

Administrative Responsibility: An Islamic Perspective

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Public bureaucracies, a general term including government agencies and departments in the areas of public utilities, social services, regulatory services, security, and law enforcement, are indispensable to our welfare; we need them for the provision of these basic services. To provide these services, bureaucracies need such resources as power and money. The power of bureaucracies is compounded by their virtual monopoly of technical expertise, which puts bureaucrats at the forefront of public policy making.

Indispensable to our welfare though they are, public bureaucracies also pose a potential threat. In view of the technical knowledge they have and their consequent important role in policy making, they may dominate public life. In other words, they may develop into a power elite and, as a result, act as masters of the public rather than as its servants. More disturbingly, they may not use the public trust to serve the public or respond to its needs. Still more disturbingly, they may breach the public trust or abuse the power entrusted to them.

All of these possibilities have given rise to a widespread fear of bureaucracy. In some societies, this fear has reached pandemic levels.¹ Fear of bureaucracy is not unwarranted; there is a consensus and concern in administrative and academic circles that the degree of bureaucratic accountability has declined in both developed and developing countries.² A central issue with public bureaucracy has always been how to make it behave responsibly or in the public interest. Despite a plethora of mechanisms for ensuring administrative responsibility or bureaucratic responsiveness, many public bureaucracies may still be unresponsive and unaccountable.

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The principal contention of this paper is that success in making bureaucrats responsible or responsive depends on whether or not they have sufficiently strong motivation to serve the public. The present approaches to the issue are lacking in such motivation, which must be spiritually grounded. This paper contends that Islamic values and institutions can be used to provide this motivation.

The study is divided into two sections. The first section presents and examines critically the modern literature on administrative responsibility. The second section presents an Islamic alternative that builds and improves on the approaches embodied in this literature. It should be noted in passing that the subject matter of this study is general. In the first section, administrative responsibility is discussed as a general concept, not as actually practiced in any particular country. Similarly, the Islamic perspective presented in the second section does not deal with the experience of a specific Muslim country. The study presents a perspective distilled from the Qur'an and Sunnah rather than one based on the actual experience of contemporary Muslim countries.

The Meaning of Responsibility

The word *responsibility* has several connotations.³ However, two meanings are emphasized here. First, responsibility is seen as accountability or answerability.⁴ *Accountability* means that a person has to render an account of or answer for his/her performance to some entity. This entity can then impose sanctions or rewards in response to that performance.

Accountability also denotes external control over the person to whom some duties have been assigned. Here, *control* refers to a constraint on the behavior of that particular person. The individual's behavior is constrained in that the only behavior permitted by the entity exercising control is the one that is essential for discharging his/her duty. When such constraint comes from outside the individual, the control exercised is external. However, constraint can also come from within the person. This is the so-called "inner check," sense of duty, or felt responsibility internalized by individuals (see discussion below).

The entity to which duties have been assigned can be an individual working in an administrative agency or an entire administrative agency. In the case of the individual, control is exercised by the organization's leaders. Although such control is within or internal to the organization, it is external to the individual over whom it is exercised. In the case of an administrative agency charged with some duty (e.g., environmental regulation), control is external when exercised, for instance, by legislative and/or executive oversight bodies.

In both cases, control over or constraint on the behavior of the entity entrusted with some duty exists outside that entity. The essence of control here is that the entity has to render account of or answer for his/her (as in the case of an individual) or its (as in the case of an administrative agency)

behavior to some entity. In the case of an individual, this would be an organizational leader; in the case of an administrative agency it would be a legislative and/or executive oversight body. The essence of responsibility is that individuals and organizations are induced by such control, which is backed by the use of sanctions and rewards, to behave responsibly or to refrain from irresponsible behavior.

Apart from accountability, responsibility is also seen as a sense of duty or felt responsibility. Responsibility conceived as a sense of duty focuses on "to whom and for what one feels and behaves responsibly."⁵ Unlike accountability, felt responsibility is not backed by the use of sanctions and rewards. Here, the motivation to feel and behave responsibly stems from within the individual rather than from external entities. In other words, an individual's behavior is constrained by his/her sense of duty rather than by any stipulation to answer for his/her behavior to an external entity.

Felt responsibility applies not only to an individual but also to an organization as a whole. Felt responsibility may exist in the organization if organizational members have internalized a commitment to their duties. As will be discussed later, such commitment stems, as argued, from administrative morality or ethics and professionalism. In sum, the essence of felt responsibility is that an individual or administrative agency behaves responsibly because of an inner motivation and refrains from irresponsible behavior because of an inner check or restraint.

Schools of Thought on Administrative Responsibility

Two schools of thought are discernable in the literature on administrative responsibility. These schools are based on the two meanings of responsibility discussed above and symbolize two distinct answers to the question: What is the best means of enforcing the responsibility of bureaucrats? One school of thought relies entirely on putting external checks on the administrators, while the other advocates giving bureaucrats discretionary power and relies on factors within the bureaucracy itself to ensure responsible administrative behavior. The former school of thought is referred to as the *chain-of-command* school; the latter is called the *discretionist* school.

The Chain-of-Command School of Thought. Various terms have been used to refer to the version of responsibility represented by this school: *objective responsibility, political responsibility, hierarchical responsibility, and political accountability.*⁶

Proponents of this school reject vehemently the notion of granting administrators power and relying on their sense of responsibility. To them, the responsibility of administrators means accountability to an entity external to administration. Furthermore, they identify this responsibility with democracy. Herman Finer, the classic representative of this school and one of its most ardent supporters, wrote:

Are the servants of the public to decide their own course, or is their course of action to be decided by a body outside of themselves? My answer is that the servants of the public are not to decide their own course; they are to be responsible to the elected representatives of the public, and these are to determine the course of action of the public servants to the most minute degree that is technically feasible This kind of responsibility is what democracy means.⁷

A principal concern of this school is to guard against the abuse of power by administrators. This is implicit in that administrators are subject to external controls involving the use of sanctions. Adherents advocate a dual accountability-enforcement mechanism, discussed next, which is clearly indicative of the chain-of-command or hierarchical nature of their conception of administrative responsibility. To them, accountability is to be enforced first through the courts and disciplinary controls of administrative departments and, second, the authority exercised over public administrators by ministers accountable to a representative assembly accountable to the public at large.⁸

The Discretionist School. The type of responsibility represented by this school is entwined closely with old and recent arguments for giving public administrators substantial discretionary power. The principal argument is that, given the complexity of modern government and policy concerns, it is impossible to avoid giving bureaucrats substantial discretionary power.⁹ These two factors, they argue, put administrators at the forefront of policy making.

Adherents charge that accountability is negative in its content, for it seeks merely to prevent abuses rather than to stimulate policy initiatives to deal with social problems. In this regard, a leading discretionist wrote:

Too often it is taken for granted that as long as we can keep the government from doing wrong, we have made it responsible. What is more important is to insure effective action of any sort to stimulate initiative, even at the risk of mistakes, must nowadays never be lost sight of as a task in making government's services responsible.¹⁰

Discretionists conceive of administrative responsibility as felt (subjective) responsibility, a sense of duty, or an internalized commitment to be effective (that is, to do one's work well) and to be responsible to the needs and welfare of the public. According to them, felt responsibility stems from factors inside administration rather than from external factors (e.g., legislative and/or executive directives).

One of these internal factors, they argue, is the presence of professionals in public bureaucracies. This presence brings into public service professional norms and ethics that impart a sense of responsibility to work. Indeed, proponents of professionalism see it as an internalized duty to be

effective; it is "a kind of performance ethic . . . by which people (professionals) are simply called to do their best, for anything less would be embarrassing to them."¹¹ Professionalism is also seen as instrumental in making administrators responsive to the public.¹²

Another internal factor suggested as conducive to felt responsibility among administrators is administrative morality or ethics. Several ethical principles have been proposed as essential for moral behavior in administration. The most important one is the concept of social equity, which is derived from Rawls's "Theory of Justice."¹³ It is worth noting that social equity, as a guideline for administrative action, requires administrators to be particularly responsive to the disadvantaged members of society.

Scholars have also suggested some moral qualities, the internalization of which is seen to be conducive to moral behavior in administration. These moral qualities include, *inter alia*, optimism, courage, fairness tempered by charity, benevolence, and prudence.¹⁴ Discretionists argue that the relevance of these suggested ethical principles and moral qualities to administrative responsibility is that, when internalized, they generate public-spirit-ness in administrators, thereby making them responsive to the needs of the public.

A Critique of the Two Schools

Although the preceding discussion implies that the two schools represent two polar extremes, they nevertheless share a common denominator. Both imply that the responsibility of public servants boils down to whether or not they are motivated to behave responsibly. The source of motivation is external in the case of objective responsibility, whereas it is internal as far as subjective responsibility is concerned. However, each type of responsibility implies that the other does not provide sufficient motivation for administrators to behave responsibly. Indeed, each type sees itself not as supplementing the other, but as supplanting it.

Subjective responsibility seems to have the edge; it is more efficient, as it implies the minimum use of resources. Its presence means that administrators have an inner commitment, conviction, or a genuine sense of duty to be responsive to the public. If this can be ensured, it might be argued that there is no need for objective responsibility, which would be superfluous and, consequently, an unnecessary claim on resources.

Compelling though this argument may seem, objective responsibility is still needed, because it performs an important insurance function. Despite the best of efforts to inculcate a sense of duty into administrators, this approach might not work. Moreover, if it can be ensured, administrators might experience temporary lapses in their internalized commitment to serve the public interest. Under such circumstances, the existence of external controls is necessary.

Each school is useful in that it draws our attention to the source of motivation for responsible administrative behavior. However, since each school

is presented as an alternative to the other, a principal weakness of each is its lopsidedness. The two schools should supplement (rather than substitute) each other, as administrators need both internal and external motivation to behave responsibly. Another weakness is that each approach may not provide sufficient motivation for administrators to behave responsibly. Such motivation can be ensured if administrative responsibility is anchored in the relationship between the individual and God.

The Islamic perspective presented belows corrects the first weakness by synthesizing the two types of administrative responsibility. Moreover, since administrative responsibility here is anchored, in part, on the relationship between the individual and God, the individual is expected to be motivated strongly to behave responsibly. This corrects the second weakness in the current approaches.

Before closing this section, it may be useful to discuss briefly some recent ideas to promote bureaucratic responsiveness. These ideas encompass administrative redundancy, representative bureaucracy, associationalism, and influencing the character of the bureaucrat. Each idea is discussed and critiqued.

Administrative Redundancy

Redundancy in administration means the existence of duplication and overlap in the functions performed by different administrative agencies.¹⁵ It is claimed that the public is best served by a redundant system of administration. The argument underpinning this claim is that a redundant system of administration permits administrative agencies to compete in performing the same or similar tasks. The public is served best as each agency attempts to outperform its rivals in service provision.¹⁶ While such a system may enhance bureaucratic responsiveness, the resulting gain must be weighed against the probable accompanying loss in administrative efficiency. A redundant system diminishes efficiency, for it is based on the wasteful or inefficient use of resources.

Representative Bureaucracy

Representative bureaucracy is based on the notion that the surest way of ensuring that a bureaucracy will be responsible to a society is to require it to recruit its personnel from all segments of that society.¹⁷ The assumption is that a bureaucracy that mirrors a society in its composition will be sensitive to the needs of the society's members and will be unlikely to exercise its power arbitrarily or abusively.

However, the basic underlying assumption is rather flawed. As noted previously, this view assumes implicitly that background determines attitude. Empirical studies have shown that the correlation between these two variables is weak.¹⁸ Bureaucrats may not represent the social groups from which they are recruited; they may, it is argued, represent the bureaucracy

itself or the professional groups to which they belong.¹⁹ Representative bureaucracy also runs counter to the principle of merit in the recruitment of administrative personnel. In other words, merit, as an objective recruitment criterion, may be brushed aside. If this happens, it will be at the expense of administrative efficiency. Thus, representative bureaucracy, like administrative redundancy, involves a trade-off between bureaucratic responsiveness and administrative efficiency.

Associationalism

Proponents of associationalism or associative democracy charge that modern representative democracy offers low levels of governmental accountability to citizens and to public influence on policy making. They argue, more specifically, that the institutions of representative democracy are "hopelessly overburdened by the sheer size of modern bureaucratic big government, and the multiplicity of the functions of social provisions and regulation undertaken by modern states."²⁰ This is said to have resulted in undermining representative democracy by weakening the accountability of elected policy makers and administrators to the people. In addition, they stress that associative democracy seeks to supplement, rather than serve as a substitute for, representative democracy. Their aim is to reform representative democracy and to offer a principle of administrative renewal that seeks to restore the "ideal of committed public service."²¹

A principal element of associationalism is the claim that human welfare is best served when most social and economic affairs are administered by voluntary and democratically elected self-governing associations.²² Under associative democracy, civil society organizations become the primary mechanisms for the provision of public goods or services. Once in place, associative democracy ensures accountability to the people through their voluntary associations and also enhances governmental accountability. The enhancement of governmental accountability is made possible, they argue, because associative governance reduces the tasks of government and thereby makes modern government more manageable and, consequently, accountable.²³

The notion of associative democracy is certainly commendable, as it seeks a deeper involvement of the public in the governance of its affairs. However, the concept relies exclusively on accountability; it ignores subjective responsibility. Moreover, the direct involvement of the public in service provision may diminish its efficiency, as members of the public or civil society associations may not have the technical expertise needed for efficient service provision or delivery.

Influencing the Bureaucratic Character

This idea seeks to ensure bureaucratic responsiveness by infusing a sense of responsibility into the character of the bureaucrat. Many attempts

have been made to specify what a public administrator's character should be and how it can be nurtured.²⁴ As noted previously, several ethical principles and moral qualities have been advanced as basic to administrative morality or ethics. Although administrative morality is commendable, it may not by itself ensure bureaucratic responsiveness. In other words, the idea is lopsided; it embraces subjective responsibility only. From a realistic standpoint, it needs to be supplemented by enforceable accountability.

In general, each approach to enhancing bureaucratic responsiveness is lopsided, for each one provides either accountability or subjective responsibility. As noted previously, these two types of administrative responsibility are complementary. An approach that combines them provides stronger motivation for responsible bureaucratic behavior.

An Islamic Perspective on Administrative Responsibility

Islamic values and institutions can be used to provide internal motivation (the basis of subjective responsibility) and external motivation (the basis of accountability or objective responsibility) for responsible administrative behavior. By combining these two aspects of administrative responsibility, the Islamic perspective presented here overcomes the principal weakness—lopsidedness—of current approaches. Moreover, by making administrative responsibility the function of one's religious convictions, the Islamic approach provides a strong internal motivation for administrators to behave responsibly. This overcomes the second weakness—the absence of a strong motivation—associated with current approaches.

The Basis of Administrative Responsibility in Islam

The basis of administrative responsibility in Islam is the Qur'anic command of enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. The command itself occupies a central place in Islam, a fact attested to by numerous Qur'anic verses and prophetic traditions.²⁵ Prominent Islamic jurists have treated this command as the essential basis for the undertaking of public duties.²⁶ According to them, public servants must do what is good and refrain from what is evil. This applies to all kinds of dealings, be they economic, social, political, or otherwise, with the members of the community.

This command is an integral part of one's religious beliefs that, in turn, consist of one's relationship with God and some related values. This implies that the individual should be motivated by these beliefs to obey the Qur'anic command noted earlier. In the administrative realm, these beliefs should establish in the administrator's soul a genuine commitment to care for the welfare of others or to be responsive to their needs. There are also several Islamic institutions that can provide administrators with motivations to follow the command. As they are external to the individual, their motivations are also external. These will be discussed below.

Subjective Responsibility

Subjective responsibility is based on internal or intrinsic motivation that, in turn, is the function of one's relationship with God and of some related values. The relationship in question pertains to *imān* (faith in God) and *taqwā* (awareness of God). Both generate a number of moral virtues that commit the individual to caring for the well-being of others. The related values, justice to and love for others, also motivate the individual to look after the welfare of others.²⁷

Imān. Commitment to the service of fellow human beings is implanted in human nature and is the function of the essential goodness ingrained in human nature. *Imān* activates and reinforces this innate goodness.

The Qur'an affirms the essential goodness of human nature: "We have indeed created man in the best of molds" (95:4). Note that "in the best molds" has been interpreted as having "the purest and best nature."²⁸ However, the self is drawn to evil (95:5; 12:53), and individuals are inordinately attracted to such instinctive pleasures or needs as wealth (3:14). This combination breeds egocentricity, self-indulgence, and other sources of evil. If human conduct is to be imbued with selflessness and charity, the self's excesses and propensity to evil must be kept in check. One's capacity to do this lies in *imān*, for the Qur'an expects those who have faith to resist surrendering to the self's evil propensities (95:5-6).

By restraining these propensities, *imān* reinforces the essential goodness ingrained in human nature. This does not mean that it changes one's nature; the Qur'an notes that God's creation, including the essence of human nature, is immutable (30:30). *Imān* simply tilts the balance toward the good in human nature and this, in turn, produces a balanced set of needs within the human self. One set of needs pertains to the self's own needs; another set is related to the self's need to do good or to serve other people.²⁹

Imān induces such charitable virtues as optimism, humility, and moral courage. Optimism is the result of one's faith in God infusing the believer with a hopeful attitude or outlook that the good will come to pass. The Qur'an enjoins this outlook and associates it with belief in God (12:87; 2:186; 39:9). Such an outlook promotes bureaucratic responsiveness by motivating those in charge of public affairs to strive for personal improvement in serving their clients.

Faith in God also inculcates humility in the faithful. In the Qur'an, humbling oneself before God is associated with faith in Him (11:23). Humility implies an attitude of regard or respect for others as well as charity and a recognition of others' interests and needs. The Qur'an associates humility with doing good to others (4:36). Viewed in this sense, humility is a useful work virtue, since it commits the individual to caring for others. It is worth noting here that in modern organization theory, one criticism levelled against bureaucrats is that their arrogance (or lack of humility) or domineering attitude renders them unresponsive to their clients.³⁰

Faith in God also leads to moral courage in the sense that one is ready to uphold what is right even at the expense of personal interests. Moral courage is indispensable to administrative responsibility in at least three respects: (a) Administrative decisions often entail hurting someone. This can be seen clearly in personnel administration. A senior administrator needs moral courage to choose between firing an employee for malpractice and a sympathy-arousing appeal for mercy on the part of an employee who must support a family; (b) Moral courage is important for guarding against bureaucratic pathologies inimical to administrative responsibility. Such ills result from structural features of bureaucratic organizations. One of these ills is excessive formalism, which engenders a crippling or incapacitating obsession with rules and regulations that renders bureaucrats timid and overly self-protective. This may lead to buck-passing, which is antithetical to administrative responsibility; and (c) Moral courage is essential for guarding against bureaucratic sycophancy (the hiding of bitter facts from policy makers or telling them what they want to hear). Omnipresent though it is, sycophancy is a serious concern to public bureaucracies. Given that bureaucratic advice to policy makers is now an indispensable component of public policy making, bureaucratic sycophancy may lead to public policy actions or inactions with disastrous consequences. Such a practice signifies the abandonment of one's sense of duty and responsibility. It can, however, be guarded against or prevented, for moral courage does not really allow the development of sycophants.

Taqwā. Taqwā (awareness of God) is based on divine accountability and concomitant divine reward or punishment and relates to the consequences of transgressing the "limits of God."³¹ The Qur'an points out that one is accountable to God for every act, regardless of its apparent importance or lack thereof (99:1-8). This imparts a sense of responsibility and continuous vigilance on the part of the believer. Divine judgment brings conscientiousness and enthusiasm into one's actions, for if one believes in divine judgment and its consequences, one has a strong motivation for making earnest and enthusiastic efforts in the pursuit of good and/or in the avoidance of evil. A sense of responsibility, conscientiousness, and enthusiasm are conducive to the service of others; they motivate the individual to expend sincere efforts when carrying out one's duties or discharging one's obligations toward others.

Justice to Others. The Qur'an views justice as giving others their due and not harming them, even when one's own interests, or those of one's relatives, are at stake (4:135). Commitment to justice in one's actions or inactions predisposes one to be sensitive to the rights and needs of others.

Love for Others. Love for others entails not only avoiding harming them and their legitimate interests but also doing good to them. This is so central in Islam that it is a condition for *imān*. The Prophet was reported to

have said: "None of you has faith unless he loves for his brother what he loves for himself."³² Love for others brings into one's action the virtues of sympathy, compassion, and generosity. Clearly, these moral virtues denote commitment to the well-being of others. Imbued with love for others and with these moral virtues, the Muslim administrator ought to be responsive to the welfare of his/her clients.

In sum, *imān*, *taqwā*, and justice to and love for others generate a host of mutually reinforcing values and virtues that motivate the individual to look after the well-being of others. These elements are reinforced further by *ihsān*, the beautification or perfection of one's behavior. As an Islamic concept, *ihsān* denotes divine presence, as indicated by the following hadith: He asked, "What is *ihsān* (goodness)?" The Prophet replied, "That you worship God as if you see Him, for if you see Him not, surely He sees you."³³

The divine presence finds expression in a special relationship between the individual and God:

As for those who pursue most earnestly the quest in Us (God), We surely guide them in Our paths. And certainly God is with those who practice *ihsan*. (29:69)

In the context of this verse, the word "with" in the verse is interpreted as emphasizing "togetherness" and "company" and, thus, as denoting a "distinctive form of relationship between God and the devotee, as compared with the universal and general with-ness of God in reference to everything in Creation."³⁴ The implication is that one who pursues *ihsān* (a *muḥsin*) is constantly cognizant of God's presence and that his/her conduct is being observed by Him. This realization motivates one to strive for the optimum behavior possible in achieving Islamic values.

Ihsān is related closely to *imān* and *taqwā*. In fact, it has been described as the "beautification of faith and Islam."³⁵ It has been pointed out elsewhere that since *ihsān* indicates a state of sincerity in one's conviction and practice, it embodies both faith and Islam, as the former relates to conviction and the latter to practice.³⁶ Viewed in this sense, not only does *ihsān* imply both faith and Islam, but it is higher in degree. *Taqwā* is also related closely to *ihsān*, for it is based on personal accountability and belief in the divine judgment that will come into play when the "limits of God" are transgressed.³⁷ The *muḥsin*, who is constantly conscious of God's presence, is best suited to be most aware of God.

The pursuit of *ihsān* is particularly pertinent to the realization of Islamic values for two reasons.: (a) It is commanded in every aspect of life for, as related by the Prophet, "God has made obligatory the use of beauty in respect of everything"³⁸; and (b) the consciousness that one is in the company of God generates a sincere motivation to do one's best to achieve what He enjoins and to refrain from what He forbids. This implies that the pursuit of *ihsān* strengthens *imān*, *taqwā*, and justice to and love for others.

Ihsān also leads to selflessness, which commits an individual to care for others and, thereby, enhances his/her sense of responsibility or duty to them. *Selflessness*, defined as the “absence of evils relating to the animal self,” is commanded in the Qur’an (59:9-10) and symbolizes an attitude of goodwill, charity, and altruism. Selflessness can be seen as a consequence of *ihsān* on both the religious and moral levels. On the religious plane, since God commands *ihsān* in every aspect of life, *ihsān* applies to doing good to others, which is the essence of selflessness. On the moral plane, *ihsān* leads to selflessness by restraining the animal self in human nature and, consequently, by tilting the balance toward the goodness ingrained in human nature.

What all this implies is that the pursuit of *ihsān* by administrators ought to strengthen their sense of responsibility to serve the public and their desire to refrain from committing bureaucratic evils.

An Internalization Strategy

A two-pronged strategy is needed to ensure that these values and virtues are internalized by public servants. One aspect is to recruit for public service those who are most likely to have these values and virtues (righteous individuals). This dimension of the strategy requires a stringent screening mechanism for recruiting public employees. The second aspect, which reinforces the first, consists of exposing public servants to continual on-the-job education in the aforementioned values and virtues. In particular, they should be urged to pursue *ihsān* in their lives in general and their work in particular. This strategy should be reinforced further by incentive mechanisms conducive to inculcating an ethos of Islamic administrative morality into the soul of the bureaucrat. One such incentive mechanism is to keep an employee well-paid; another is to appoint an employee on a probationary basis until the internalization of the values and virtues in question has been demonstrated.

The advice of ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, fourth political successor of the Prophet, to his newly appointed governor of Egypt remains a particularly pertinent strategy for ensuring Islamic administrative morality:

Then come officers of your state They must be appointed after a careful scrutiny of their capabilities and characters. These appointments must be made originally on probation without any kind of favoritism being shown or influence being accepted While selecting your officers, take care to select experienced and honorable persons They are not greedy and cannot be easily corrupted Keep them also well paid, so that they may not be tempted to lower their standards of morality and may not misappropriate the cash of the state which they hold in their trust.³⁹

The internalization of the values and virtues in question should generate in the soul of the administrator a sense of responsibility that makes him/her responsive to the needs of his/her clients. However, it is realistic to complement this with external control mechanisms for deterring and guarding against bureaucratic sins, such as various forms of abuse of power and breach of public trust (corruption, embezzlement of public funds, and willful acts of injustice to one's clients, among others).

It is also sensible to institute mechanisms for externally inducing bureaucratic responsiveness. Such mechanisms, discussed below, can be derived from or are consistent with several Islamic values and institutions. As will be seen, these mechanisms institutionalize the principle of enjoining the good and preventing the evil.

External Mechanisms against Bureaucratic Sins

The aim here is to prevent evil due to bureaucratic action or inaction. Any institutional arrangement designed to achieve this aim should, in principle, be acceptable from an Islamic standpoint. The essence of the issue is external control, whether formal or informal, over bureaucratic behavior. *Formal control mechanisms* refer to formal institutional arrangements for the exercise of control over bureaucratic behavior. The arrangements discussed below comprise the relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government, *mazālim* courts, and formal institutions to guard against and prevent administrative secrecy. *Informal control* refers to actions initiated by individuals to expose bureaucratic misbehavior. The discussion here focuses on the airing of bureaucratic evils.

The Relationship between the Executive and Legislative Branches. This relationship is particularly pertinent to the issue of controlling bureaucratic behavior. From an Islamic perspective, what should this relationship be in relation to exercising external control over public administrators? Should it be based on the notion of fusion of powers or separation of powers?

It has been argued that in an Islamic state, the executive and legislative branches should be fused or integrated because the *amīr* (the leader) must also be the leader of the *majlis al-shūrā* (the legislative assembly). It is argued further that such integration makes the government efficient⁴⁰ and that such integration is unlikely to lead to autocracy, for "all government activities, executive as well as legislative, must be an outcome of consultation among accredited representatives of the community."⁴¹ Therefore, it follows that "decisions arrived at by the *majlis al-shūrā* through a majority vote are not of a merely advisory character—to be accepted or rejected by the holders of executive power—but are *legally binding* on them."⁴²

The idea that the executive and legislative branches should be fused may be advantageous in terms of governmental efficiency. Moreover, consultation and the stipulation that its outcome be binding on the executive may be instrumental in guarding against and preventing authoritarianism in

government. However, such a system has no safeguard against abuse of power by the upper echelon of the executive branch. Such a safeguard must be institutionalized in the form of legislative oversight. To the extent that this requires the separation of the two branches, the separation of powers is compatible with the principle of forbidding evil (i.e., abuse of power). There is one drawback, however: A government based on the separation of powers is prone to gridlock and, consequently, to inefficiency. Americans often complain of gridlock in the federal government, particularly when Congress is controlled by one party and the White House (i.e., the executive branch) by another.

From an Islamic perspective, efficiency in government is as important as guarding against and preventing abuse of power. Indeed, efficiency is a basic value enjoined on Muslims.⁴³ An Islamic governmental system must guard against abuse of power and operate efficiently. This is not easy to do, for its realization may not depend exclusively on the relationship between governmental branches, but, at least in part, on addressing the spirit of the public official. More specifically, the internalization of Islamic values (notably, *ihsān*) by public officials may provide most of the answer. When internalized by public administrators, *ihsān* should restrain them from abusing power and motivate them to be efficient.

It should be noted also that the control of the executive branch is not entirely dependent on the relationship between this branch and the legislative branch. It is useful to think of the executive branch as made up of two echelons: an upper echelon (the cabinet) and a lower echelon (the various government agencies and departments). In general, while the upper echelon consists of a few dozen officials, the lower echelon includes thousands of public administrators or civil servants. This distinction is important, for external control over administrators is usually seen in terms of legislative oversight over the executive branch as a whole. This tends to overlook the fact that external control over public administrators is also exercised by the upper echelon of the executive branch. In the United States, for example, the Office of Management and Budget, which is part of the upper echelon of the executive branch, oversees the budgetary matters of federal agencies and departments.

Both the legislative branch and the upper echelon of the executive branch can exercise oversight over government agencies and departments comprising the lower echelon of the executive branch. This is independent of whether the governmental system is based on the separation of powers or the unity of powers notions.

It is worth noting that quasigovernmental watchdog entities (besides executive and legislative oversight bodies) can be set up to monitor public bureaucracies and guard against bureaucratic abuse of power. Such entities are, in principle, acceptable in Islam. Watchdog bodies are used in a number of Muslim countries, such as the peoples' committees in Sudan, the revolutionary committees in Libya, and the Islamic guards in Iran. However, two things should be guarded against in connection with the

operations of such entities. First, their monitoring of government agencies and departments may become a source of interference and may lead to administrative inefficiency. Hence, watchdog agency intervention must not be allowed to undermine the efficiency of government bureaucracies. In addition, they must be accountable to some entity, because this is essential for guarding against or preventing excesses and consequent injustices against individuals or groups.

Instituting Mazālim Courts. *Mazālim* courts, a feature of the early years of Islam,⁴⁴ dealt with wrongs committed by public officials against the public. These courts analyzed complaints lodged by members of the public against some bureaucratic action or inaction to determine whether they were entitled to redress by the bureaucracy (today, this function is fulfilled by an ombudsman). The institution is entirely consistent with the Qur'anic principle of forbidding evil. Bureaucratic discrimination (on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, etc.) against members of the public is particularly pertinent to the work of *mazālim* courts. Discrimination cases presuppose the existence of antidiscrimination laws that are entirely consistent with justice, which occupies a central place in Islam (Qur'an 95:8 describes it as the value nearest to piety). In multiethnic societies, antidiscrimination laws may be essential for justice and fairness in the distribution or allocation of values (education, health, public employment, etc.) by government agencies and departments.

It is worth noting that both antidiscrimination laws and representative bureaucracy seek to prevent injustice resulting from bureaucratic discriminatory action or inaction. Which one is more effective in achieving this goal is an empirical question. However, antidiscrimination laws may achieve this goal without compromising administrative efficiency. This may not be true in the case of representative bureaucracy, which implies, as noted previously, that one's background (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) may be substituted for technical competence or qualifications as a criterion for recruitment to public office. If this happens, it may lead to administrative inefficiency. In contrast, antidiscrimination laws are designed to prevent these very same background factors from being used in recruiting people for public employment.

Preventing Administrative Secrecy. Administrative secrecy, which is inimical to administrative responsibility, is of pivotal importance. It can be looked at from two different angles. First, public officials can use secrecy to hide corruption, embezzlement of public funds, or other abuses of power. Second, secrecy means that the public has little or no information on administrators' activities. Since information is essential for controlling behavior, secrecy is a serious impediment to public control over public officials. Thus, administrative secrecy is antithetical to administrative responsibility. However, secrecy is ubiquitous in organizations because, as stated by Max Weber, bureaucratic organizations are inherently preoccupied with secrecy and, in varying degrees, all organizations are bureaucratic.⁴⁵

An open administration, explained below, is consistent with the spirit of Islam. As Ansari has argued, Qur'an 12:40 enjoins the freedom and democratic rights of the people.⁴⁶ Keeping the public informed about what its government does must be seen as one of these rights, inasmuch as the actions of government affect the lives of the people. Thus, Islam calls for an open system of administration, one in which members of the public have access to information on decisions made by bureaucrats. Such access should be institutionalized in the form of statutes. A notable example of such laws is the Freedom of Information Act in the United States.

Another way to make administration open to the public is to involve the people in administrative decisions affecting their lives. The institution of *shūrā*, discussed below, can be used in this regard.

It should be noted in passing that the control arrangements thus far discussed are external to the government agencies or departments over which control is exercised. However, control entities also come from within the agencies and departments themselves. Intra-agency or intradepartmental control entities are external to the agency's or department's individual bureaucrats over whom control is exercised. Internal control entities may include internal auditors, inspectors, or any internal oversight body designed to guard against or prevent the abuse of power by bureaucrats acting individually or collectively. These internal control entities are entirely consistent with the Qur'anic principle of preventing evil.

Airing of Bureaucratic Evils. A Muslim is enjoined not to be indifferent when he/she witnesses acts of evil. In this regard, the Prophet was reported to have said:

If any one of you sees something objectionable, he should change it with his hand. If he cannot, he should do it with his tongue, and if he cannot, he should do it in his heart, which is the weakest form of faith.⁴⁷

This prophetic tradition calls for airing or exposing anything that is evil. If this is officially sanctioned in administration, it will act as a deterrent against bureaucratic abuse of power or breach of public trust.

One way to encourage such exposure is to sanction whistle blowing by forces within and outside the bureaucracy. Both bureaucrats and members of the public should be involved in this process. Reporting bureaucratic evil by a bureaucrat against a fellow bureaucrat requires a lot of moral courage, because bureaucrats tend to protect themselves and their colleagues. However, if bureaucrats are assured that they will not be victimized after airing abuses of power by fellow bureaucrats, this might provide an incentive for whistle blowing from within the bureaucracy itself. It should be noted, however, that despite laws to protect whistle-blowers, "whistle-blowing remains a risky occupation,"⁴⁸ as whistle-blowers occasionally suffer as a result of sounding the alarm. Encouraging forces out-

side the bureaucracy to expose bureaucratic sins might take the form of officially encouraging journalists to engage in muck-raking.

It should be noted, in passing, that exposing bureaucratic sins should not just be confined to overt acts of bureaucratic abuses of power, but should include abdication of one's responsibility or bureaucratic inaction when action is the right course.

External Mechanisms for Inducing Bureaucratic Responsiveness

The two mechanisms discussed in this section provide the means that enable members of the public to communicate their welfare needs to public servants.

Applying Shūrā in Administration. As a Qur'anic concept, *shūrā* refers to the leaders' obligation to consult with the public concerning the conduct of public affairs. Although Islamic jurists have differed on who should be consulted, there seems to be agreement on *shūrā*.⁴⁹ It is noted that all public affairs of the Muslim community should be subject to consultation. This does not apply when injunctions are available in the Qur'an and the Sunnah or when they are contradicted.⁵⁰

Shūrā can be used in at least two ways to ensure bureaucratic responsiveness. First, in view of the significant role of administrators in policy making, it should be interpreted broadly enough to encompass the area of administration. The Qur'an does not provide any specific organizational mechanism or structure for applying the concept. In the area of administration, *shūrā* can take the form of decision review boards. Essentially a screening mechanism in the decision-making process, *shūrā* can help reduce the risk of error associated with the single decision maker and can also guard against abuse or misuse of power (the likelihood of these occurring is higher if a decision maker does not consult others). It does not make a critical difference whether the decision review board acts as part of the decision-making process or on an ex-post facto basis. What is really important here is that before a decision is finally made, it should pass through a screening stage and be subjected to the opinions of several people.

Second, extending *shūrā* to the public policy implementation process can be particularly instrumental in ensuring bureaucratic responsiveness, as the public can be directly involved in this process. The implementation of policy should be informed by an ongoing consultation between the implementers and those affected by the policy. This is essential, for policy outputs or implemented policies may sometimes deviate from the original intended policy goals.⁵¹ In addition, justice requires that those who implement public policies consult with those who will be affected by the policy makers' actions. Such consultation affords the opportunity for expected public policy beneficiaries to contribute (through, for instance, a feedback mechanism) what they think will best serve their welfare.

Bureaucrats Must Be Accessible. The accessibility of public administrators is particularly pertinent to their responsiveness to the public. As accessibility makes public servants well-informed about the needs and wishes of the people, it has a direct bearing on the public's welfare. Such accessibility is consistent with the Islamic concepts of justice and *shūrā*. In general, it is compatible with the spirit of Islam. In fact, a prophetic tradition encourages it. It was reported that the Prophet once said:

If God puts anyone in the position of authority over the affairs of the Muslims, and he secludes himself (from them), not fulfilling their needs, wants, and poverty, God will keep Himself away from him, not fulfilling his needs, want, and poverty.⁵²

Administrative responsiveness is ensured in a number of ways by the accessibility of administrators: (a) It provides useful feedback from the public as to whether or not, and how, administrative action or inaction impinges on the public's welfare. Here, accessibility is important because administrators affect policy making through policy implementation and administrative discretion; (b) Bureaucratic accessibility is essential for rectifying grievances committed by administrators out of commission or omission. To do this, access to an external appeals authority, such as a *mazālim* court, is necessary. In addition, access to offending bureaucrats may be instrumental in rectifying grievances. Such access may be effective under two conditions: first, if the offence is the result of an honest mistake and/or bureaucratic ignorance and, second, if the bureaucrats have enough moral courage to admit their mistakes; and (c) Bureaucratic accessibility makes administration open and hence less prone to abuse of power, which is more readily detectable in an open than in a secretive administrative system.

What can be done to ensure and enhance administrative accessibility? A first step is to specify barriers to accessibility. To most people, barriers to bureaucratic accessibility are physical (the gatekeeper). However, barriers can be psychological, as in the case of those bureaucratic attitudes that seek to deflect members of the public who are seeking the fulfillment of a service. Such attitudes are bureaucratic arrogance and haughtiness, which are, it is claimed, attributable to certain structural features of bureaucratic organizations.⁵³ Such psychological barriers are more serious impediments, for they cannot be removed as easily as their physical counterparts. The removal of psychological barriers requires the internalization of the Islamic values and virtues of justice to others, love for others, humility, and optimism. The aforementioned internalization strategy is helpful in this regard.

Conclusion

Present approaches to the question of administrative responsibility regard it as felt responsibility and accountability enforced through formal external control mechanisms. These two approaches, together with recent

ideas to promote bureaucratic responsiveness, do not provide sufficiently strong motivation for ensuring and enhancing such responsiveness. The Islamic alternative synthesizes both approaches and adds a spiritual element: a set of mutually reinforcing values and virtues, the internalization of which establishes in the bureaucrat the motivation to serve the public. The spiritual element also comprises some formal external mechanisms to ensure bureaucratic responsiveness and to guard against bureaucratic evils.

Endnotes

1. Herbert Kaufman, "Fear of Bureaucracy: A Raging Pandemic," *Public Administration Review*, no. 41 (January/February 1981): 1-9.
2. M. Shamsul Haque, "The Emerging Challenges to Bureaucratic Accountability: A Critical Perspective," in *Handbook of Bureaucracy*, ed. Ali Farazmand (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 266.
3. For these different connotations, see Roland Pennock, "Responsiveness, Responsibility, and Majority Rule," *American Political Science Review*, no. 46 (September 1952): 796-98; Herbert J. Spiro, *Responsibility in Government: Theory and Practice* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1969), 14-22.
4. For these two meanings, see Herman Finer, "Administrative Responsibility in Democratic Government," *Public Administration Review*, no. 1 (Summer 1941): 336; Frederick C. Mosher, ed. *Democracy and the Public Service* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 7-8; Robert B. Denhardt, *Theories of Public Organization* (Monterey, CA: Brooks Cole, 1984), 125-26.
5. Mosher, *Democracy*, 8.
6. See Spiro, *Responsibility*, 83-84; See also two articles in *Images and Identities in Public Administration*, eds. Henry D. Kass and Bayard L. Carlton (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990): Michael M. Harmon, "The Responsible Actor of 'Tortured Soul': The Case of Horatio Hornblower," 156-58; and Charles J. Fox and Clarke E. Cochran, "Discretionary Public Administration: Toward a Platonic Guardian Class," 101, 105.
7. Finer, "Administrative Responsibility," 336.
8. *Ibid.*, 336.
9. On this argument, see Carl Joachim Friedrich, "Public Policy and the Nature of Administrative Responsibility," in Mosher, *Democracy*, 197-204. On other arguments, see Fox and Cochran in *Images and Identities*, 87-112; Francis E. Rourke, *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Public Policy*, 2d ed. (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1976), 175-80.
10. Friedrich, "Public Policy," 197.
11. *Ibid.*, 103.
12. Richard C. Kearney and Chandan Sinha, "Professionalism and Bureaucratic Responsiveness: Conflict or Compatibility," *Public Administration Review*, no. 48 (January/February 1988): 575-77.
13. See H. George Fredrickson, "Toward a New Public Administration," in *Toward a New Public Administration*, ed. Frank Marini (Scranton, PA: Chandler: 1971), 309-31; David K. Hart, "Social Equity, Justice, and the Equitable Administrator," *Public Administration Review*, no. 34 (January/February 1974): 3-11.
14. See Stephen K. Bailey, "Ethics and the Public Service," *Public Administration Review*, no. 24 (December 1964): 234-43; David K. Hart, "The Virtuous Citizen, the Honorable Bureaucrat, and 'Public' Administration," *Public Administration Review*, no. 44 (March 1984): 111-21; Terry L. Cooper, "Hierarchy, Virtue, and the Practice of Public Administration: A Perspective for Normative Ethics," *Public Administration Review*, no. 48 (July/August 1969): 346-58.
15. Martin Landau, "Redundancy, Rationality, and the Problem of Duplication and Overlap," *Public Administration Review*, no. 29 (July/August 1969): 346-58.

16. Francis Rourke, Introduction to Chapter 6 in Francis Rourke, ed., *Bureaucratic Power in National Politics*, 2d ed. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1972), 313-14.
17. On the concept of representative bureaucracy and some critical examination, see V. Subramanian, "Representative Bureaucracy: A Reassessment," *American Political Science Review*, no. 61 (December 1967): 1010-1119.
18. Denhardt, *Theories*, 128.
19. *Ibid.*, 128.
20. Paul Hirst, *Associative Democracy: New Forms of Economic and Social Organization* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 21.
21. *Ibid.*, 6.
22. *Ibid.*, 19.
23. *Ibid.*, 21-22.
24. For some of these attempts, see Stephen K. Bailey, "Ethics"; Hart, "The Virtuous Citizen," 111-21; and Cooper, "Hierarchy," 320-28.
25. See al-Ghazālī, *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1982), 2:225-31.
26. Some of these jurists are Ibn Taymīyah, *Public Duties in Islam: The Institution of the Hisba* (London: The Islamic Foundation, 1982), 19-27 (trans. from Arabic); Fazul-ul-Karim, *Imām Ghazālī's Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (New Delhi: Kitab Bhavan, 1982), 225-58; al-Māwārdī, *al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭānīyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1983), 207-21.
27. It should be noted that these are not the only Islamic values that, when internalized, commit one to the service of fellow human beings. Islamic jurists have specified a host of Islamic values that are pertinent to the issue of administrative responsibility. However, the values discussed here are particularly germane to the question. For a comprehensive bibliographical essay on these values, see Shaikat Ali, *Administrative Ethics in a Muslim State* (Lahore: Publishers United Press, n.d.), 87-187.
28. A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corp, 1983), 1759.
29. For a very useful discussion on the effect of faith in God on human nature, see Naim Nusair, "Human Nature and Motivation in Islam," *The Islamic Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (1985): esp. 152-59.
30. Robert Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," in Mosher, *Democracy*, 257-58.
31. For more on this concept, see Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1980), 28-30.
32. Muhammad Ali, *A Manual of Hadith* (London: Curzon Press, 1977), 25.
33. *Ibid.*, 22.
34. Muhammad Fazul-Ur-Rahman Ansari, *The Qur'anic Foundations and Structure of Muslim Society* (Karachi: The World Federation of Islamic Missions, 1973), 1:139.
35. *Ibid.*, 140.
36. Ali, *Manual of Hadith*, 23.
37. For more on the concept of the "awareness of God," see Rahman, *Major Themes*, 28-30.
38. al Nawawi, ed., *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1981), 13:106 (in Arabic).
39. Quoted in Ali, *Administrative Ethics*, 52.
40. Muhammad Asad, *The Principles of State and Government in Islam* (Gibraltar: Dār al-Andalus, 1980), 51-52.
41. *Ibid.*, 52.
42. *Ibid.*
43. The Prophet was reported to have said: "God has made obligatory the use of beauty in respect to everything." al-Nawawi, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 13:106.
44. The institution originated in the period of the Umayyads. For more information, see al-Māwārdī, "On Looking into Wrongs from the Governing Statutes," in *Themes of Islamic Civilization*, ed. John Alden (Los Angeles: University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971), 147-50.
45. Frank Blackler and Sylvia Shimmin, *Applying Psychology in Organizations* (London: Methuen, 1984), 61.

46. Ansari, *Qur'anic Foundations*, 2: 351-52.
47. Quoted in Muhammad A. Al-Buraey, *Administrative Development: An Islamic Perspective* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1985), 81-82.
48. "The Uncommon Good," *The Economist* 336, no. 7928 (19 August 1995): 57.
49. For a useful discussion of the concept, see Lukman Thaib, *Al-Shura under the Pious Caliphs* (Petaling Jaya, Malaysia: Tempo, 1993), 8-14.
50. *Ibid.*, 17.
51. Students of public administration argue that bureaucrats affect public policies through, *inter alia*, policy implementation. In this regard, bureaucratic organizations provide the capabilities through which public policies are executed. As a result, "the shape of policy as it emerges from the machinery of bureaucracy reflects not only the intentions of decision makers at the head of government but also the characteristics of the organizations through which decisions are carried out. Policy outputs thus generate many surprises among political officials responsible for decisions, often referred to as 'unanticipated consequences.' In extreme cases the original intentions of policy makers may hardly be visible in the output of the organization charged with putting decisions into effect." Francis Rourke, *Bureaucracy, Politics, and Public Policy* (Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1984), 32. According to Rourke, this tendency is caused, in particular, by bureaucratic routines or standing operating procedures.
52. Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1984), 2:832.
53. Robert Merton, "Bureaucratic Structure and Personality," in Mosher, *Democracy*, 257.