynamic process, responsive to societal change and public opinion. Legislatures are empowered to craft, amend, or repeal laws based on evolving political, economic, and cultural needs, with minimal constraints beyond constitutional boundaries.

In contrast, theo-democracy permits electoral processes and representative institutions, but within a framework that is theologically bounded. Elections are not expressions of popular sovereignty per se, but instruments for selecting individuals who will faithfully interpret and implement divine law. Legislative bodies in a theo-democratic system do not possess autonomous lawmaking authority; their role is to codify and apply Shari’ah principles to contemporary issues through *ijtihad*. As Maududi explains, “The legislature of an Islamic state is not sovereign. It cannot legislate anything which is repugnant to the injunctions of Islam. Its function is to interpret and apply the laws of God.”⁴⁷ This fundamental distinction underscores the theo-democratic commitment to divine sovereignty, setting clear limits on legislative discretion and ensuring that all political activity remains subordinate to the moral and legal authority of Islam.

2. Fundamental Differences

2.1. Sovereignty

At the heart of theo-democracy lies the conviction that ultimate sovereignty belongs exclusively to Allah. This foundational belief shapes every aspect of political life, from lawmaking to leadership accountability. In this model, all political authority is derived from divine will, and human agency is exercised only within the parameters set by Shari’ah. Political action, therefore, is not autonomous but a form of stewardship

⁴⁶ Abul A’la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans. and ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 158.

⁴⁷ Abul A’la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans. and ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 146.

(*khilāfah*) that must align with the moral and legal imperatives of Islam. The legitimacy of governance is measured not by popular consent alone, but by fidelity to divine commandments. This theocentric orientation establishes a sacred boundary around political power, ensuring that no human institution can override or nullify the authority of God.

In contrast, modern liberal democracy is grounded in the principle of human sovereignty, where the people are regarded as the ultimate source of law and legitimacy. The social contract replaces divine ordinance as the basis of political order, and laws are crafted through secular deliberation and majority consensus. This anthropocentric framework allows for legal flexibility and pluralism but lacks a transcendent moral anchor. The divergence between these two systems is not merely procedural but ontological, reflecting fundamentally different understandings of authority, law, and justice. As Maududi asserts, “In Islam, sovereignty belongs to God alone, and no man, not even the entire community as a whole, can legislate against His law.”⁴⁸ This distinction underscores the unique moral architecture of theo-democracy, where divine sovereignty is both the source and limit of political power.⁴⁹

2.2. Role of Religion

Religion occupies a foundational role in theo-democracy, where the state is not merely influenced by religious values but is structurally and functionally integrated with Islamic teachings. In Maududi’s vision, the state serves as an instrument for the realization of divine will on earth, ensuring that all aspects of governance—from legislation and education to economic policy and social norms—are aligned with the principles of the Qur’an and Sunnah. The state is thus envisioned as a moral and spiritual entity, charged with cultivating a just and virtuous society through the implementation of Shari’ah. This fusion of religion and governance is not seen as a threat to freedom but as a means of actualizing a divinely ordained order that benefits all members of society.

In contrast, Western liberal democracies are grounded in the principle of secularism, which mandates a formal separation between religion and the state. This model seeks to protect religious freedom by preventing any single faith from dominating public institutions or policymaking. Religion is relegated to the private sphere, while public policy is shaped through secular reasoning and pluralistic deliberation. The aim is to foster inclusivity and neutrality in governance, ensuring that citizens of all faiths—or none—can participate equally in political life. Maududi, however, critiques this separation as morally rootless, arguing that “a secular state cannot provide a firm basis for moral values, for it has no authority to define good and evil.”⁵⁰ This divergence highlights a fundamental tension between theo-democracy’s sacralization of the state and liberal democracy’s commitment to religious neutrality in public affairs.

2.3. Legislative Authority

⁴⁸ Abul A’la Maududi, *The Islamic Way of Life* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), 35.

⁴⁹ Seyyed Mahdi Alizade Mosavi, ‘The Sovereignty and Theo-Democracy in Sayyid Abul-A’la Mawdudi’s Thought’, *Journal of Islamic Political Studies*, 2023. p. 95.

⁵⁰ Abul A’la Maududi, *Four Basic Quranic Terms*, trans. Syed Elahi Baksh (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 112.

In theo-democracy, the legislative process is fundamentally constrained by the immutable principles of Shari'ah. Lawmakers are not autonomous creators of legal norms but interpreters and implementers of divine injunctions. Their role is to apply the eternal values of Islam to contemporary issues through the disciplined use of *ijtihad*, ensuring that all legislation remains within the bounds of the Qur'an and Sunnah. This model envisions a legal system that is principled, morally anchored, and resistant to the volatility of popular opinion. The goal is not to reflect the shifting preferences of the majority, but to uphold a divinely sanctioned moral order that transcends temporal and cultural fluctuations.

In contrast, Western liberal democracies operate on the premise of human sovereignty, where lawmaking is a secular and dynamic process. Legislators are empowered to craft, amend, or repeal laws based on public consensus, electoral mandates, and evolving societal values. This flexibility allows for pluralism, innovation, and responsiveness to changing social conditions, but it also means that legal norms are subject to the contingencies of political negotiation and ideological contestation. Maududi critiques this model for its moral relativism, arguing that "a law which is made by man can be changed by man, and therefore it cannot be the final authority in matters of right and wrong."⁵¹ This contrast highlights the divergent foundations of legal legitimacy in theo-democracy and liberal democracy—one rooted in divine command, the other in human deliberation.

2.4. Purpose of the State and Freedom

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⁵¹ Abul A'la Maududi, *Islamic Law and Constitution*, trans. and ed. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 132.

⁵² Abul A'la Maududi, *Four Basic Quranic Terms*, trans. Syed Elahi Baksh (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 112.

highlights a fundamental tension between theo-democracy's sacralization of the state and liberal democracy's commitment to religious neutrality in public affairs.

Its Relevance in the Modern Context

The contemporary significance of Abul A'la Maududi's theo-democracy can be assessed through its partial influence on modern Muslim-majority states, even though no country fully implements his model. Elements such as divine sovereignty, Shari'ah-based governance, and guided public participation are reflected to varying degrees in states like Iran and Pakistan.

1. Iran: Clerical Authority within an Islamic State

Iran's post-1979 political system, established in the wake of the Islamic Revolution, presents a compelling case of a modern Islamic state that, while not directly influenced by Abul A'la Maududi, exhibits notable conceptual affinities with his theo-democratic vision. Central to Iran's governance model is the doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurist), which vests ultimate political and religious authority in a single cleric—the Supreme Leader. This figure holds sweeping powers over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches, and serves as the guardian of both the Islamic character of the state and its strategic direction. Although Iran maintains electoral processes for institutions such as the presidency and parliament, these are tightly regulated by clerical bodies like the Guardian Council, which vets candidates and oversees the ideological conformity of legislation.

This structure echoes Maududi's insistence on divine sovereignty and the necessity of aligning governance with Shari'ah. However, it departs significantly from his emphasis on participatory consultation (*shūrā*) and collective moral leadership. Maududi envisioned a system in which rulers are accountable not only to God but also to the broader Muslim community, with leadership emerging from ethical merit and communal trust rather than clerical hierarchy. Iran's model, by contrast, centralizes authority in a singular religious figure, thereby limiting the scope of public deliberation and diminishing the role of communal consensus. As Maududi cautioned, "The Islamic state is not a theocracy ruled by a priestly class, but a popular vicegerency based on the collective conscience of the Muslim community."⁵³ This divergence underscores a key tension between institutionalized clerical control and the theo-democratic ideal of shared, accountable governance.

Iran's system does offer certain strengths that resonate with theo-democratic principles: a constitutional commitment to divine sovereignty, religious oversight of state functions, and a framework for elections within an Islamic paradigm. However, these are counterbalanced by critical weaknesses. The overcentralization of power in the Supreme Leader undermines the consultative ethos of *shūrā*, while the suppression of dissent and political pluralism restricts the pursuit of justice and ethical governance. Moreover, the prioritization of institutional loyalty over moral and intellectual merit challenges the theo-democratic ideal of leadership grounded in piety, competence, and public trust.

2. Pakistan: An Incomplete Realization

⁵³ Abul A'la Maududi, *Political Theory of Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 23.

Pakistan offers one of the most tangible, though uneven, attempts to embody theo-democratic principles in a modern nation-state. As the birthplace of Abul A'la Maududi and the headquarters of his movement, Jamaat-e-Islami, Pakistan has been deeply shaped by his political theology. Maududi's influence is most clearly reflected in the 1949 Objectives Resolution, a foundational constitutional document that declared, "sovereignty over the entire universe belongs to Almighty Allah alone," while affirming that the authority to be exercised by the people of Pakistan is a sacred trust.⁵⁴ This articulation of divine sovereignty, coupled with the notion of popular trusteeship, mirrors Maududi's vision of a state governed by Shari'ah through participatory consultation (*shūrā*).

Institutional developments further demonstrate the imprint of theo-democratic ideals. The establishment of the Federal Shariat Court and the Council of Islamic Ideology were designed to ensure that legislation conforms to Islamic principles, echoing Maududi's insistence that no law should contravene divine injunctions. Yet, the practical realization of this vision has been fraught with contradictions. Political instability, recurrent military interventions, and the strategic use of religion for partisan gain have diluted the moral and consultative ethos that theo-democracy demands. Instead of fostering a governance model rooted in ethical leadership and communal deliberation, Pakistan has often witnessed the politicization of religious discourse and the marginalization of genuine *shūrā*. As Maududi warned, "If religion is used as a tool for political ends, it loses its sanctity and becomes a source of discord rather than unity."⁵⁵

Despite these challenges, Pakistan retains structural features that align with theo-democratic aspirations. The constitutional integration of Islamic values, the presence of institutions tasked with Shari'ah compliance, and the existence of electoral mechanisms provide a framework for potential reform. However, persistent weaknesses—such as the inconsistent enforcement of Islamic law, the erosion of ethical leadership, and the lack of a cohesive moral vision—continue to hinder the realization of Maududi's ideal. The gap between constitutional promise and political practice underscores the difficulty of translating theo-democracy from theory into sustainable governance.

Conclusion

The cases of Iran and Pakistan offer two distinct trajectories in the interpretation and implementation of theo-democratic principles, each reflecting different emphases and institutional designs. Iran's post-revolutionary system is characterized by clerical centralism, where the doctrine of *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* concentrates religious and political authority in the Supreme Leader. While elections exist, they are tightly regulated by unelected clerical bodies such as the Guardian Council, limiting meaningful public participation. This model prioritizes ideological conformity and religious oversight, but often at the expense of consultative governance and pluralistic engagement.

Pakistan, by contrast, presents a more open, though ideologically inconsistent, approach. Democratic institutions such as regular elections, a multiparty system, and a

⁵⁴ Government of Pakistan, *Objectives Resolution*, 1949.

⁵⁵ Abul A'la Maududi, *Political Theory of Islam* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 27.

relatively free press coexist with constitutional commitments to Islamic principles, as seen in the Objectives Resolution and the establishment of bodies like the Federal Shariat Court and the Council of Islamic Ideology. However, the lack of cohesive implementation, political instability, and the instrumentalization of religion for partisan ends have hindered the realization of a coherent theo-democratic order. The result is a hybrid system where Islamic ideals are constitutionally enshrined but often diluted in practice.

Maududi's theo-democratic vision occupies a conceptual middle ground between these two models. He advocates for a governance system rooted in divine sovereignty and Shari'ah, yet insists on inclusive consultation (*shūrā*) and moral accountability, rejecting both clerical authoritarianism and superficial Islamization. As he wrote, "Islam wants to establish a system of government which is based not on the sovereignty of man but on the sovereignty of God and the obedience of His laws, and which functions through the consultation of the people."⁵⁶ This balanced model underscores that the viability of theo-democracy depends not only on institutional design but also on the integrity of leadership and the sociopolitical context in which it is embedded. Without a genuine commitment to both divine principles and public engagement, theo-democracy risks devolving into either rigid theocracy or symbolic religiosity.

Conclusion

Abul A'la Al-Maududi's theo-democracy stands as a seminal contribution to modern Islamic political thought, offering a principled alternative to both secular liberalism and authoritarian theocracy. Grounded in the Qur'an and Sunnah and informed by classical jurisprudence and contemporary realities, Maududi's model is built upon the foundational pillars of *ḥākimiyyah liLlāh* (divine sovereignty), *shūrā* (consultation), *ʿadl* (justice), and *mas'ūliyyah* (accountability). By conceptualizing leadership as *amānah* (sacred trust), he integrates legal, moral, and spiritual dimensions into a unified vision of governance. This vision rejects the concentration of power in a clerical elite while also resisting the secular detachment of religion from public life. Instead, it calls for a morally grounded political order in which divine law guides human agency through participatory mechanisms.

This study affirms that theo-democracy is not a static or utopian ideal but a dynamic normative paradigm capable of adapting to the institutional and cultural complexities of modern nation-states. Its strength lies in its ability to harmonize immutable divine principles with evolving administrative structures—such as legislative deliberation, judicial independence, and civic engagement. By embedding Shari'ah within a consultative and accountable framework, theo-democracy aspires to cultivate a just society where power is exercised with humility, transparency, and moral responsibility. As Maududi emphasized, "The real objective of the Islamic state is to enforce the laws of God and to establish justice and righteousness in the world."⁵⁷ ¹ This vision offers a

⁵⁶ Abul A'la Maududi, *The Islamic Way of Life* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967), 42.

⁵⁷ Abul A'la Maududi, *Towards Understanding Islam*, trans. Khurshid Ahmad (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1971), 125.

compelling response to the ethical and governance crises facing many contemporary Muslim societies.

The comparative experiences of Iran and Pakistan illustrate both the potential and the pitfalls of theo-democratic experimentation. Iran's model, with its centralized clerical authority, demonstrates the dangers of conflating religious legitimacy with unchecked political power, often at the expense of *shūrā* and pluralism. Pakistan, while more inclusive in its democratic structures, struggles with ideological inconsistency, political volatility, and the instrumentalization of religion. These cases reveal that the success of theo-democracy hinges not merely on constitutional declarations but on the cultivation of ethical leadership, resilient institutions, and a public ethos committed to Islamic values. Ultimately, Maududi's theo-democracy endures as a vital reference point for those seeking to construct governance models that are both theologically authentic and responsive to the demands of justice, accountability, and participatory legitimacy in the modern world.

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