

The Problem of Constructing a Political Paradigm in Muslim Thought

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Abstract. Our research will focus on the problem of conceiving and constructing a political paradigm, which is the most important dilemma of Muslim thought. We will evaluate the traditional political conceptions of Muslims that have emerged throughout the historical process, beginning with the death of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Solving problems first requires identifying and examining their root causes. If we fail to accurately diagnose the problems, we will not only fail to solve them but will also become part of the problem. Naturally, politics constitutes only a part of individual and social life, not the whole. To conceive of politics as encompassing all of life is contrary to the nature of political thought. Such a way of thinking would harm all values outside the political sphere. In this context, when discussing religion and politics, it is important to note that although they appear separate, these concepts, which are in fact interconnected in a vibrant and intricate network, point to two crucial dimensions of individual and societal reality. Both religion and politics are human phenomena that, in their own dimensions and planes, exert a decisive influence on the social, political, and economic structures that shape the individual and society. Both phenomena fulfill their respective missions in the writing of history. On the contrary, they pave the way for an increase in problems related to these issues in individual and social life, leading to insolubility and chaos.

Keywords: human, religion, politics, caliphate institution, prophet

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Müsəlman dünyasında siyasi paradigmanın problemi

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Xülasə. Tədqiqatımız müsəlman düşüncəsinin ən vacib dilemması olan siyasi paradigmanın təsəvvür edilməsi və qurulması probleminə yönələcək. Məhəmməd Peyğəmbərin (ona Allahınsalavatı və salamu olsun) vəfatından başlayaraq tarixi proses boyunca müsəlmanların ortaya çıxan ənənəvi siyasi konsepsiyalarını qiymətləndirəcəyik. Problemləri həll etmək üçün əvvəlcə onların kök səbəblərini müəyyən etmək və araşdırmaq lazımdır. Problemləri dəqiq diaqnoz edə bilməsək, nəinki onları həll edə bilməyəcəyik, həm də problemin özünün bir hissəsinə çevriləcəyik. Təbii ki, siyasət fərdi və sosial həyatın yalnız bir hissəsinə təşkil edir, bütövlükdə deyil. Siyasəti həyatın bütün sahələrini əhatə edən bir şey kimi təsəvvür etmək siyasi düşüncənin təbiətinə ziddir. Belə bir düşüncə tərzini siyasi sahədən kənar bütün dəyərlərə zərər verərdi. Bu kontekstdə, din və siyasət məsələsinə toxunarkən qeyd etmək vacibdir ki, zahirən ayrı görünənlər də, əslində canlı və mürəkkəb bir şəbəkədə bir-biri ilə əlaqəli olan bu anlayışlar fərdi və ictimai reallığın iki vacib ölçüsünə işarə edir. Hər iki fenomen tarixin yazılmasında öz missiyalarını yerinə yetirir.

Bu fenomenlərdən birini və ya hər ikisini inkaredən və ya görməzdən gələn ideoloji və siyasi yanaşmalar onları aradan qaldırmır. Əksinə, fərdi və sosial həyatda bu məsələlərlə bağlı problemlərin artmasına yol açır və həll olunmazlığa və xaosa səbəb olur.

Açar sözlər: *insan, din, siyasət, xilafət quruluşu, peyğəmbər*

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Introduction

One of the most fundamental problems of social and political science is the relationship between religion and the individual, society, and politics. Since the Middle Ages, the relationship between politics and religion has been a central topic on humanity's intellectual and political agenda. When considering religion and politics, it is crucial to understand that, although they appear distinct in reality, they are fundamentally interconnected and share a vibrant, intricate network of relationships that serve the essential needs of human nature. In this sense, the concepts of religion and politics point to two vital dimensions of individual and societal reality. Naturally, concepts like religion and politics are inherent human phenomena that, in their own dimensions, affect individuals and society and have a decisive influence on intellectual, social, political, and economic structures. Humanity cannot neglect or ignore these inherent phenomena, for both fulfill their respective missions in the writing of history. In this context, the Prophet Muhammad also engaged in political activities and made decisions as part of his human responsibility. Based on this understanding, we would like first to evaluate the Prophet Muhammad's political decisions, the political model of the founding generation (the Companions and the Tabi'in), and the theoretical and practical views of Muslim scholars on this subject. The Prophet Muhammad's period in Medina was a movement that, while religious, also had political dimensions. The socio-political conditions in Medina compelled the Prophet to engage in political activity. The political activities the Prophet undertook in Medina were entirely a human, earthly, and jurisprudential endeavor dictated by the prevailing circumstances. Therefore, the vision of social leadership that the Prophet Muhammad undertook in Medina was not a part of, or a continuation of, his prophetic mission, but rather a necessity and a consequence of his humanity. We see that the Prophet Muhammad, in establishing the city-state of Medina based on a social contract, structured it according to the general principles defined by the Quranic teachings, such as establishing justice, consultation, and entrusting affairs to competent individuals, while also incorporating his own traditional tribal, political, and human experience, intellectual imagination, and the common good. As is well known, the Quran does not propose any model for state and governance. In other words, the Quran does not offer a systematic, defined, and modeled political understanding. In this regard, the Quran merely sets forth universal principles for political legitimacy. It leaves the structuring, organization, and execution of politics to humanity, that is, to the social will and the collective wisdom of society.

The death of the Prophet Muhammad marked the beginning of a new and significant era in Islam, for Muslims had lost not only their Prophet but also their head of state. Neither the Quran nor the Sunnah of the Prophet contained any decree or political regulation regarding the identity of the person who would lead the state or how they should be chosen. The Companions faced the need to rebuild the state after the Prophet Muhammad's death. The Ansar gathered in the shade of the Banu Sa'ida to choose one of their own to lead the Muslim state. This disagreement over governance, which arose even while the Prophet's body was still there, left its mark not only on that era but for centuries to

come. In the courtyard of Beni Sa'ida, it is observed that the discussions were based on the Arab understanding of politics, as required by the existing administrative, political, and social conditions; neither the Ansar nor the Muhajir groups put forward a religious justification; instead, they presented arguments with purely political and social content. (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, pp. 225–228) We wish to evaluate these arguments, taking into account the social and political conditions, in accordance with Qur'anic principles. When we examine the content and arguments put forward in the caliphate debate between the Ansar and the Muhajirun in the courtyard of Beni Sa'ida, we see that the discussion was not conducted within the framework of the general principles outlined in the Quran. The meeting of the Ansar, gathered in the shade of Beni Sa'ida to elect a caliph, was joined by a group of Muhajirun, and the discussion unfolded as follows: Should the caliph be from the Ansar or the Muhajirun? (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 225). Thus, the matter was framed within tribal logic. As the discussion continued, Abu Bakr, who was attending the meeting on behalf of the Muhajirun, asked, "What is the purpose of this meeting?" (Taberî, 1907, Vol. 3, p. 198). The spokesman for the Ansar stood up and responded to Abu Bakr as follows: "We are the helpers of God's religion and the soldiers of Islam. O community of Muhajirun! You are a small group compared to us." "You are slow-moving and few in number. However, look, such a group wants to seize a task that belongs to us," he concluded his speech. Although Umar attempted to respond, Abu Bakr prevented him. Then Abu Bakr asked Sa'd ibn Ubadah, "O Sa'd! What is your opinion?" Sa'd ibn Ubadah replied, "I am one of them!" (Andalusi, p. 2/175). Then Hubab ibn Munzir said, "Let one leader be from us and one from you!" (İbn Sa'd, 1957, p. 182). "The service of the Muhajirun to religion pales in comparison to the service of the Ansar." Umar replied, "Indeed, the service of the Ansar to religion pales in comparison to the service of the Muhajirun." Hubab ibn Munzir rejected Umar's statement. (İbn Abdirabbih, 1948, p. 2/175). Umar asked, "O people of Ansar, do you not know that the Messenger of Allah appointed Abu Bakr to lead the people in prayer?" The Ansar replied, "Yes, we know." Umar said, "Which of you would be willing to go ahead of Abu Bakr after this?" They replied, "We seek refuge in Allah from going ahead of Abu Bakr." (İbn Hanbel, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 21). After these discussions, Abu Bakr addressed the Ansar as follows: "O people! We, the Muhajirun, are the first of all people to accept Islam, the most honorable in lineage and ancestry, the most superior in homeland, the most beautiful in appearance, and the closest to the Prophet among the Arabs. We became Muslims before you. Allah mentioned our names in the Quran before yours. You are our brothers in faith, our partners in the spoils of war, and our helpers against our enemies. We are the commanders, and you are the ministers. (İbn Abdirabbih, 1948, p. 2/111). We will not cease consulting you; we will not do anything without consulting you. (Dineverî, 1909, Vol. 1, pp. 14–15)."

O community of Ansar! You are the people of the good and righteousness you speak of, but all the Arabs do not recognize the right of this leadership for anyone other than the tribe of Quraysh. They are the middle ones among the Arabs in terms of lineage and status (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 227). The Arabs embraced Islam only for the sake of this particular tribe, Quraysh (İbn Abdirabbih, 1948, p. 2/175); (Belâzurî, 1959, Vol. 1, p. 582). It is even stated that, in this gathering, Abu Bakr cited the hadith from the Prophet, "The Imams are from Quraysh," as evidence (Maverdî, 1966, p. 6). Thereupon, the Ansar proposed, "Let there be one commander from us and one from you" (Buhârî, 1981, Vol. 4, p. 194). Abu Bakr rejected this proposal, saying, "We are the commanders, and you are the ministers." Hubab ibn Munzir said, "No! By Allah, we do not accept what you say. Let there be one commander from us and one from you." Again, Abu Bakr replied to Hubab ibn Munzir, "No, we are the commanders, and you are the ministers," and added, "You can pledge allegiance to either Umar ibn al-Khattab or Ubayda ibn al-Jarrah" (İbn Sa'd, 1957, Vol. 2, p. 269). Upon hearing this proposal and seeing the voices rise and the argument escalate, Umar, fearing that the dispute would reach a dangerous level, extended his hand to Abu Bakr to pledge allegiance, and the Muhajirun and Ansar who were present followed Umar (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 227).

Sa'd ibn Ubadah, initially the Ansar's candidate for caliph, was the leader of the Khazraj. The Aws, another Ansar tribe, were former opponents of the Khazraj and therefore preferred Abu Bakr over

Sa'd, leaving Sa'd in the minority (Hatipoğlu, 1978, p. 39). The limited pledge of allegiance made in the courtyard of Beni Sa'ida was followed the next day by a general pledge of allegiance in the Mosque of Medina, and Abu Bakr was elected the first Caliph of the Muslims with the overwhelming majority of the Muslims in Medina (Suyûtî, 1951, pp. 67–72); (Hatipoğlu, 1978, p. 39). In the following days, when criticized for the hasty selection of Abu Bakr as caliph, Umar responded: “By Allah, in the situation we were in that day, there was nothing better than pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr. If we had left without pledging allegiance to Abu Bakr, the Ansar would have pledged allegiance to one of their own, which we feared. For in that case, we would either have reluctantly pledged allegiance to the Ansar or we would have remained in opposition, which would have resulted in anarchy.” (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 226); (İbn Hanbel, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 56).

It is clear from the above words of Caliph Umar that the first caliph election was not conducted properly. Even Caliph Umar, the main political actor in the first caliph election, later expressed his dissatisfaction, stating that the election was rushed and conducted without consultation (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 226). However, despite our consideration of this, we find it surprising that he did not conduct a self-critique of the evidence presented in the Beni Sa'ida case, which we consider surprising for a genius like Caliph Umar. We also find it difficult to explain why the Companions, who were educated under the Prophet Muhammad, would engage in a low-level political polemic by making accusatory statements and engaging in actions against each other, despite the command to “Entrust the trust to those who are worthy of it” (Nisa, 4/58); (Akbulut, 2001, pp. 42–67). However, according to the worldview of the Holy Quran, being from the Prophet's people, or even his son, daughter, brother, or uncle, does not grant any privilege. Because the Quran explains that believers are brothers (Hujurat, 49/10), that superiority lies only in piety, and that the reason for the division of people into nations and tribes is related to divine wisdom aimed at enabling people to love and recognize one another (Hujurat, 49/13); Compare (Al-i Imran, 3/139). Given this, how can tribal and racial differences be presented as a means of privilege and superiority? Furthermore, the Quran bases Islamic brotherhood not on blood ties or tribal values, but on the principle of believing in shared values (Buhârî, 1981, Vol. 4, p. 194). These Qur'anic values indicate that, according to the Qur'an, being related to the Prophet Muhammad grants no privilege or superiority. The theory of the superiority of the Quraysh, voiced by Abu Bakr on election day, originated in the Beni Sa'ida tribe as a result of the exploitation of being from the Prophet's tribe, later developed into a hadith, and entered Islamic culture (Akbulut, 2001, 42–67). The Quraysh, who championed their lineage from the Prophet's tribe, even pushed the Ansar, who had welcomed them, out of the political bureaucracy, ensuring that the Muslim aristocracy consisted of members of the Quraysh. Thus, the tribal mentality of the pre-Islamic era, while no longer in its old, primitive, and crude forms, continued to influence Islam in a more refined, sophisticated, and transformed way. At the same time, there are no specific rulings in the Quran and Sunnah that favor any particular tribe or clan. The unnecessary humility, self-denial, and tolerance of Muslims in the Islamic era allowed for the emergence of un-Islamic thought. This was initially reflected in the restriction of the leadership position to the Prophet's tribe. Subsequently, it even extended to the sanctification of a tribe, including this tribe (Hatipoğlu, 1978, p. 87).

Although the Ansar were the first to seriously oppose the theory of Quraysh superiority under the shade of Beni Sa'ida, their reaction was not rooted in Islamic concerns but rather in anxieties stemming from tribal instincts (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 226). Although the Ansar were the first to seriously oppose the theory of Quraysh superiority under the shade of Beni Sa'ida, their reaction was not rooted in Islamic concerns but rather in anxieties stemming from tribal instincts (İbn Hanbel, 1981, Vol. 1, p. 56); (Buhârî, 1981, Vol. 8, p. 28). Despite the inadequacy and lack of substance in the justifications put forward by the Quraysh to gain leadership, which were far from Islamic concerns and convincing, it is possible to say that, compared to other pledges of allegiance and political practices throughout Islamic history, this was closer to the Quranic understanding and the Prophet Muhammad's style of politics (Celî, 1986, p. 7). Ultimately, it would have been more appropriate for

the Companions of the Prophet, after his death, to choose a leader for the Muslim state through social consensus, after obtaining the opinions and consent of all segments of the Muslim community on political matters concerning the Muslim society. If only the Companions of the Prophet had been able to transcend tribal and clan values and establish a solid foundation for the political structure, and if only they had been able to construct the political paradigm they envisioned in accordance with the Islamic value system, this would have benefited both Muslims and humanity. Naturally, the political system they established might not have collapsed upon itself so quickly. Following this brief assessment, we now wish to focus on the concept of the Caliphate established by the Companions after the Prophet.

Some books have been published that are indirectly related to our research. These works and articles mainly address topics such as the political reason in Islam, vicegerency of man, Islam and the formation of state power, religion-state relations, Islam and political reform, Islamic political sociology and Islamic political theory and rationalism, Islam and Democracy after the Arab Spring, Religion and State in the Middle East, What is Political Islam?, Sharia policies in the modern world, etc. In this respect, our research is original in every aspect and will serve as a source for future studies.

Jabirî, *Political Reason in Islam* (1997); March, *The caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in modern Islamic thought* (2019); Nasr, *The Islamic Leviathan: Islam and the Making of State Power* (2001); Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for A New Ummah* (2004); Yavuz, *Nostalgia for the Caliphate: Islamism and Identity* (2020). Asad, *Secular Translations: Nation-State, Modern Self, and Calculative Reason* (2018); Ayoob, *The Many Faces Of Political Islam: Religion and Politics In The Muslim World*. (2008); Brown, *Islamic Law and Political Authority*, (2020); Esposito et al., *Islam and Democracy After The Arab Spring* (2016); Fuller, *Islam And Political Reform In The Middle East* (2021); Brown, *Religion and state in the Middle East*. (2021); Cesari, *What Is Political Islam?* (2018); Hefner, *Sharia Politics: Islamic Law And Society In The Modern World* (2011); Mandaville (2020). *Islam And Politics*; Bacık, *Islamic Political Theory And Rationalism*. (2024); Şentürk, *Islamic Political Sociology* (2025).

Some articles indirectly related to our research have also been published. The topics addressed in these publications mainly include Islam and secularism, totalitarian movements and political religions, politics and religious society, Islam and democracy in the Middle East, democracy in Islamic political thought, political Islam, Islamic political thought and its application, religion and politics in contemporary societies, political thought in Islam: Development and evolution, Political Islam, Islam and government, Islamic political thought: A contemporary analysis, Reconstructing political Islam: A discursive tradition approach, Reimagining Islamic political structures in contemporary Muslim societies, Islamophobia and political discourse. In this respect, our research is original in every aspect and will serve as a source for future studies.

Tibi, "Islamism and secularism. Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions" (2019); Sariolghalam, "Political Development in the Muslim World" (2020); Ke, "Political Polarization in Religious Societies"; Hashemi, "Sectarianization and Political Islam" (2020); Volpi, "Political Islam: A Critical Review" (2020); Kawtharani, "Political Thought in contemporary Shi'a Islam" (2020); Schwedler, "Islamists in politics: Inclusion and Contestation" (2021); Cavatorta, F. "Islamism and Democracy in the Middle East. Democratization", (2021); El-Affendi, "Democracy in Islamic Political Thought" (2021); Khan, *Political Islam A literature Review* (2022); Turam, "Religion and Politics in Contemporary Societies" (2022); Ilhamni & Rahman, "Islamic Political Thought and Its Implementation" (2022); Faris, "Political Thought in Islam: Development and Evolution" (2023); Ibrahim, "Islam and Governance: A Global Review" (2023); Salihu, "Islamic Political Thought: A Contemporary Analysis" (2024); Jong, "Reconfiguring political Islam: A Discursive Tradition Approach" (2025); Ahmed, & Ali, "Reimagining Islamic Political Structures in Contemporary Muslim Societies", (2025); Mustafa & Noor, *Islamophobia and Political Discourse*. (2025).

Materials and Methods

This research is a qualitative study that aims to analyze the problem of constructing a political paradigm in Muslim thought. The research primarily uses historical-analytical approaches along with comparative and interpretive methods.

The starting point of this research is the examination of the political structures that emerged after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and the intellectual foundations on which they were based. In this context, events from early Islamic history (especially the Beni Sa'ida meeting and the caliphate process) are first examined within their historical context. Their effects on Muslim political thought are then analyzed. In this respect, the research employs a historical analysis method.

The research utilized classical Islamic history, hadiths, works on Kalam and political thought, and modern academic studies as data sources. The data obtained within this framework were examined using a textual analysis method, without adhering to any ideological preconceptions. Quranic verses and hadiths were interpreted in their contexts, and their potential to serve as a direct normative model for the production of political theory was discussed.

The research also includes a comparative analysis of different approaches, primarily within the Sunni and Shia traditions of political thought. This reveals how religious and political authority are positioned within Islamic political thought and how these authorities have diverged over time.

In conclusion, this research is grounded in historical data and employs a critical, interpretive methodological framework, supported by textual analysis and comparative readings. Through this approach, the possibilities and limitations of the paradigm-building process in Muslim political thought have been evaluated holistically.

1. Concepts Related to the Theory of Caliphate

Generally, three concepts have been used in classical Kalam literature for those who assume the task of governance in the Muslim world. These are the concepts of "Caliph," "Commander of the Faithful," and "Imam" (Teftâzânî, 1998, Vol. 5, p. 232 et seq.).

Each of these concepts corresponds to a function, operation, or characteristic of governance in traditional Muslim societies. Depending on the stages the institution of the Caliphate underwent. On the emergence of alternative power structures, the term "malik" (sultan) also began to denote the true governing authority (Teftâzânî, 1998, Vol. 5, p. 239). Now, let us explain these concepts related to governance.

1.1. The Concept of Caliph

The root of the word is خ-ل-ف "ha-le-fe". Its infinitive is caliphate. Half is the opposite of kuddam (İsfahânî, 1997, p. 293). In the dictionary, caliphate is defined as "succeeding someone, acting as a representative for someone else, an apprentice, or a second master" (İbn Manzûr, 1990, Vol. 5, p. 540). Taking the place of someone else; It occurs either due to the absence of the successor, or his death, or incapacity, or to honor the successor (İsfahânî, 1997, p. 29). The plural of Caliph is خُلَافَة "halâif" or خُلَفَاء "hulefâ" (İbn Manzûr, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 883), and it refers to the one who succeeds another in their position (Yazır, 1979, Vol. 1, p. 300). The technical meaning of Caliphate is the succession of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) to the position of Caliph. It is the general leadership in religious and worldly affairs on behalf of the Prophet (Teftâzânî, 1998, Vol. 5, p. 232); (Hasan, 1964, Vol. 1, p. 428). The word "caliph" is used in the sense of someone who succeeds another, with the plural forms "khalaf" and "khulafa" (al-Baqara, 2:30; al-Araf, 7:69, 74). Furthermore, the word "caliph" appears in Surah Sa'd, differing from its dictionary meaning. Allah says, "O David! We have indeed made you a caliph on earth. So judge justly between people and do

not follow your desires, lest they lead you astray from Allah..." (Sa'd, 38:26). This verse requests that Prophet David (peace be upon him) judge not according to his own whims, but in accordance with the principles revealed to him by Allah Almighty (Yazır, 1979, Vol. 6, p. 4093). In other words, Prophet David was tasked with establishing justice (Seyyid Bey, 1969, p. 9).

1.2. The Concept of Emir

In the pre-Islamic period, Arabs prepared divisions and units for warfare. They gave the title of emir to the commander they appointed to lead the military unit. Emir, in Arabic, is a verb form meaning 'someone who is appointed, assigned, or placed under command.' Its plural is umara (Firuzabadi, 1987, p. 430).

Some Arabs, unable to abandon the customs of the pre-Islamic era, referred to the Prophet Muhammad as "Emir of Mecca" and "Emir of Hijaz." The Companions addressed Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas (d. 55/675), the commander-in-chief of the Kâdîsiyya army, as "Emir of the Believers" (İbn Haldun, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 578). It is stated that the term "Emir al-Mu'minin" was first used for Umar (d. 23/644) (Suyûfî, 1931, p. 138); The word "emir" (commander/authority) appears in the Quran in one place. In this verse, Allah demands that believers obey Allah, the Prophet, and those in authority among them (Ulu'l-Emr) (Nisa, 4/59); (For the interpretation of Ulu'l-Emr, see Akbulut, 2001, pp. 75–77). The Prophet Muhammad would give the title of "emir" to the commanders he appointed to lead military units for certain military operations in which he did not participate (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 226). Abdullah ibn Jahsh, who migrated to Abyssinia, participated in the Battle of Uhud, was martyred, and had his nose cut off (İbn Abdilberr, 1995, p. 14). The Prophet Muhammad appointed him commander of a military expedition sent to Nahle in the seventeenth month of the Hijra (Çakan, 1988, 89), and he was called emir because of his position as commander of such a military unit (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 2, p. 179). He is also recorded in history as the first emir appointed by the Messenger of Allah for a military expedition (al-Jazari, 1995, Vol. 3, p. 89). This concept was not an ambitious title, but it was an influential one, encompassing enough authority to maintain discipline within a military unit and in society. When the Prophet passed away, the Companions, discussing governance in Beni Sa'ida, first conceived and uttered this title. The Ansar suggested to the Muhajirun: "Let there be a leader from among us and a leader from among you" (İbn Hanbel, 1981, p. 1/56). The reason the title "Emir al-Mu'minin" (Commander of the Faithful) was used during the time of Caliph Umar was that it was not overly grandiose or exaggerated. It was also suitable for the social and political understanding of the Arabs who came from tribal life. Therefore, the title "Emir al-Mu'minin" was adopted and embraced (Uludağ, 1998, p. 52). From then on, "Emir al-Mu'minin" was accepted as the title of the caliph, and this title was reserved for caliphs. Even during the Umayyad period, no one other than the caliph could use this title (İbn Haldun, 1990, 1/579). In later periods, the title of emir was given to viziers, governors, commanders, and especially to beys who established autonomous rule in a small region or to those who headed small dynasties (Uludağ, 1998, p. 52).

1.3. The Concept of Imam

The word إِمَام (Imam) is sometimes used in place of the word caliph in classical sources. In both Shia and Sunni sources, governance is referred to as imamate, and the ruler as imam (Kâdî, 1988, p. 750). The root of the word Imam is اِمَّ “emme”, and its plural is اِئِمَّة “eimme”. In the dictionary, it means leader, ruler, person who leads a community of people, and guides them, etc. It means (İsfahânî, 1997, p. 294); (Develioğlu, 1984, p. 516). Imamate, on the other hand, is a general leadership in religious and worldly affairs. After the Prophet Muhammad Maverdî (d. 450/1058), the imamate is also defined as the caliphate to prophethood, stating that the caliph undertakes the duties of protecting religion and managing worldly politics (Maverdî, 1966, p. 5). İbn Haldun (d. 808/1406), on the other hand, defines caliphate, or imamate as it is used in its place, as follows: "It means acting as deputy to the possessor of Sharia in protecting religion and managing worldly politics in accordance with religion" (İbn

Haldun, 1990, Vol. 1, pp. 481–482). The word "Imam" appears in the Quran, in accordance with its dictionary meaning. When Allah said to Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), "I will make you a leader for mankind," he said, "And make leaders from my descendants, O Lord!" (Baqara, 2:124). Those who pray, "Make us leaders of the righteous" (Furqan, 25:74) are praised in the Quran. The Quran states that Allah granted Isaac and Jacob the authority to lead by His command (Al-Anbiya, 21:72); (Sajdah, 32:24). The Quran also refers to the disbelieving leaders who lead the unbelievers as: "The leaders of the unbelievers (Eimme-i Küfür)" (Tawbah, 9/12). Furthermore, the word "imam" is used in the Quran for the books that God sent to His prophets (Hud, 11/17); (Yasin, 36/12); (Ahkaf, 46/12).

1.4. The Concept of Malik/Mulk

In the dictionary, the word **مَلِكٌ** melik, derived from the root **مَلَكٌ** mülk (mulk, melk), meaning to possess and own, to have under one's control and to dispose of alone (İsfahânî, 1997, 774–775), has its plural **مُلُوكٌ** mulûk. It is found in many Semitic languages. It is seen to have been used as a king's title in some inscriptions before Islam. As a term, melik is a title for rulers, kings, and high-ranking state officials from a royal family, responsible for the administration of a city or region (Topaloğlu, 2004, Vol. 29, pp. 50–51). Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad, during the political restructuring of society, Muslims adopted the title "Malik" (king). Whether during the reigns of the first four caliphs or the Umayyad period, those at the head of state, including the Abbasid rulers, mostly used the titles of caliph, "Amir al-Mu'minin" (Commander of the Faithful), and rarely "Imam." However, the majority of Muslims viewed the Umayyads not as an Islamic government but as a kingdom, due to their reliance on hereditary succession to determine the head of state and their perceived moral depravity (Teftâzânî, 1998, Vol. 5, p. 239). (İrfan Aycan has published a book demonstrating that the caliphate was transformed into a monarchy during the reign of Muawiya.) (Aycan, 2020, pp. 1–254).

It is stated that the Umayyads, even before seizing the caliphate, emulated the kings, dressing and living like them. When Muawiya was the governor of Damascus, and Umar came to Damascus, he disapproved of Muawiya's attire and rebuked him, saying, "O Muawiya! Are you taking the Kisras as your role models?" (İbn Haldun, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 513); cf. (Suyûtî, 1951, p. 195). The concept of "king" (melik/mülk) is also used in the Quran, in accordance with its dictionary meaning. When the concept of "king" is attributed to Allah in the Quran, it expresses Allah's sovereignty, power, and the fact that He holds the ownership and right of disposal over everything in His own hands (Fatiha, 1/3); (Baqara, 2/107); (Al-Imran, 3/189); (Ma'idah, 5/17, 18, 40); (An'am, 6/73); (A'raf, 7/158); (Tawbah, 9/116); (Isra, 17/11); (Hajj, 22/56); (Mu'minun, 23/88); (Nur, 24/42); (Furqan, 25/2). (For other verses regarding God's sovereignty, see Abdulbâkî, 1994, pp. 673–674). When attributed to humans, it includes political sovereignty (İsfahânî, 1997, pp. 774–775); (See Maide, 5/20); (Neml, 27/34); (En'âm, 6/75); (Araf, 7/185). In this sense, the Quran states that the family of Prophet Abraham was given dominion (Nisa, 4/54). It was also given to Prophet Joseph, who descended from him (Yusuf, 12/101), Prophet David (Bakara, 2/251; Sa'd, 38/20), and Prophet... The Quran states that political sovereignty was granted to Solomon (Baqara, 2:102), describing this sovereignty as a blessing. Furthermore, the Quran explains that Satan tempted Adam by speaking of an endless kingdom (Taha, 20/120). Furthermore, the Quran mentions that even tyrants like Nimrod and Pharaoh, who opposed God's prophets and prevented them from fulfilling their duties, were granted dominion (rulership) (Baqara, 2:258); (Zuhruf, 43:51). As can be seen, the Quran speaks of both God's sovereignty and the dominion of the prophets and their enemies. When power and dominion are in the hands of prophets and righteous people, it is a blessing from God (Sa'd, 38:35); when they are in the hands of dictators, tyrants, and oppressors, it becomes an instrument of oppression (Baqara, 2:258; Qasas, 28:4). What is condemned or praised in the Quran is not dominion or sovereignty itself, but rather how the person who possesses it uses it, whether justly or unjustly. Kur'ân melik-kral, hükümdar, peygamberlerin mevcudiyetinden bahsettiği halde (Yûsuf, 12/101); (Bakara, 2/102, 251); (Sa'd, 38/20, 35). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) never referred to himself as a king or ruler. Nor did he ever

introduce himself as a king or ruler. He always told his companions that he was the servant and messenger of God. He advised them not to elevate him as Christians elevate Jesus (peace be upon him), son of Mary, saying, "Surely I am the servant of God, the servant of God and His messenger." (Buhârî, 1992, Vol. 4, p. 142). As can be understood from the above explanations, the terms "caliph," "imam," "emir," "king," and "king" used in the Quran are not fundamentally religious or Islamic. These terms are more human and political, and their connection to religion is indirect (Uludağ, 1998, p. 51). At the Beni Sa'ida meeting, Abu Bakr was elected caliph, becoming the first person to lead the Muslim state after the death of the Prophet (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 225); (İbn Hanbel, 1981, 1/56). Although the caliphate regime was established after the Prophet, Muslims generally regarded the caliphate as a religious office (Akbulut, 2001, p. 77). Abu Bakr was also considered the caliph by the Prophet. They regarded him as a successor to the Prophet (İbn Hanbel, 1981, Vol. 5, p. 404). Some of the Companions even addressed Abu Bakr as "Khalifatullah" (Khalil of Allah), believing him to be Allah's representative. Upon hearing this, Abu Bakr warned, "I am not Allah's Caliph; I am only the Caliph of Allah's Messenger." (İbn Hanbel, 1981, 1/10–11). (İbn Haldun, 1990, 1/482); (İbn Sa'd, 3/183). The understanding that the Caliph was the representative of the Prophet Muhammad, rather than of society, posed many problems. Such a political thought model was also incompatible with the Quran's understanding of politics. For God Almighty did not grant even His prophets the privilege of being a representative (Shu'ara, 26/36); (Qaf, 50/45); (Ghashiyah, 88/21), 22); (Taghabun, 64/12); (Yasin, 36/17); (Ankabut, 29/18); (Nur, 24/54). Because one of the most fundamental characteristics of Islam is the rejection of religious authority. The Quran describes the Prophet Muhammad not as a controller, enforcer, or ruler, but only as a messenger, a warner, a reminder, and someone tasked with explaining the religion. In this regard, God Almighty says to His prophet:

"We have not sent down the Qur'an to cause you distress, but as an admonition to those who fear Allah." (Taha, 20/2, 3).

"Give advice, you are only a giver of advice, not a tyrant over them." (Ghashiyah, 88/21-22).

"If they turn away, then your duty is only to convey the message." (Al-Imran, 3:20). "Your duty is only to convey the message." (Maidah, 5:19, 99).

"If they turn away, we have not sent you as a guardian over them." (Nisa, 4:80); (Enam, 6:104, 107); (Hud, 11:86).

"We have sent you only as a warner and a bringer of good tidings." (Baqara, 2:213; Ma'idah, 5:67, 99; Ahzab, 33:45). "There is no compulsion in religion..." (Baqara, 2:256). "You shall not compel people to believe." (Yunus, 10:99). As seen in the aforementioned verses, the Quran never approves of acting as a representative for either God or the Prophet. This type of representation is neither politically nor legally correct. Legal representation is only permissible in temporary situations. Since the Prophet Muhammad has passed away, there is no legal way to act as his representative. Because representation is only possible for those who are alive, it is also necessary not to equate the Prophet Muhammad with the Muslim state (Akbulut, 2002, p. 76); cf. (Akdoğan, 2000, p. 29). Furthermore, the principle that "there is no monasticism in Islam" is not straightforward; it has many dimensions. Firstly, this means that it is impossible for a special and privileged class, or any group or leader claiming to transform society, to integrate themselves with the will of God, to interpret the literal meanings of religious texts as God's will, and to impose them on people as God's decree. The absence of a sacred class eliminates any political action driven by the desire for rule by a privileged class and their authority to legislate in the name of God (Macit, 2000, p. 118). Since Islam does not accept a priestly class, that is, a class that would share God's power and authority in His name, the sharing of power in the name of religion is out of the question (Ethem, 1997, p. 23).

The absence of religious authority indicates that state authority is not religious in character, and therefore religion does not determine political authority. Thus, governance is a human endeavor. The principles upon which governance is based, that is, the normative structure of governance, also depend on humanity. In short, governance is a human undertaking. For God created man as His vicegerent, entrusting him with the task of developing the earth, ensuring a safe and orderly social life without neglecting anyone's rights, and granting him authority and responsibility, it follows that the source of political choice and power must be human. Otherwise, man's role as vicegerent would lose its meaning (Bardakoğlu, 1989, p. 367).

2. The Qur'an's Approach to the Concept of Representation

Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention representation for God or the Prophet, Muslims generally accept that after the Prophet's death, the person who succeeds him is considered the Caliph of the Prophet (Khalifatu Rasulillah). As a result of this understanding, the concept that the head of the Islamic state is the Caliph of the Prophet placed the question of "Who will be the Caliph of the Prophet?" at the center of Muslims' political agenda. If Muslims could develop a political philosophy based on the fact that the Caliph is the representative of the Ummah, not the Prophet (Hamidullah, 1995, p. 51), many problems would not arise. Political disagreements could be resolved more easily. However, it is unclear in Muslim political thought whether the caliph assumed a spiritual or religious leadership role or merely a political one. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad, during his lifetime, held both leadership roles: religious leadership stemming from his prophetic mission and social and political leadership. The fact that the Prophet Muhammad combined religious and political leadership simultaneously and intrinsically in his personality presented a serious problem. The perspectives that began with the discussions on the Caliphate and gradually developed into schools of thought brought with them a fundamental problem regarding the perception and understanding of the Prophet. Two opposing yet unacknowledged modes of perception sought to define the Prophet's political and religious roles. One approach modeled the Prophet's experience without separating the political and religious dimensions; the other distinguished between the Prophet's actions related to prophethood and those related to politics and *ijtihad* (Evkuran, 2005, p. 164). The first was later explicitly systematized in the Shi'ite understanding of *imamate*. Shia Islam believed that the religious and divine leadership mission encompassed within the prophetic mission also applied to the imams. They interpreted the continuation of religious leadership through political leadership as a requirement of God's justice and grace (Kummî, 1978, p. 19). Ahl al-Sunnah, however, separated political and religious leadership. According to the Ahl al-Sunnah approach, with the death of the Prophet Muhammad, the prophethood ended both institutionally and functionally. Therefore, a person who became caliph after the Prophet assumed the mission of political leadership, not religious leadership. Indeed, in the Sunni theory of caliphate, the effort to place political power on a plane distinct from religious power is clearly evident. However, the Sunni approach should not be confused with a secular approach. Because what Sunni political scientists were trying to do was not to completely separate religion from politics, but to soften the thesis of the identity of religion and politics. The statement that politics is not a matter of procedure but of *ijtihad* (legal reasoning) serves this purpose. Indeed, Sunni scholars think that politics is an indispensable tool for achieving the aims of religion (Bağdâdî, n.d., p. 349); (Bakillânî, 1987, p. 477). The fact that God's command regarding governance dictates that societal affairs be regulated by the collective will (Shura, 42:38), that tasks be entrusted to competent individuals, and that judgment be rendered justly (Nisa, 4:58) demonstrates that political sovereignty belongs to humanity. However, those with the power to choose are expected to appoint competent individuals; those with the power to rule are expected to uphold justice; and those who will make decisions based on their experience are advised to consult the people. To interpret verses that emphasize God's ontological sovereignty in the context of political sovereignty is nothing short of recklessness. These verses have no connection whatsoever with political dominance. One of the three verses where the word "judgment" appears is verse 57 of Surah Al-An'am. This verse states that worship and adoration are by God's decree, and that even the Prophet Muhammad has no say in

matters of urgent request. In verse 40 of Surah Yusuf, it is stated that for worship to be legitimate, God must provide proof of it, and that only God can make a ruling on this matter. Verse 67 of the same surah is as follows: "Their father (Jacob) said, 'My sons, enter through separate gates, not through one gate. However, I can be of no benefit to you in the sight of God. The judgment belongs only to God; in Him I have trusted, and let those who trust, trust in Him.'"

In this verse, Jacob advises his sons on how to enter the city safely. However, he also emphasizes the necessity of relying on God. As can be seen, these verses are not related to the governance of society, that is, politics, and the state, and they assert that God is the absolute possessor of power (Akbulut, A. 3–4, 1995, pp. 3–4/150–151). To conclude that political sovereignty belongs to Allah simply by considering verses such as, "The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah alone," (Al-Shura, 42:49), "Do you not know that the ownership and sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belong only to Allah?" (Baqarah, 2:107), "The sovereignty of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah..." (Imran, 3:189), "The dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs only to Allah..." (Tawbah, 9:116), etc., as Allah being the Lord of both the heavens and the earth, means overlooking the theocentric rhetoric of these verses. If these verses are read only as theological texts, they lose all their implications. The expressions in these verses are rebukes and threats against stubborn polytheists. They are not sophisticated doctrinal texts. Here, the emphasis is on God's divinity and sovereignty (Güler, 2000, pp. 125, 139, 147). The verses cited as references in Islamic political discourse emphasize the importance of upholding the fundamental principles of power, ensuring justice, and maintaining a balanced, measured approach, free of all forms of malice and prejudice. This includes preventing oppression, rectifying injustice, denying troublemakers opportunities, safeguarding the common good, and upholding truth and righteousness. For example, when we look at the verses before and after the verse, "Those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed are disbelievers" (Ma'idah, 5/44) (Aydın, 1999, p. 162). Most importantly, in other verses, we see that what Allah has revealed clearly refers to the principles of "justice and fairness" (Fırlalı, 1997, p. 25). Therefore, the verse "Whoever does not judge by the judgment of Allah" should be understood as "whoever does not uphold truth, justice, and fairness." Indeed, a study on this subject indicates that the crucial point in the verse is that "judging" is attributed to humans. Judging is not merely acting or applying established rulings, but rather arriving at new rulings and conclusions by starting from the premises of the Holy Quran. In this sense, judging also means establishing the sovereignty of knowledge and the supremacy of law (İcî, n.d., p. 395). Indeed, Sunni scholars have interpreted the phrase *وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُحْكَمْ* "wa man lam yahkum" as *وَمَنْ لَّمْ يُصَدِّقْ* "wa man lam yusaddik". That is, according to them, what makes a person an unbeliever, a tyrant, or a transgressor is not failing to apply God's judgments, but rather failing to believe in them. Sunni theologians have valued the state not as a part of faith, but as a matter of public benefit and social organization (Cüveynî, 1950, p. 410). Sunni Islam viewed the state as a contract and considered governance as a secondary matter, a part of transactions. The fundamental principles of transactions are public benefit and human welfare.

The Ahl al-Sunnah, in stating that a state is necessary by hearing (*sem'an*), based their argument on the following evidence: Appointing a ruler means warding off harm from people, and warding off harm from the self is obligatory (Razi, n.d., p. 240). Furthermore, some Mu'tazilite thinkers have argued that the necessity of a state is not based on hearing (*sem'an*), but on reason (*aql*). That is, according to them, reason, not religion, deems the existence of a state necessary. Famous theologians such as Abu al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728), al-Jahiz (d. 255/865), al-Ka'bi (d. 319/931), and al-Hayyat (d. 300/913) adopted this latter view.

Sunni and Mu'tazilite scholars who ruled that the appointment of a ruler is (İcî, n.d., p. 395) also stated that this obligation is on society, not on God, contrary to the Shia view (Tefâtânî, 1998, Vol. 5, pp. 235–236). To reject this authority as divine and to base it on human nature is unacceptable. The method of appointing a ruler is a free choice that will emerge through *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). This is because there is no explicit text from the Prophet Muhammad regarding the

appointment of a ruler. The prerequisite for being a ruler is knowledge, justice, and political acumen (Bağdâdî, n.d., p. 349). The Sunni school of Kalam has at least given us this: The issue of legal power is not a matter of faith, but an intellectual one, and therefore a subject open to rational discussion and change. The state is a reality, a social and human necessity. However, it is not a religious necessity. Indeed, the Companions viewed the caliphate not as a matter of faith, but as a political matter. When Abu Bakr asked the Companions to exempt him from the caliphate, Ali responded to Abu Bakr: "The Prophet has been pleased with you for the sake of our religion; should we not be pleased with you for the sake of our worldly affairs (caliphate)?" (Îcî, n.d., p. 407). When Ali said "our religion," he meant the Prophet's appointment of Abu Bakr as imam for prayer (Pezdevî, 1988, p. 261).

The absence of any text prohibiting Muslims from any form of government, and the fact that the first four caliphs were appointed to the caliphate through different methods and procedures, is the clearest evidence that this matter was left to reason and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). (For the methods by which the caliphs came to power, see Teftâzânî, 1998, 5/233); (Ebû Zehrâ, 1983, p. 101–103). Although Muslims did not initially consider the issue of imamate as a matter of faith, it has since been incorporated into the realm of belief. The historical event that led to the inclusion of the imamate issue in Kalam (Islamic theology) books is the Shia sect's view of the election of the head of state as a fundamental issue of faith. Sunni theologians also included this issue in their Kalam books to refute the Shia theory of imamate. (For the methods of caliphs' ascension to the caliphate, see Teftâzânî, 1998, 5/233 ff.). The inclusion of the concept of imamate in theological texts paved the way for the equivalence of religion and politics within traditional Muslim culture. Consequently, Muslims have become prisoners of their own actions, laws, or institutions in matters of politics (Fazlurrahman, 1997, p. 103). The political solution found by the Companions after the death of the Prophet Muhammad eventually led to deadlock, chaos, and instability. In fact, Muslims even shed each other's blood over this issue of imamate.

Jabirî explains the constitutional loopholes that caused the caliphate regime established by the Companions to fall into instability, stagnation, failure to institutionalize, and its transformation into a monarchy as follows:

1. The absence of a single legal method for appointing the Caliph,
2. The lack of a limit on the Caliph's term of office,
3. The lack of limitations on the Caliph's authority and powers. (Jabirî, 2001, pp. 85–87); cf. (Hamidullah, 1995, pp. 167–168). Although there were constitutional loopholes as pointed out by Jabirî, when Abu Bakr became caliph, he said, "I have been appointed to lead you, but I am no better than you in any way. If I do good deeds, support me; if I do bad deeds, correct me!" (İbn Hişam, 1978, Vol. 4, p. 228). Umar also said similar things in his sermons (Suyûtî, 1951, pp. 139–146); (Ashmawy, 1993, p. 89). Both Abu Bakr and Umar individually drew upon religious texts to the very end. However, they never dogmatically based their political decisions on God or the Quran. Abu Bakr decided to compile the Quran (make it a book) for the sake of expediency, even without any verse or hadith supporting it. Similarly, when he decided to wage war against those who apostatized during the "rida" events, he felt no need to base his decision on any verse or hadith (Suyûtî, 1951, pp. 72–77). When Caliph Umar decided against distributing the land of Sawad to the veterans who participated in the war and abolished the share given to those whose hearts were inclined towards Islam, he was aware that this contradicted the verses on the subject (İbn Kesir, 1983, Vol. 2, p. 365). However, Caliph Umar understood the circumstances, context, and purpose for which these verses were revealed. He did not understand them in the same way as the conservative Companions (Güler, 2002, 69). Caliph Ali also avoided citing Quranic evidence to convince the Kharijites (Ebû Zehrâ, 1983, p. 80), thus not using the Holy Quran to advance his political ambitions. Despite some shortcomings, the era of the first four caliphs symbolizes adherence to the law in classical Muslim culture. Consequently, Islam does not offer a system or theory of governance as an institutional

structure. With the development of the Islamic call, initially, and after the death of the Prophet, a system of governance based on the example of the "commander of war" was established. This was a situation necessitated by the needs of the time and the circumstances (Jabirî, 2001, p. 88); cf. (Hamidullah, 1995, pp. 167–168). Initially sufficient, this political structure later gave way to conflict when a peaceful, legal solution could not be found, thereby transforming the caliphate into a monarchy. The political rebellions that began during the caliphate of Uthman continued for centuries after his assassination. In a society that had previously agreed, harmoniously cohesive, and even fraternally, conflicts and confrontations arose, swords were drawn, and a new era of division and fragmentation, filled with hatred and ambition, began. This process of separation and fragmentation accelerated further with Ali's ascension to the caliphate, and political rivalries escalated into civil wars. Taking advantage of this political division and separation, Muawiya, seeking to realize his political ambitions, used the idea of Uthman's injustice, innocence, and the wasting of his blood as a shield and seized the caliphate through various political games, deceptions, and staged events (For more information, see Akbulut, 2001, 164 et seq.). After Muawiya seized the caliphate, the Islamic state, which expanded rapidly through conquests, entered a new phase. During this period, state administration became increasingly secularized, and the caliph's absolute authority began to strengthen. Apart from these characteristics, it is observed that, with a few exceptions, those who came to the caliphate did not place much value on Islamic precepts (Suyûtî, 1951, pp. 194-254); (Mumcu, 1963, p. 12). Therefore, debates and disagreements regarding the political paradigm continue to occupy the agenda of the Muslim world.

Analysis

In this research, the problem of political paradigm in Muslim thought has been systematically addressed in three main areas: (1) normative-theoretical framework, (2) historical-practical applications, and (3) comparative evaluation in the context of sectarian approaches.

1. Normative-Theoretical Framework

First, the normative foundations of the political sphere were examined within the framework of the Quran and the practices of the Prophet Muhammad. The findings show that the Quran does not propose a specific political model or institutional structure; instead, it sets forth general principles such as justice, consultation, competence, and public interest. These principles focus not on the form of the political structure, but on its functioning and moral quality. Therefore, the determination of the political order is left to human responsibility, rather than being a field directly determined by revelation.

In this context, an analysis of the Prophet Muhammad's practices during the Medina period reveals that the political order was neither independent of revelation nor a fixed model directly determined by it. On the contrary, these practices have a pragmatic and interpretive character, adapting to the existing socio-political conditions.

2. Historical-Practical Process Analysis

In the second stage, the political structures that emerged in the post-Prophet Muhammad period were examined from a historical perspective. In particular, the Beni Saide meeting and the process of determining the first caliph demonstrate that political decisions were shaped by social and tribal dynamics rather than by religious references.

The emergence of the caliphate, initially seen as a pragmatic solution, eventually faced institutionalization problems and evolved into different forms of governance. Indeed, the transformation of the caliphate into a monarchy led to significant ruptures in the legitimacy of

political authority. This situation reveals that the political paradigm is not historically fixed but rather variable, often shaped by power relations.

3. Comparative Analysis of Sectarian Approaches

In the third stage, the Sunni and Shia paradigms, two fundamental approaches prominent in Islamic political thought, were evaluated comparatively. Shia thought, by viewing political leadership as a divine appointment and religious necessity, grounded the doctrine of imamate on a theological basis. In contrast, the Sunni approach evaluated political authority more within the framework of social consensus, *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), and public interest.

The fundamental difference between these two approaches lies in the source of political authority: divine legitimacy is paramount in the Shia tradition. In contrast, human legitimacy is more decisive in the Sunni tradition. This clearly demonstrates that there is no single, homogeneous paradigm in Islamic political thought.

4. Conceptual Transformation and the Problem of Legitimacy

In the final stage of the research, the transformation of the concepts of caliphate, imamate, emirate, and kingdom throughout history was examined. These concepts initially carried more functional and human meanings; over time, they acquired a religious content. This transformation led to serious problems, including the sacralization of political authority and its immunity from criticism.

In this context, the absolutization of political structures through religious references does not fully align with either historical reality or the principles outlined in the Quran. On the contrary, this situation hinders the establishment of a healthy relationship between religion and politics.

Conclusion

In this study, the problem of constructing a political paradigm in Muslim thought was analyzed in light of historical processes, conceptual frameworks, and theoretical approaches. The findings clearly show that Islam does not propose a fixed, institutional political model; instead, it offers normative principles such as justice, consultation, competence, and public interest. This indicates that the political structure is shaped not by a divine form but by human experience and social will.

A historical comparison reveals significant differences between the era of the Prophet Muhammad and the subsequent caliphate practices. The Prophet's practices in Medina reflected a flexible, pragmatic political order that emerged in response to specific circumstances, within the framework of the general principles established by revelation. In contrast, in the post-Prophet era, particularly during the formation of the caliphate, political choices were often shaped by tribal, sociological, and power dynamics. This confirms that the political structure was a historical construct, not a religious necessity.

The comparison between Sunni and Shia political thought traditions further deepens this problem. While the Shia approach grounds political authority in a religious and divine foundation, viewing imamate as a theological necessity, the Sunni tradition considers governance more as a human and social issue open to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). The difference between these two approaches demonstrates that the relationship between religion and politics in Islamic political thought cannot be explained through a single, uniform model. However, the fact that many of the caliphates, sultanates, and other forms of government that emerged throughout history were often justified by religious legitimacy has resulted in the sacralization of the political sphere. This situation has led to the instrumentalization of religion by political authority and the weakening of critical thinking. In contrast, from a Quranic perspective, the essential principle is not the absolutization of political authority, but rather its limitation by the principles of justice, fairness, and accountability.

Compared to the modern era, Muslim societies still face similar problems in generating political paradigms. The idealization of traditional models and the inability to critically synthesize them with modern political systems lead to an intellectual impasse. Therefore, the fundamental issue for contemporary Muslim thought is not to absolutize the historical legacy, but to develop a new political paradigm that is pluralistic, critical, and human-centered, based on the universal principles of the Quran. In conclusion, it can be said that in Islam, the political order is not a fixed, divinely determined model, but rather a dynamic realm left to human responsibility. Within this framework, the criteria for a legitimate political structure are: establishing justice, protecting individual freedoms, reflecting the collective will, and being open to critical scrutiny. No political model that fails to fulfill these principles, even if based on religious references, can be said to align with the value system envisioned by Islam fully.

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