

ISLAM & POLITICS

ISLAMIC POLITICAL PRINCIPLES &
THEIR PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION

A translation of
Islām awr Siyāsī Nazariyāt

MUFTI MUHAMMAD TAQI USMANI

Foreword by
HRH PRINCE GHAZI BIN MUHAMMAD



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PREFACE

In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful and Compassionate. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, alone and without partners, and that Muhammad is His servant and Messenger. I invoke the blessings of Allah and peace upon his final Messenger, Muhammad, and his Family and Companions, along with all those who follow them in goodness till the Day of Rising.

As a complete and comprehensive religion, Islam provides its followers with guidance in all aspects of life. Politics and governance are no exception, and yet they are often thought to be areas which Islamic teachings do not cover. With a view to dispelling this misconception, and to elucidating the correct Islamic perspective on politics and related issues, a series of lectures in Urdu were delivered in Darul Uloom Karachi over a two-week period in 1416 AH/1995–6 CE. These lectures were then transcribed and edited before being published under the title *Islām awr Siyāsī Nazariyāt* ('Islam and Political Theories'). By the grace and mercy of Allah, this publication proved very beneficial for Urdu-speaking readers, and it was subsequently translated into Arabic. It was then thought appropriate to translate the second half of the book, which focuses on politics from an Islamic perspective, for the benefit of English-speaking readers. The result is the book which you are now reading.

I am grateful to Maulana Abdullah Memon and Maulana Muhammad Muzzammil Kapadia, both of whom worked tirelessly to transcribe and edit these lectures for the original Urdu publication. Likewise, I extend my gratitude to Sister Zehra Baintner, whose translation of the work I have had the opportunity to check in a number of places and have found to be an accurate rendering. Moreover, I would like to thank HRH Prince Ghazi, who has kindly written a foreword to this translation, Dr Muhammad Isa

Waley for his meticulous editing of the text, and finally Turath Publishing for publishing this with great care.

May Allah reward all those who have contributed in any way to this publication, and may He grace it with acceptance and make it beneficial for all. *Āmīn*.

MUHAMMED TAQI USMANI
Karachi, February 2018

FOREWORD

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Praise be to God.
May Peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of God

Dear Reader,
Peace be upon you—*Al-Salaamu ‘alaykum*,

Since you have picked up this book, it is likely you had the same frustrating experience as I have. I was searching for a book like this for years before it was actually written. What I mean by this is that I was looking for a book that could comprehensively and objectively explain—from the viewpoint of traditional *usul*-based Sunni Islam (that is, representing the four *madhaahib* of Sunni Islam)—the proper relationship between Islam and politics, taking into consideration the art of the reasonably possible in the (admittedly uniquely challenging) present times (*al-waqi'*).

The book you have between your hands right now—*Islam and Politics: Islamic Political Principles and their Practical Implementation* by 'Allama Mufti Taqi Uthmani—represents the end of my—and perhaps your—intellectual quest for the proper nexus between Islam and politics.

Let me explain further: there are a lot of books about *Sunni* Islam and politics in Arabic and even in English. These usually fall into the following categories (or combinations and permutations thereof):

1. Academic books looking at a historical sweep of the different political views expressed by Muslims or claimed by Muslims as being 'Islam's view'.
2. Muslim Brotherhood books, theorising on Islam and politics or calling or arguing for one or other political view, with a whole gamut of opinions from Syed Qutb and Syed Sabiq to Rachid Ghannouchi.

3. Wahhabi and Salafi *jihadi* books, treatises and calls to action from Ibn Taymiyyah and Muhammad ibn 'Abd Al-Wahhab themselves to modern writers like Abu Mus'ab Al-Suri's *Call for Global Jihad*; Abu Muhammad Al-Maqdisi's *Millat Ibrahim*; the tracts of Osama Bin Laden and those of ISIS and Al-Nusra. There also softer, 'Saudi Salafi' texts which are less overtly pro '*jihad* of aggression'.
4. Modernist, pro-liberal, pro-Western, pro-democracy tracts and books gymnastically trying to make Islam fit in with modern Western political thought, in various forms.
5. Nationalistic tracts conflating contemporary Muslim causes with Islam itself, and using Islamic sacred texts as a platform for their views.
6. Apologists pro-government texts trying to use Islam to justify or prop up *x* or *y* modern Muslim nation state with justifications from the Qur'an and *hadith*.
7. Classical *usuli* Islamic texts about politics (e.g. Mawardi's *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*). Most of these of course are perfectly correct and legitimate, but naturally none of them take into consideration the vast discrepancies in not only the political and historical circumstances between now and then, but more importantly, the technological changes which have all but affected the human condition itself. Indeed, these changes in particular make it necessary to constantly reassess the political and sociological context within which we must apply our immutable Islamic beliefs.

None of these categories of books are sufficient in themselves for those who want to know how to apply *usuli* Sunni Islamic political principle to the situation as it is today. This may seem like a strange thing to say about the last category, because after all the principles of Islam are immutable and applicable to every circumstance, time, place and people, but in fact *these principles themselves* require a knowledge an understanding of circumstance, time, place and people in order to be applied justly. This is why Mufti Taqi's book is so important. It is characterized by the following qualities:

1. It brings together and summarises the vast majority—if not all—of the key texts that the Qur'an, the *hadith* and the *sunnah* mentions about politics. Indeed, Mufti Taqi's knowledge is vast—his mind, and discernment, is peerless in our day (if I may say so)—and this is clearly seen in the text.

2. It summarises the *usuli* tradition and experience of politics, particularly benefiting from the 700 years of Ottoman Hanafi experience with politics. The Ottoman Caliphate was the longest single Islamic experience with politics, and was one in which circumstances were constantly changing; in which there were constant *jihad*, and in which there were many different (well-respected and protected) non-Muslim minorities living within the Islamic polity. At the same time, this book does not neglect divergent opinions from the *Jumhur al-‘ulama* (i.e the other three *madhahib*) especially when these provide better practices.
3. It is objective—without secret, personal or political agenda, or vested interest (*ma‘rab*)—and without unguided passion (*hawa*).
4. It does not compromise Islam or the *shari‘ah*, and indeed contains a lot of inconvenient truths for today’s states and rulers. On the other hand, it is realistic and does not seek to impose unnecessary burdens on people out of misplaced religious zeal.
5. It clearly benefits from Mufti Taqi’s having tried to immerse himself in history and political thought—and in particular, Western history and political thought. It is very rare to find an Islamic scholar of Mufti Taqi’s calibre doing this, but without this kind of study it is impossible to fully understand the context of the present political reality.
6. It benefits from Mufti Taqi’s own efforts and experiences with the Islamic courts in Pakistan, and with Pakistan’s constitutional change (in which he was consulted but not fully listened to).
7. It is clearly and simply written, and the English translation is well edited by Muhammad Isa Waley.

For all these reasons and more, in my opinion, this book is the best book to appear in the modern world on Islam and Politics that I know of—certainly in English—and I humbly recommend it to all those interested. I do not say these things lightly.

But God knows best.

PROFESSOR HRH PRINCE
GHAZI BIN MUHAMMAD
1439 AH / 2017 CE.