Reconceptualizing Political Obedience in Islamic Thought: An Analytical Study of Ḥadīth Literature

BACHAR BAKOUR

Abstract

This study examines the concept of obedience to the ruler in Islam focusing on prominent ḥadīth collections, primarily Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*. It conducts a comprehensive textual and contextual analysis, extending its exploration to classical and contemporary works of Islamic political thought. The primary objective is to unveil insightful clues

Bachar Bakour is an Associate Professor at the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies in the AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). He has published five books in Arabic and five in English, including *Al-Buti and the Syrian Revolution* (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2021).

Bakour, Bachar. 2025. "Reconceptualizing Political Obedience in Islamic Thought: An Analytical Study of Ḥadīth Literature." *American Journal of Islam and Society* 42, nos. 1-2: 6–41 • doi: 10.35632/ajis.v42i1-2.3428

that contribute to a profound understanding of the concept of obedience, synthesizing original Islamic sources, historical experiences of the ummah, and the current realities of the Islamic world. The study argues that the concept of obedience emerges as conditional and contextual, balancing the rights of the ruler and the people. Also, the term *ulū al-amr*, symbolizing the joint effort of legislation, law enforcement, and adjudication, rejects autocratic power and political tyranny. Rulers are expected to consult with scholars, emphasizing a reciprocal relationship for the benefit of the ummah. The study further identifies a three-tiered classification of obedience: normative obedience rooted in love and respect for just rulers, obedience of necessity applied to corrupt rulers in Muslim history prior to the collapse of the Caliphate, and a form of emergency obedience to leaders in the contemporary era. On the basis of "averting harm takes priority over bringing the benefit" dictum, Islamic law has ordered that the despotism of the ruler, viewed as a *fait accompli*, is something that ought to be endured, and obedience given till the time is ripe for change.

Keywords: obedience, *Ǧāmiᶜ al-Uṣūl*, ruler, community, Ḥadīth, authority.

Introduction

The late year of 2010 marked the commencement of a transformative era in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), characterized by significant social and political disruptions. This period witnessed the emergence of populist movements opposing authoritarian regimes, collectively known as the Arab Spring. These popular uprisings emphasized the critical role of religion in both social and political spheres. The significance of religious settings became evident as Friday sermons, traditionally spiritual gatherings, evolved into powerful platforms for political expression and congregation. Numerous mosques transitioned into arenas for anti-regime demonstrations, reflecting a fusion of faith and political activism.[1]

Influential Muslim scholars, who play key roles in understanding and interpreting the dynamics of the conflict, adopted a range of stances toward the protests. Some ulama, aligning with the protests, openly criticized their respective governments, offering religious legitimacy to the demonstrators' demands. These scholars utilized their influence to mobilize support against the regimes, framing the protests within the context of Islamic principles of justice and resistance against oppression. Conversely, another group of ulama condemned the demonstrations, propagating the official narrative that emphasized stability and obedience to the ruler.[2] These scholars, often backed by state apparatus, argued that the protests were a source of discord and sedition and that maintaining peace and order was paramount. Their sermons and public statements aimed to dissuade the masses from participating in the uprisings, warning of the chaos and instability that rebellion could bring. A third faction of ulama, seemingly uncertain or cautious, opted for a culture of quiescence and silence. This group, perhaps wary of the potential repercussions of either stance, chose to remain neutral, neither endorsing the protests nor fully supporting the regimes. The escalating protests took this ulama vs. the regime dynamic into uncharted territory, as the ulama's roles as religious leaders and political actors are intensely scrutinized and contested.

The debate surrounding obedience to the ruler versus rebellion took centre stage in these debates and formed a basis for their respective arguments. While many religious scholars in the MENA approached the concept of obedience through a lens shaped by a medieval mentality, others opted for a complete departure from traditional perspectives. I contend that amidst the fervour of the discussions there exists a lack of awareness regarding pertinent contemporary socio-political concepts. With the adoption of civic and political ideals such as secularism, democracy, liberty, the sovereignty of the people, parliamentary constitutionalism, and considering the abolition of the Islamic caliphate in 1924, there has arisen a need for a renewed exploration of the question of obedience. This study endeavours to provide a contemporary and balanced analysis of the issue of obedience to a ruler, considering the rights and duties of both rulers and the ruled. In doing so, it seeks to

advocate for values of equality and social justice within today's Muslim community.

Numerous authentic traditions reported from the Prophet command subjects to obey their leader or ruler, be they just or unjust.[3] The Prophet employed various rhetorical styles to emphasize obedience, leaving no room for ambiguity or confusion. Muslims must render "obedience" to their emir as long as the latter adheres to the Shariah and follows the Book of Allah.[4] Nevertheless, other reports, from which this condition is absent, order Muslim subjects to listen and obey their rulers, even if they do evil.[5] In this case, punishment will fall upon the rulers, not their subjects.[6] Thus, these reports create a moral distance between the actions of the rulers and their subjects. As long as Muslims show obedience, they are not held responsible by Allah for the injustice of the rulers. Rulers alone are liable for their own misbehaviour.[7]

The Prophet also warned, "Whoever renounces allegiance, will meet Allah on the Day of Judgment with no excuse for him."[8] According to other reports, Muslims are not permitted to fight against the ruler except in cases of blatant disobedience or disbelief.[9] Furthermore, many Prophetic traditions underscore the importance of maintaining connections within the Muslim community and issue stern warnings against abandoning it, particularly during times of turmoil and civil unrest.[10]

The frequent emphasis of these Prophetic instructions begs the following questions: Why is rebellion discouraged unless in exceptional circumstances? What does the term *ulū al-amr* mean? How does the concept of *al-jamāʿah* contribute to the preservation of obedience and the promotion of Muslim unity? What does the term fitnah mean in the context of rebellion? Is obedience absolute or conditional? Additionally, what are the degrees of obedience that can be inferred from ḥadīth reports and the obedience-verse?

The study focuses on the renowned collections of ḥadīth, specifically Ibn al-Athīr's *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl*, which integrates the six fundamental ḥadīth books: al-Muwaṭṭa', al-Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī, and al-Nasā'ī. With regard to the compilation of reports on the subject of obedience, the study conducts a thorough textual and contextual analysis encompassing both classical and contemporary

works of Islamic political thought. This analysis operates on two levels: the first level examines three interrelated and significant conceptions of obedience. The second level reveals insightful clues that contribute to a comprehensive understanding of obedience by synthesizing original Islamic sources, the historical experiences of the ummah, and the contemporary realities of today's Islamic world.

Following the introduction, the study then conducts an in-depth analysis of three essential concepts frequently referenced in ḥadīth relating to obedience: leadership, the Muslim community (*al-jamāʿah*), and discord/civil war (*fitnah*). Additionally, the study pays particular attention to the concept of *ulū al-amr*, closely related to leadership, examining its meaning, implementation, and defining characteristics. Next, the study shifts its focus to the discussion and analysis of the conditional and contextual nature of obedience to rulers in Islam. It highlights the three-tiered classification of obedience, showcasing their varying degrees and nuances. This is followed by an exploration of the challenges and considerations involved in choosing between enduring oppression and resorting to sedition. Finally, the study concludes by summarizing the key points and emphasizing the overall understanding of obedience in Islam.

Basic Concepts

Understanding the intricate dynamics of political obedience in ḥadīth literature necessitates a thorough exploration of its three foundational concepts: leadership, *al-jamāʿah*, and *fitnah*. These interconnected terms form the bedrock upon which the entire corpus of ḥadīth related to political obedience is built. The following pages provide an examination of these concepts, delineating their interrelations and their pivotal role in shaping the framework of political obedience in Islam.

1. Leadership

The state, according to Plato, arises "out of the needs of mankind; no one is self-sufficing, but all of us have many wants."[11] This was echoed by his

student, Aristotle, who argues in *Politics* that human beings are by nature political animals, who tend to live together.[12] Later, for reasons of protection and security, discussions of power became an established reality among medieval Muslim scholars of literature, political-ethical philosophy, and sociology. These scholars include al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 869),[13] Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ (d. 885),[14] al-Fārābī (d. 950),[15] Ibn Sīnā, Avicenna (d. 1037),[16] and Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1406).[17] Recognizing the necessity of an organized structure for both political and non-political societies, it is understood that a certain entity is most suited for the fundamental task of organization. This entity, commonly referred to as 'authority,' plays a pivotal role in ensuring the effective administration of people's affairs.[18] Consequently, a form of 'political differentiation' naturally emerges, delineating two distinct groups: a ruling party vested with political authority and decision-making capabilities, and subjects obligated to adhere to directives.[19]

Islam strongly supports the pressing need for authority: (i) A Prophetic tradition states, "It is inevitable for people to have *imārah* (an emirate), whether it is good or bad."[20] (ii) ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib said, "[The affairs] of people are only set right by the existence of an emir, whether good or bad."[21] (iii) When three individuals plan to embark on a journey, it is a religious obligation for them to designate one among them as their leader.[22] The caliphate, taking over the role of Prophethood, "is responsible for guarding the religion and managing the affairs of this world."[23] Without a caliphate or imamate, neither religious obligations nor the objectives of the Shariah can be carried out. Thus, numerous Muslim scholars, throughout the history of Islam, have unanimously called for the imperative of a caliphate.[24]

Among the essential terms regarding leadership is the Qur'ānic reference to *ulū al-amr*, which needs to be examined. The verse where the term is mentioned reads, "You who believe, obey God and the Messenger, and those in authority among you. If you are in dispute over any matter, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you truly believe in God and the Last Day" (Al-Nisā': 59).[25] Commentators hold varying opinions regarding the identity of *ulū al-amr* (those in authority). Some interpret it as specific groups such as scholars, emirs of military expeditions, or emirs in general.[26]

Others argue that it applies broadly to anyone vested with authority, whether in public or private capacities (such as leaders, sultans, judges, scholars, muftis, etc.), provided that their position of authority is legitimate and valid.[27] Al-Shawkānī for example notes, "*Ulū al-amr* includes leaders, sultans, judges and every one with legally accredited authority, rather than the authority of *ṭāghūt* (Satan/a false deity)."[28] Contemporary thinkers, like Muḥammad ʿAbduh and Ḥasan al-Turābī, are quite explicit about the importance of the ummah freely choosing their ruler.[29]

Given that the term *ulū al-amr* by its very nature is open to multiple interpretations, the choice of emirs or rulers does not take precedence over other choices. In this context, the fixed plural form of *ulū al-amr*[30] may subscribe to the general applicability of the term. It alludes to a sense of corporate responsibility of those of authority to work hand in hand under the umbrella of the Shariah for the promotion of the best interests of the Muslim community in all areas.[31] In other words, the term *ulū al-amr* ultimately refers to the three powers: legislative (i.e., the ulama and muftis as the exponents of Islamic law), executive (rulers, sultans, emirs), and judiciary (judges).[32] On the basis of the obedience verse as well as the previous verse (no. 58),[33] those of *ulū al-amr* are identified with three distinguishing features: fulfilment of trust, maintaining justice, and referring to Allah and His messenger with regard to disputed matters.[34]

Consequently, the Muslim community is obligated to show allegiance to *ulū al-amr* who have fulfilled these three duties, with a particular emphasis on justice. Conversely, rulers who are unjust or corrupt, failing to uphold the specified features outlined in the Qur'ān, cannot be categorized as *ulū al-amr*. Instead, as per the renowned commentator al-Zamakhsharī, they are appropriately labelled as *al-luṣūṣ al-mutaghallibah* (the dominant thieves). [35] In the Sunnah, a ruler - referred to in ḥadīths with terms such as emir, imam, sulṭān - is defined as someone who leads in achieving the objectives of the Shariah, enforcing the *ḥudūd* (fixed penalties), engaging in combat against enemies, and safeguarding the land.[36]

2. Al-Jamāʿah

The term *al-jamāʿah* is challenging to define or delineate clearly, particularly following the demise of the Ottoman caliphate, which had lead to the fragmentation of the ummah into numerous small groups and movements with secular-nationalist and social orientations. In classical Islamic books, there are five interpretations of what *al-jamāʿah* represents, the most appropriate being the one that defines it as a Muslim group following a single imam.[37] This group pledges allegiance to a unified authority responsible for safeguarding their civil and religious rights, administering their affairs, and without which the existence of the community is at risk of collapse. The reason why this interpretation is the most suitable lies in the fact that it elucidates the robust connection established by many reports between 'imam or emir' and *al-jamāʿah*, signifying a close association between the community and a singular political authority. Moreover, the absence of this authority inevitably results in the fragmentation of the community. In such a scenario, Muslims are obligated to distance themselves from all conflicting factions and remain detached.

In the year 41 AH, when al-Ḥasan transferred the caliphate to Muʿāwiyah, it was referred to as "the community year," signifying the reunification under one emir after a period of division.[38] It is crucial to emphasize that the unity of the Muslim community is an unwavering imperative, and anyone attempting to disrupt or dismantle it may be confronted, even to the extent of facing combat or death.[39] A valuable historical lesson teaches us that a nation's political unity, regardless of its strength, acts as a significant impediment to divisive projects and schemes. Despite the weakened and politically disintegrated state of the caliphate, it remained a symbol of collective consciousness for Muslims globally. Consequently, rulers of the Sultan States, situated on the periphery of caliphate territories, fervently demonstrated their commitment to this symbolic union under the caliph.[40]

With respect to the correlation between the ruler and the community, bound by the concept of obedience, al-Jāḥiẓ observes that a leader with sole sovereignty is akin to the imam in prayer, who alone is followed and obeyed. In the absence of political rivals, consensus prevails, harmony is achieved, and the affairs of the community are set in order.

Furthermore, the presence of a united community signifies the absence of adversaries, bringing an end to fanciful thoughts and ideas.[41] Just as individuals in prayer follow their imam, the community ought to obey its political authority and refrain from rebellion. When voluntary obedience is willingly embraced, it results in a unified community. This implies that individual wills merge into the collective will, and personal interests are subordinated to the broader common interest. Consequently, as Rousseau puts it, "Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an indivisible part of the whole."[42]

To sustain both political and social unity and facilitate the smooth execution of numerous religious duties, Muslims are counselled to endure the injustices of their rulers. The ruler, as argued, serves as the thread that binds the beads of a necklace together. If the thread were to break, the beads would scatter. This analogy succinctly elucidates the correlation between the existence of the ruler and that of the community, a connection underscored by many Prophetic traditions.[43] In a historical context, al-Ṭabarī recounts an incident involving Saʿīd ibn Zayd, who was asked about the timing of Abū Bakr's installation as caliph. In response, Saʿīd stated that Abū Bakr assumed the role of caliph on the very day the Prophet passed away. This swift transition was motivated by a collective desire to avoid any prolonged period without a unified leadership.[44] The significance of this event lies in the sense of urgency and unity that characterized the early Muslim community. The companions recognized the potential dangers and divisions that could arise in the absence of a clear leader. Therefore, the immediacy of Abū Bakr's appointment was driven by the communal imperative to maintain cohesion and prevent any fragmentation among the Muslims. This historical account reflects the commitment of the early Muslim community to swiftly establish leadership and ensure the continuity of a united ummah following the death of the Prophet.

3. Fitnah

The rationale for the repeated emphasis on adhering to obedience to the ruler lies in preventing the emergence of *fitnah*. In other words,

attempting to remove the ruler through military means is most likely to cause widespread bloodshed and upheaval. The evil and harm of removing him will be far greater than what occurs if he remains. What does *fitnah* mean in the ḥadīths in the context of obedience? Linguistically, The word *fitnah* means "to burn," referring to the process of melting gold or silver with fire to purify it.[45] This signification has extended to putting to the test, afflicting (especially as a means of testing someone's endurance), disrupting the peace of a community, tempting, seducing, alluring, or infatuating.[46] Therefore, something that causes one to enter *fitnah* signifies a trial, affliction, distress, or hardship, typically an affliction that tests some good or evil quality.[47] According to al-Jurjānī, *fitnah* is "a mechanism by which man's status (good or bad) is identified."[48] Various mundane temptations, such as money, women, offspring, sickness, health, and power, are sources of *fitnah* (tests and trials). Whatever happens to people in this life, whether good or bad, is a test (as in Qur'ān, 2:155; 21:35).[49] However, English dictionaries narrowly define *fitnah* as "a state of trouble or chaos"[50] and "rebellion, especially against a rightful ruler."[51]

Fitnah, as intimately related to anarchy, chaos, and upheaval, is strongly condemned in multiple prophetic ḥadīths. These ḥadīths, seeking to block acts leading to the *fitnah*, order Muslims to obey their corrupt rulers and maintain patience.[52] A Muslim during times of sedition and turmoil is required to extend their compliance to the community and imam.[53] Also, dire warnings and threats of excommunication are directed to those Muslims who, having committed acts of disobedience to their leader, departed from the Muslim mainstream community.[54] ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd provided counsel to those expressing grievances against their unjust governor, al-Walīd ibn ʿUqbah of the Umayyads. He advised them to exercise patience, asserting, "Enduring the injustice of an imam for fifty years is preferable to the chaos and disorder of *harj* persisting for just one month!" When queried about the definition of *harj*, Ibn Masʿūd clarified, stating, "It refers to killing and lying."[55] This advice finds validation in Islamic teachings promoting patience and endurance, while historical context supports the idea that enduring prolonged injustice may, in certain instances, offer a more stable and preferable alternative to

the chaos and devastation brought about by short-lived periods of *harj*. In the event of *fitnah*, Muslims are advised to refrain from participating in or supporting any of the conflicting parties. Instead, they should focus on managing their everyday and religious affairs.[56]

Ḥadīth scholars have compiled ḥadīths on *fitan* (the plural of *fitnah*) in a chapter titled "The Book of *al-Fitan*." This method was first used by al-Bukhārī,[57] followed by his student, Muslim al-Qushayrī,[58] as well as other ḥadīth scholars.[59] To understand the primary meaning of *fitnah* in a revolutionary context, I conducted a linguistic and statistical review of "The Book of *al-Fitan*" in the ḥadīth collections of al-Bukhārī,[60] Muslim,[61] Abū Dāwūd,[62] al-Tirmidhī,[63] and Ibn Mājah.[64] Based on the context and explanatory notes provided by scholars of ḥadīth, I examined all ḥadīths containing the term *fitnah/fitan* and discovered that *fitnah* predominantly refers to conflicts and wars among Muslim groups. Many ḥadīths closely link *fitnah* with *harj* (civil war, conflict, and mass slaughter), making both terms nearly synonymous.[65] Therefore, in ḥadīth literature, *fitnah* fundamentally means illegitimate fighting or conflict that leads to social chaos and political disorder, resulting in indiscriminate killing and bloody massacres among Muslims.[66]

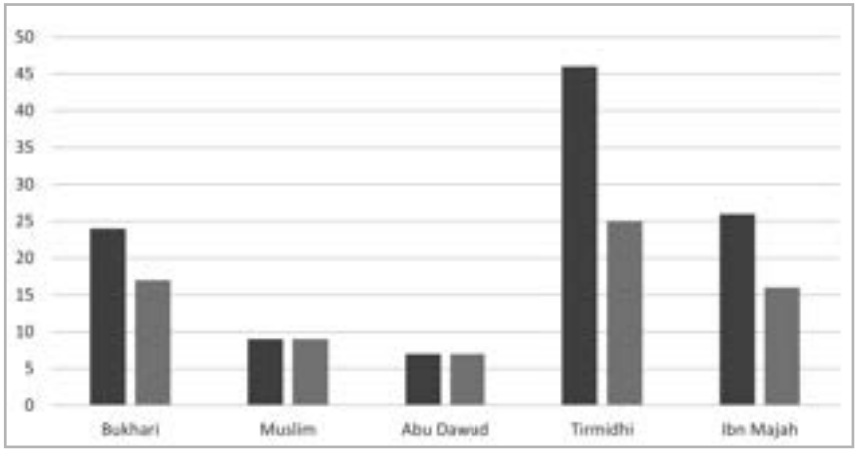

Figure 1. Percentage of chapters related to fighting in the five collections of ḥadīth

Jurists assert that Muslims must avoid engaging in *fitnah*-inducing conflicts under various circumstances: when the distinction between the right and wrong parties becomes blurred;[67] when power is illegally contested in the absence of a legitimate leader;[68] when participants are unaware of the reasons behind the conflict;[69] when unjust parties engage in warfare without credible religious justification;[70] when conflict is driven by tribalism, whims, or worldly interests;[71] and when rebellion against either a just or corrupt ruler is likely to result in greater chaos and bloodshed.[72]

The second, less common, meaning of *fitnah* relates to confusion and perplexity. During times of civil unrest and turbulence, the distinction between right and wrong becomes blurred, allowing conflicting parties to interpret *fitnah* in various ways. This inevitably leads to a state of confusion. Ḥudhayfa ibn al-Yamān, a companion of the Prophet, remarked, "*Fitnah* does not harm you as long as you gain insight into [matters] of your religion. *Fitnah* exists when the distinction between right and wrong is obscured, and you do not know which to follow; that is *fitnah*."[73] To Ḥudhayfa, *fitnah* in the context of civil war signifies a lack of knowledge of Shariah law, which breeds confusion. In another ḥadīth, the Prophet intertwines his fingers to illustrate the feeling of loss and bewilderment experienced during wartime.[74]

Regarding the connection between *fitnah* and admonishing the ruler, Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ offered a poignant critique of certain ulama who, in his view, adopted a myopic strategy that undermined the fundamental tenet of "commanding the right and forbidding the evil." This critique is particularly relevant in the context of how these ulama categorized this principle as *fitnah*, especially when armed resistance was involved.[75] They further asserted that the Sultan was beyond reproach, even when committing acts of injustice or killing innocent people.[76] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ argued that the abandonment of this crucial principle led to severe consequences: the rise of ungodly men, the dominance of enemies of Islam, the loss of fortified border cities, the spread of injustice, and the destruction of territories.[77] Al-Jaṣṣāṣ's argument underscores the dangers of a narrow interpretation that regards this principle as *fitnah* when it involves armed resistance. He was particularly concerned with

the implications of this stance, as it effectively placed the Sultan above moral and legal accountability, even when he committed grave injustices, including the killing of innocents. This critique remains relevant today as it invites a reflection on the balance between obedience to authority and the imperative to uphold justice and moral integrity.

Political tyranny should be recognized as the primary catalyst for *fitnah*, as evidenced by the recent Arab uprisings, which have naturally emerged from years of pervasive, systemic injustice, social inequality, and religious persecution perpetrated by regimes and their security forces.[78] The Syrian Islamic revivalist, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Kawākibī (d. 1902), identifies despotic tyranny as the principal cause of revolutions.[79] He advises against responding to tyranny with violence to avoid the *fitnah* that would inevitably devastate the populace.[80] Similarly, Professor Aḥmad al-Raysūnī argues that there is no *fitnah* in combating rampant corruption and injustice when peaceful measures such as advice and patience prove ineffective.[81] He asserts that removing or deposing rulers is necessary to eliminate the root cause of *fitnah*.[82]

To support his argument, al-Raysūnī cites a juristic text from the Ḥanafī school, which states that if a group of people revolts against an imam due to injustices committed by him, they are not considered rebels (*bughāh*). The imam must halt this injustice, and others should not support the imam against the wronged group, nor should they support the wronged group against the imam.[83] Additionally, al-Raysūnī, who rejects the view that popular protests constitute *fitnah*, aptly notes that the true *fitnah* arises from the actions of repressive regimes, such as killing, terrorizing, intimidating, kidnapping, arresting, and torturing. It is not appropriate, according to Shariah, to confuse matters and hold people accountable for actions they neither committed, spoke of, nor accepted. We must attribute the *fitnah* to its actual perpetrators and instigators.[84] Thus, ulama, while discussing rebellion, should recognize their dual responsibility. They need to cite ḥadīths that advocate for obedience to pacify the angry masses, while simultaneously issuing stern warnings to corrupt rulers based on the principle of commanding the right and forbidding the evil.

Obedience Contextualised

The question of obedience undeniably stands as one of the fundamental rights of the state to uphold its existence and stability. Acts of disobedience and rebellion represent significant contributors to the potential dissolution of a state. Ibn Khaldūn astutely observes that lack of obedience posed a hindrance to the establishment of well-organized societies among pre-Islamic Arabs. Their refusal to submit to each other, fueled by their rugged nature, pride, and aspirations for leadership, became a notable obstacle.[85]

Similarly, in the modern context, authority must align with the core ideas and beliefs of its community to maintain legitimacy and gain obedience. People are naturally resistant to submitting their will to others, but they will consent to be governed by an authority that upholds the principles and values they hold dear. This alignment provides the psychological and moral support necessary for their acceptance and obedience.[86] Thus, both historical and contemporary insights emphasize the importance of authority adhering to the belief systems and values of the governed to overcome the natural resistance to obedience and establish a well-organized society.

As mentioned above, the primary function of the state is to maintain the security and protection of its citizens. However, merely establishing peace and order is not sufficient; it must coexist with justice. A system organized to ensure protection, but where people are not convinced they are being treated justly, may secure obedience but never true allegiance.[87] Thus, when the authority becomes corrupt and unjust, the attitude is to uphold obedience.

In the legal context, obedience entails that Muslims, exercising patience, should refrain from initiating armed uprisings against their unjust or oppressive rulers, except in rare circumstances. The Sunnah describes the primary duty of an emir or imam who should "rule according to what Allah has revealed, and fulfil trusts. If he has done that, Muslims have to listen and obey and be responsive to him."[88]

This ruler, having fulfilled his responsibilities, can be either virtuous and morally upright, adhering to the norm of good conduct, or corrupt

and immoral. Historically speaking, leaders of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphate were able, with a position of domination, to fulfil these duties, although some of them seemed to have been despotic and unjust.[89] Also, the sultanate states,[90] which usurped power from the caliphate and were in search of legitimacy, committed themselves to the Shariah, performing jihad, suppressing intra-wars, as well as serving the community's socio-economic needs.[91]

Furthermore, obedience involves enduring patiently and refraining from staging an armed rebellion against unjust or oppressive rulers, unless they exhibit clear and definitive signs of disbelief. From a rational and realistic perspective, this form of obedience is deemed a necessary process aimed at maintaining order and stability within Muslim society, which are crucial for meeting and serving basic human needs. Consequently, enduring the ruler's despotism is considered inevitable, with obedience mandated until the opportune moment for change arises. However, when it pertains to disobeying Allah, there is no room for compromise or concession.[92]

A Contrasting Image

A point of considerable importance to note is that insightful scholars of ḥadīth have strategically placed the chapter on obedience within a broader context, integrating it with other chapters that, in contrast, present materials such as traditions and reports that, to some extent, contrast or balance the concept of obedience. These chapters encompass themes like "the rights of subjects on the ruler," "the punishment of the unjust ruler and lenient treatment of subjects," "the obligation of forbidding evil before emirs," "no obedience to a creature if it entails disobeying the Creator," "speaking the truth before the imams," and "how to advise the imams."[93]

This arrangement is deliberate, aiming to guide readers to comprehend obedience in conjunction with these related chapters, rather than in isolation. Consequently, obedience in the ḥadīth literature is contingent and contextual, involving a careful balance between the rights of the ruler and the rights of the people. The ruler is accountable to the ummah,

and when deviating from established norms, admonition and denunciation of their wrongdoing are warranted. To focus solely on obedience would be a systematic error, suggesting that Islam endorses unrestricted authority for rulers, regardless of their character, while simultaneously demanding unquestioning obedience from their subjects.

A report, narrated by ʿUbādah ibn al-Ṣāmit, encapsulates this dual responsibility. It states, "We pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah to heed and obey, whether our spirits are high or indifferent, in times of adversity or ease, and even if others are favoured over us. We would not engage in conflict against the ruler unless there is clear evidence of disbelief, supported by proof from Allah. And we speak the truth for the sake of Allah, fearing no one's reproach."[94] Moreover, absolute submission to corrupt rulers directly contradicts a well-known report attributed to the Prophet, "The best Jihad is to speak a word of truth in front of a tyrannical ruler."[95] It also stands in contrast to another narration which asserts, "The prince of martyrs are Ḥamzah ibn ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and a person who spoke the truth before a tyrant and consequently got killed."[96] Indeed, classical Islamic literature abounds with accounts of courageous scholars who confronted caliphs, admonishing them for their misdeeds.[97]

Another indication of the non-passive nature of obedience lies in the legal permissibility to engage in self-defence against acts of injustice, even when the wrongdoer is the ruler himself. This defensive action, which is far from rebellion, aligns with a ḥadīth advising Muslims to heed and follow those in authority, "even if they strike your back and confiscate your wealth."[98] The essence of this ḥadīth suggests that while obedience to unjust rulers is required, one should resist the unlawful seizure of property if capable. If this resistance leads to one's death, the individual is granted the status of a martyr, as affirmed in several traditions.[99] Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between the legitimacy of defending oneself, one's honour, and property against any aggressor or tyrant, even if that tyrant is the ruler himself, and engaging in armed rebellion against the corrupt ruler with the intention of toppling his regime. These defined boundaries on obedience to oppressive rulers tend to challenge their authority and undermine their legitimacy, ultimately providing a rationale for those governed to consider rebellion.

Losing sight of these presented facts and juristic rulings, some orientalists argued that the Muslim caliphate is of an autocratic character. For example, Thomas Arnold contended that the caliphate "placed unrestricted power in the hands of the ruler and demanded unhesitating obedience from his subjects."[100] To support his argument, Arnold provided several obedience traditions,[101] with no reference to even a single narration about the counter-obedience traditions! The same opinion was shared by William Muir,[102] and Duncan B. MacDonald.[103] As for rebellion in Islamic jurisprudence, Gibb argued that Muslim jurists adopt quietism and reject any right to rebel against an unjust imam.[104]

It is crucial to emphasize that, since the inception of the first *fitnah* among the Companions and throughout the centuries, the practical stance of numerous scholars toward corrupt political authority has extended beyond mere "obedience and patience" to encompass "opposition and resistance" as well. The disobedient position encompasses a range of approaches spanning from inwardly condemning sinful acts, remaining secluded at home, suspending public lectures, refraining from visiting the ruler's court or accepting prizes, to offering moral support to rebels,[105] or actively participating in opposition movements.[106] In both of these stances, a common thread of obedience to the Shariah is discernible. Those who choose to endure despotic rulers are, in essence, professing their obedience to Allah and His messenger, just as those who uphold the principle of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, each manifesting their commitment through various stages and methods.

What ought to be stressed in this context is that leadership or caliphate constitutes a mutual agreement between two parties: the ummah and the ruler, with the former granting legitimacy to the latter. In addition to being accountable to Allah, the ruler is equally answerable to the ummah, the rightful holders of their own rights. According to the terms of this contract, individuals have the entitlement to offer advice, pose questions, and ultimately remove the ruler if he demonstrates moral corruption and negligence in his duties.[107]

The position of rulership is regarded as a trust.[108] As the guardian of people's rights, the ruler is obligated to be trustworthy and honest,

safeguarding the rights of individuals and refraining from their violation. Upon assuming the role of caliph, Abū Bakr delivered a memorable speech, stating, "O People! I have been appointed as caliph over you, even though I am not the best among you. If I do well, help me; if not, straighten me up… Obey me as long as I obey Allah and His Messenger. If I disobey them, then no obedience is due to me."[109] The ruler does not wield authority through an unseen force or divine right; rather, he is simply ordinary individual whose legitimacy stems from the people who have elected him.

The Three-Degrees of Obedience

The preceding exploration of obedience in the Qur'ān and Sunnah reveals a nuanced understanding that encompasses three distinct types of obedience, transitioning from an idealistic perspective to a more practical, realistic approach. As mentioned above, the Qur'ān outlines specific features and conditions governing political obedience, particularly regarding *ulū al-amr*, which includes rulers and leaders. According to these guidelines, individuals in authority are deserving of obedience when they demonstrate fairness in their treatment of subjects, fulfill entrusted responsibilities faithfully, and, crucially, make decisions in alignment with the Shariah, using it as a guiding principle.

The ideal form of obedience is one that emanates from a genuine sense of love and respect for just rulers. This echoes the exemplary obedience observed in the actions of the Prophet Muhammad and the four rightly guided caliphs. In this ideal scenario, obedience is not merely a duty but a voluntary and heartfelt response to leaders who embody principles of justice, equity, and adherence to Sharia. This elevated form of obedience envisions a harmonious relationship between rulers and their subjects, grounded in mutual respect and a shared commitment to ethical governance.

Prophetic traditions, nevertheless, have gone beyond this utopian Qur'ānic concept that existed for the first three decades of early Islam and sporadically throughout history.[110] Other traditions speak of three different periods: Prophethood and the caliphate coupled with mercy, kingship

characterized by oppression, followed by powers of despotism, brutality, and open moral laxity.[111] In acknowledging the moral deterioration evident in various aspects of human life, especially within the political realm, these reports offer Muslims a pragmatic and multifaceted approach to navigate the challenges posed by incoming authorities that fall outside the narrow confines of the ideal obedience verse. While the Qur'ān slams the door of obedience in faces of morally corrupt rulers, the Sunnah adopts a more inclusive stance, addressing a spectrum of political scenarios that range from the pristine model of the caliphate to various degrees of adulterated rulership. This wide-ranging approach recognizes the complexities of political power and provides Muslims with diverse strategies and remedies to navigate the intricate landscape of governance, acknowledging the diverse forms and challenges that authority may take over time.

Upon perusing the corpus of literature about obedience ḥadīths, one discerns a nuanced delineation of the boundaries for tolerating bad rulers. These boundaries fluctuate, at times narrowing to cases of unequivocal sin and,[112] on other occasions, expanding to encompass instances of clear-cut disbelief.[113] One ḥadīth explicitly prohibits armed revolt against a ruler who continues to engage in prayer,[114] or emphasizes the sanctity of the prayer.[115] Some Muslim intellectuals interpret this tradition literally, while others perceive the exclusive mention of "prayer" as a symbolic representation of the ruler's overall commitment to the faith,[116] or a practical demonstration of his valid authority under God's law.[117]

Concerning the extent of persecution, the literature underscores that a Muslim is obligated to listen and obey even in the face of physical harm, such as having his back beaten or wealth unjustly seized.[118] This obligation persists because the perpetrators of such persecution are deemed as "people of devils' hearts in human bodies."[119] In this context, obedience is seen as a strategic response, aimed at averting anticipated harm from those wielding ruthless power. It becomes a pragmatic approach to mitigate potential harm and navigate the challenges posed by individuals in positions of authority who exhibit cruelty and oppression.

Here then, three phases of Muslim history emerge:[120] The first phase, represented by the Rightly-Guided Caliphate, and comprising the

leadership of Abū Bakr, ʿUmar, Uthmān, and ʿAlī, (631-661), is regarded as the epitome of Islamic governance and ethical rule. This era, immediately following the demise of the Prophet Muhammad, is commended for its adherence to the principles and teachings of Islam as outlined by the Prophet himself. The Rightly-Guided Caliphs, or "al-Khulafā' al-Rāshidūn," exemplified the values of justice, piety, and humility in their governance, striving to emulate the Prophet's example in both their personal and administrative conduct. Their rule is characterized by the establishment of a just and equitable society, the promotion of communal welfare, and the implementation of the Shariah in a manner that balanced mercy with justice. The Prophet explicitly advised Muslims to follow the path of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, highlighting their role as paragons of Islamic leadership and moral rectitude.[121]

The second phase, spanning from the end of the Rightly-Guided Caliphate until the dissolution of the Caliphate in 1924, witnessed Islam serving as a moral, legal, social, and political anchor for Muslim societies worldwide.[122] Despite ethical and cultural distinctions between the Rightly-Guided Caliphate and subsequent Sultanate States, a thread of continuity existed in their adherence to the Islamic legacy and tradition. Whether the rulers were pious or corrupt, and even in cases of usurpation, Islam retained its status as a comprehensive way of life. Various caliphs and sultans, to differing extents, sought to implement some or all the three defining characteristics of *ulū al-amr*. Importantly, none of them endeavoured to challenge or dismantle the Islamic governance of the state. As John Esposito put it, "Thus, for the believer, there was a continuum of Muslim power and success which, despite the vicissitudes and contradictions of Muslim life, validated and reinforced the sense of a divinely mandated and guided community with purpose and mission."[123] For reasons of necessity and for the seamless functioning of daily life, Muslim subjects were compelled to adhere to the commands of unjust or impious rulers during this period.

The third phase began with Ataturk's abolition of the caliphate in 1924 and the implementation of his secular policies, leading to the removal of Islam as the overarching framework.[124] This shift marked a significant transition, plunging the Muslim World into a period

characterized by disbelief.[125] The impact of this sacrilegious decision was further accentuated during the Western colonial era, which brought about profound transformations across various domains—social, political, educational, cultural, ethical, and religious. In the modern-state era, many Arab leaders replaced an Islamic identity with secular, communist, and nationalistic ideologies. Despite these changes, they often invoked Islam, incorporating religious tones into their messages to maintain legitimacy and ensure stability.[126]

Worse, these rulers have engaged in a range of religious, social, and ethical transgressions. While some openly exhibit disbelief through their ideas or actions,[127] others seem to function as proxies for foreign powers, notably the State of Israel.[128] Their actions include the plundering of natural resources, the promotion of policies fostering bribery, poverty, and obscurantism, among other offenses. Additionally, they actively work to suppress an Islamic awakening using both overt and covert means. The majority of these rulers have seized power through force,[129] and strive to maintain their positions through electoral fraud, with virtually no red lines left to be crossed.

Certainly, the scale of criminality exhibited by this group of people can in no way be equated to the injustices committed by earlier Muslim leaders during the first phase. Bearing this in mind, certain contemporary Muslim intellectuals like Rāshid al-Ghannūshī,[130] ʿAbd Allāh al-Nafīsī,[131] Ibrāhīm Zayn,[132] Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Mīsāwī[133] and Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī[134] contend that obedience should not be rendered to these leaders. According to al-Ghannūshī, they are dictators, morally corrupt, servants of the enemies of Islam, and bloodthirsty. As al-Ghannūshī put it, "Had they been our *ulū al-amr*, we would have obeyed them."[135] Then he aptly notes that, contrary to contemporary presidents and kings, earlier rulers—although deviant—were respecting Islamic teachings and recognizing Islamic law as a general framework.[136] In contrast, a significant portion of traditional scholars considers the term 'ruler' and its implications to be applicable universally to all figures of authority, spanning from the early days of Islam to the contemporary era. They often cite the Qur'ān (specifically, the obedience verse) and the Sunnah (encompassing the traditions of obedience) as supporting grounds for compliance with the ruler.

Consequently, I have two key points to emphasize here**.** Firstly, it is valid to assert that the bulk of current leaders should be excluded from the *ulū al-amr* category, as advocated by al-Ghannūshī and his associates. *Ulū al-amr* represents a superior Qur'ānic designation granted to those who embody essential human moral values such as justice, trust, and dignity, while adhering to the Shariah as their guiding framework. The concept of *ulū al-amr*, integral to genuine Islamic political authority, is grounded in principles of justice, equality, freedom, coexistence, trust, and civilizational advancement. The era of the Prophet and the four caliphs, along with certain subsequent cases, epitomizes the essence of *ulū al-amr*. However, the historical political trajectory of Muslims has given rise to various forms of authority that do not fall within the *ulū al-amr* category. These include leaders marked by tyranny, corruption, despotism, usurpation, secularism, nationalism, or communism. Their proximity to the ideal varies; rulers from the early phase are closer to *ulū al-amr*, while leaders in our current phase remain more distant.

Secondly, I contend that a minimal amount of obedience needs to be considered to contemporary rulers. The Sunnah, as mentioned above, treats rulers' despotism from a broader and realistic perspective. This perspective encompasses rulers from the second phase and extends the possibility of applying it to those in the third phase as well. It becomes challenging to demonstrate that the extensive body of obedience ḥadīths, highlighting common attributes of corrupt rulership, should exclusively pertain to leaders from the first phase. After examining numerous relevant ḥadīths, I did not come across distinctive qualities that are applicable to a specific category of rulers or authorities, nor did I find indications that these qualities are associated with a particular historical period over another.[137] Ibn Taymiyyah emphasizes the absolute nature of the obedience ḥadīths, as they do not pertain to a "specific sultan, nor a specific commander, nor a particular group."[138]

The insistence on obedience, as repeatedly stressed, stems from a rational and pragmatic standpoint, grounded in the imperative of maintaining order and stability. These, in turn, are crucial for the pursuit and fulfilment of fundamental human needs. Refusing to comply with

the legitimate and socially sanctioned directives of corrupt leaders is viewed, from this perspective, as a potential precursor to rebellion and insurgency, thereby heightening the ominous possibility of civil conflict. This type of obedience arises not out of affection or respect but is borne of an extreme emergency,[139] akin to obeying someone who holds a gun to your head. This aligns with the concept of *al-luṣūṣ al-mutaghallibah* (the dominant thieves), a term coined by al-Zamakhsharī, aptly characterizing obedience enforced under coercive circumstances. [140]

Oppression vs Sedition

In his exploration of the transition from chaos to the establishment of a state, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes highlights the inclination of people towards order following a period of disorder. He recounts a historical practice in ancient Persia, where, upon the death of a king, the populace was left without a ruler and law for five days, allowing chaos to unfold throughout the country. The intention behind this was that, at the conclusion of these five days, with looting, plundering, rape, and killing reaching their peaks, those who survived the intense chaos would develop a genuine allegiance to the new king.[141]

This ordeal laying bare the dreadful consequences of a society lacking political authority is echoed in a statement attributed to the Companion ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ that reads, "An oppressive ruler is better than ceaseless sedition."[142] This maxim, inspired by Prophetic reports,[143] presents a dilemma with only two choices: enduring the presence of an unjust ruler (an undesirable option) or engaging in rebellion against them, which brings about significant disorder and dire outcomes (also an undesirable option). Should one exercise patience and endure the injustices of the ruler, or should rebellion be pursued, potentially leading to a dystopian nightmare? There is no doubt that "the lesser of the two evils" approach should be taken. Ibn Taymiyyah aptly notes that wisdom lies not in merely distinguishing between good and evil, but in recognizing the preferable option among two goods and the less detrimental choice between two evils.[144] A perceptive doctor initiates treatment by addressing the most critical illnesses.[145]

Historically, Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī meticulously documented a multitude of rebellions occurring within the first two centuries of Islam, all led by individuals with ancestral ties to the Prophet.[146] Ibn Khaldūn likewise identified instances where impassioned revolutionaries and religious jurists, driven by a fervor to rectify perceived wrongs, mobilized tribal support for revolts against oppressive emirs. Underestimating or ignoring the significance of *ʿaṣabiyyah* (group solidarity), they ended up either defeated or killed together with their followers and sympathizers.[147] These scholarly perspectives serve as valuable evidence elucidating the historical ineffectiveness and peril associated with many armed revolts in Muslim history. Such revolts, as overlooking the socio-political dynamics and tribal allegiances integral to their success, often resulted in adverse outcomes and fatal consequences.

More importantly, Rāshid al-Ghannūshī, the prominent Islamic thinker, contends that prior to initiating military measures against corrupt governments, revolutionary Islamist movements should possess a thorough understanding of the social and political consequences and assess whether the conditions are conducive to change.[148] This awareness is best articulated through fundamental inquiries: To what extent are people prepared to make sacrifices and actively participate in the rebellion? To what degree have they lost confidence in the ruler? What is the level of their response to the movement's alternative vision? Are living standards significantly low? Does the geographical positioning of the country offer protection to the revolutionaries? Are there social forces (tribes, sects, political parties, unions, etc.) likely to join the revolution? What is the probability of foreign military intervention in support of the existing regime? Are there regional or international forces that might form an alliance with the movement?[149]

Al-Ghannūshī further underscores the importance of the principle of commanding what is right and forbidding what is evil, and how to expand its basic form (i.e., speaking out against an unjust ruler) to more elaborate expressions such as protest petitions, demonstrations, general strikes, boycotting corrupt institutions, tax resistance, and the like.[150] This realistic view, however, does not completely dismiss the notion of rebellion. If there is a certainty that rebellion against an unjust leader could

potentially succeed when taking into account socio-political-military considerations, then it is not only permissible but even obligatory, as emphasized by distinguished jurists such al-Ḥulaymī,[151] and al-Dāwūdī.[152]

Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion and analysis, obedience to *ulū al-amr* in the Qur'ānic perception has to be understood in the context of justice, fulfilling trusts, in addition to admitting sovereignty as belonging to Allah alone, and implementing the guidance of His Messenger. Moreover, the common identity of *ulū al-amr* is best embodied in a joint effort of the three powers: legislation, law enforcement, and adjudication. Rulers are expected to consult ulama or muftis about the legal status of various issues. The latter, in turn, obey legitimate commands of the former and help them implement Shariah rules. Judicial power, on the other hand, joins forces with the other two powers for the benefit of the ummah. Viewed as a single entity, *ulū al-amr* decidedly banishes autocratic power as well as other systems of political tyranny.

The concept of obedience is conditional and contextual, delineating the balance between the rights of the ruler and the rights of the people. The ruler is accountable to the ummah, and the principle of commanding the right and forbidding the evil grants the ummah the right to question the ruler's actions. This dynamic interplay underscores the nuanced nature of obedience in the socio-political framework. And the emphasized connection between the community and the political authority underscores the concept of mutual interdependence. This interdependence signifies a reciprocal relationship in which the well-being and effectiveness of each entity are closely tied to the other.

The research findings highlight a three-tiered classification of obedience: normative obedience, driven by love and respect for just rulers; obedience of necessity, applicable to corrupt rulers during the first phase of Muslim history, spanning from Islam's inception until the caliphate's dissolution in 1924, and emergency obedience to leaders in the contemporary era. Despite the different ethical character of rulers of this time, virtuous or corrupt, and even in instances of usurpation, Islam

maintained its position as an all-encompassing way of life. Different caliphs and sultans, to varying degrees, endeavoured to embody some or all of the three defining characteristics of *ulū al-amr*. The second phase, characterized by the abolishment of the caliphate and the rise of secular policies, witnessed the removal of Islam as the reference point in Muslim societies. It goes without saying that enormity of the criminal and unethical conduct exhibited by these leaders stands incomparable to the injustices committed by their predecessors in the earlier periods of Muslim leadership. From a pragmatic and functional perspective, the necessity of maintaining order, stability, and preventing societal discord becomes imperative for upholding elevated moral principles. Therefore, if there is a prevailing concern that rebellion might jeopardize these fundamentals, then the status quo, though repugnant, should be maintained.

Endnotes

1 Thomas Pierret "The Role of the Mosque in the Syrian Revolution," *Near East Quarterly* 7, (2012): 1-5. On the role of the mosque in politics, see Akbar S. Ahmad, "The Mosque in Politics" in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, edited by John Esposito. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 3: 140-143.

2 Thomas Pierret, *Religion and State in Syria.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 216-234; Jawad Qureshi, "The Discourses of the Damascene Sunni Ulama During the 2011 Revolution," *St. Andrews Papers on Contemporary Syria* 4, no. 1 (2012): 59-91.

3 See these reports in Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl, Jāmiʿ fi Aḥādīth al-Rasūl.* (Damascus: Maktabat al-Ḥalwānī, 1969), 4: 61-72; al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Miṣriyyah, 1930), 12: 222; Khaled Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence in Islamic Law.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 112-118.

4 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-62.

5 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 64-65; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id.* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1994), 5: 220. E.g., "Listen and obey even if your back is beaten and your wealth is taken." Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

6 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 64-65; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 220.

7 Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 113.

8 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 78.

9 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī.* (Riyadh, 1421 AH), 13: 8-10; Muhammad Khayr Haykal, *Al-Jihād wa al-Qitāl fī al-Siyāsah al-Sharʿiyyah.* (Beirut: Dār al-Bayāriq, 1996), 1: 122.

10 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 69-70; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 219.

11 Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (America: Anchor Books, 1980), 63.

12 Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920), 1253 a, p. 28.

13 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ.* (Beirut: Maktabat al-Hilāl, 2002), 3: 99.

14 Ibn Abī al-Rabīʿ, *Sulūk al-Mālik fī Tadbīr al-Mamālik.* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1983), 175.

15 Al-Fārābī, *Ārā' ahl al-Madīnah.* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1985), 117.

16 Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa-al-Tanbīhāt.* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, n.d.), 4: 60-61.

17 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah.* (Tunisia: Dār al-Qayrawān, 2006), 1:69-71.

18 Ibid., 1: 71. For further analysis on security and protection as the original function of the state, see Lesile Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics: An Introduction to Political Science.* (8th ed.). (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1989), 47-50.

19 ʿAbd Allāh Nāṣīf, *Al-Sulṭah al-Siyāsiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Nahḍah, 1983), 4.

20 Abū al-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr.* (Cairo: Maktabat Ibn Taymiyyah, 1983), 10:1620163; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-*Zawā'id, 5: 222.

21 Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Shuʿab al-Īmān.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), 10:15.

22 Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, and Aḥmad. See al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-Awṭār.* (Lebanon: Bayt al-Afkār, 2004), 1699.

23 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah.* (Kuwait: Dār Ibn Qutaybah, 1989), 3.

24 On the necessity of setting up a caliphate, see a detailed explanation and several quotes of leading jurists in Muḥammad al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah al-Islāmiyyah.* (7th ed.). (Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, 1976), 128-143.

25 All the Qur'ānic quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an.* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

26 Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2003), 7: 176-182; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2006), 6: 423-433; Ibn al-Qayyim, *I'lām al-Muwaqqiʿīn ʿan Rabb al-ʿĀlamīn.* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn al-Jawzī, 1423 AH), 2:15-16; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr fī al-Tafsīr bi-al-Ma'thūr.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 2003), 4: 504-506; Hānī al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah fī al-Fikr al-Islāmī.* (Virginia: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2014), 112-114.

27 This is Abū Ḥayyān's preference, who puts an emphasis on the legitimate leadership. *Tafsīr al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ.* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth, 2002), 3: 396; and Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa-al-Tanwīr.* (Tunisia: Dār Suḥnūn, 1997), 5: 98; also Muḥammad ʿAbduh, who associates *ulū al-amr* with *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-ʿaqd* (emirs, rulers, ulama, military commanders, leaders and so on). Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *Tafsīr al-Manār.* (Cairo: al-Manār, 1328 AH), 5: 181. Cf. Sayf al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Ismāʿīl, *Al-Naẓariyyah al-Siyāsiyyah min Manẓūr Ḥaḍārī Islāmī.* (Amman: The Academic Centre for Political Studies, 2002), 325.

28 Al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr.* (4th ed.). (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2007), 308.

29 Quoted in al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 112.

30 *Ulū al-amr* always comes in the plural form. It has no singular that is derived from the same root. Majd al-Dīn al-Fayrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ.* (8th ed.). (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 2005), 1349; al-Zabīdī, *Tāj al-ʿArūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmūs.* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshād, 1965-2001), 40: 379; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 432.

31 It is important to understand the circumstances that accounted for the revelation of the verse. This contextual information broadens readers' horizon in terms of specifying general words, placing limitation to the absolute, and, more importantly, pinpointing the exact meaning of the verse. The incident that brought about the revelation of obedience verse serves a practical example of how, when differences of understanding

among leaders and their followers occur, the case should be referred to the guidance of the Qur'ān and Sunnah. In one of the battles, the emir who has a sense of humor was trying to test the obedience of his soldiers. So, he asked them to collect pieces of firewood and set fire to them. Then, when done, he ordered the soldiers to throw themselves on the fire claiming that his command must be obeyed, according to the Prophet's instruction. After moments of reluctance combined with a dispute, the soldiers decided to disobey the emir and consult the Prophet instead. Later, the Prophet answered, "If you had entered the fire, you would not have got out of it, for obedience is only in that which is (legally) valid and reasonable." The incident is stated in al-Suyūṭī, *Lubāb al-Nuqūl fī Asbāb al-Nuzūl.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Kutub al-Thaqāfiyyah, 2002), 80-81; al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl.* (Al-Dammām: Dār al-Iṣlāḥ, 1992), 159. It is also in al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ.* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Salafiyyah, 1400 AH), 3: 160; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim.* (Cairo: al-Maṭbaʿah al-Miṣriyyah, 1930), 12: 223, and other ḥadīth collections, as well as most of the available books of *tafsīr*, like al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 430-431; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 502. Cf. al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 189-192. There is another incident that caused the revelation of the verse. Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 502-503. Yet, according to the rules of the science of ḥadīth, it is rejected for several methodological flaws. See al-Wāḥidī, *Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 159-160 (editor's footnote). In the light of the story, the verse directs that when a dispute arises among the ruler and the ruled, a referral is to be passed to Allah and His messenger. As a result, obedience to *ulū al-amr* "applies to that which is known of God's law, that which is not covered by a statement of prohibition and that which is not subject to prohibition when referred to God's law." Sayyid Quṭb, *In the Shade of the Qur'an.* Translated into English by ʿĀdil Ṣalāḥī. (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation. 2004), 3:166.

32 The jurist Ibn al-Qayyim, quoting the obedience verse, puts the question of obedience in a new fashion. He argues that the duty to obey the ruler is derived from the duty to obey jurists, and the duty to obey the jurists is derived from the duty to obey the Prophet. Therefore, the jurists are obeyed to the extent that they obey the Prophet, and the rulers are obeyed to the extent that they obey the jurists. Ultimately, the jurists are the ones who must be obeyed, as they are the experts on the religious law. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Iʿlām al-Muwaqqiʿīn*, 2:16. Cf. Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and* Violence, 130-131.

33 "God commands you [people] to return things entrusted to you to their rightful owners, and, if you judge between people, to do so with justice: God's instructions to you are excellent, for He hears and sees everything" (Al-Nisā': 58).

34 Features of *ulū al-amr* are clearly highlighted in Qur'ānic exegeses, such as Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf ʿan Ḥaqā'iq al-Tanzīl.* (3rd ed.). (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 2009), 242; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmiʿ li-Aḥkām*, 6: 423, 428-430; al-Shawkānī, *Fatḥ al-Qadīr*, 308; Muḥammad Abū al-Suʿūd, *Irshād al-ʿAql al-Salīm.* (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 2: 193; and Ibn ʿĀshūr, *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr*, 5: 96.

35 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 242. Abū al-Suʿūd, 2: 193. For other similar commentators' statements excluding corrupt rulers from *ulū al-amr*, see al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 112-114.

36 Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Ǧāmiʿ*, 10: 15; Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 14: 305.

37 See Shāṭibī, *al-Iʿtiṣām.* (Amman: Dār al-Athariyyah, 2008), 3: 294-311; Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 37. Al-Shāṭibī identifies the imam of *al-jamāʿah* as one who is dedicated to adhering to the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. *Al-Iʿtiṣām*, 3: 311.

38 Ismāʿīl Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah wa-al-Nihāyah.* (Cairo: Dār Hajar, 1998), 11:148.

39 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 242.

40 See al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Jamāʿah wa-al-Dawlah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 3 (1989): 55; 66-67.

41 Al-Jāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il...*, 3: 99. Cf. al-Māwardī, *Adab al-Dunyā wa-al-Dīn.* (Beirut: Dār Iqra', 1985), 149.

42 Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), 1, 6.

43 See these traditions in al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5:215-225; Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥulaymī, *Al-Minhāj fī Sshuʿab al-Imān.* (Riyadh: Maktabat al-Rushd, 2003), 3:179.

44 Abū Jaʿfar al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī.* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1962), 3:207.

45 Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), 6: 2334; L. Gardet, "FITNA," in C. E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs, G. Lecomte (eds.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: Brill, new ed., 1986- 2004), 2: 930-931.

46 Elsaid M. Badawi and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, Arabic-English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 692. The *fitnah* in the Qur'ān has twelve meanings. Majid al-Dīn al-Fayrūzabādī, *Basā'ir Dhawī al-Tamyīz* (Cairo: Al-Majlis al-Aʿlā li al-Shu'ūn al-Islamiyyah, 1992), 4: 166-169.

47 Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, 6: 2334.

48 Al-Jurjānī, *Al-Taʿrīfāt* (Cairo: Dār al-Fadīlah, 2004), 138.

49 Ibrāhīm Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna bayn al-Muslimīn* (Damascus: al-Nawādir, 2012), 42-46.

50 http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/fitna.

51 http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/fitna.

52 Al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 222; Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-72; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 112-118.

53 Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10, 45.

54 Ibid., 4: 69-70; al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 5: 219.

55 Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10: 162-163.

56 Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10, 3-101.

57 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327.

58 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2207-2271.

59 Al-Haythamī, *Majmaʿ al-Zawā'id*, 7: 220-350.

60 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327.

61 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2207-2271.

62 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan Abū Dāwūd* (Jeddah: Dār al-Qiblah, 1998), 5: 5-28.

63 Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah al- ʿĀlamiyyah, 2002), 4: 233-318.

64 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Cairo: al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 1295-1371. Note that the Book of al-Sunan by al-Nasā'ī is excluded because it lacks a chapter on *al-Fitan* and does not reference ḥadīths concerning *fitnah* and sedition.

65 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4: 312-327; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2207-2271.

66 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatiḥ al-Bārī*, 13, 34; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146.

67 Ibid.

68 Haykal, *Al-Jihad*,1: 146-147; Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 203.

69 Ibid.

70 Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146; Kāmil Rabbāʿ, *Naẓariyyat al-Khurūj fī al-Fiqh al-Siyāsī al-Islamī* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 2004), 194.

71 Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Turāth, 1992), 5: 282; Jamāl Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj ʿalā al-Ḥākim fī al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islamī* (Cairo: Markaz al-Ḥadārah al-ʿArabiyyah, 2004), 62; Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 207; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 146.

72 Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj*, 62.

73 Salqīnī, *Qitāl al-Fitna*, 114; cf. Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 35.

74 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 5: 12; Ibn Abū Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf*, 21: 29.

75 Al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, 2: 320.

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid.

78 James Gelvin, *The Arab Uprisings: What Everyone Needs to Know* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 4-7, 25-27.

79 Al-Kawākibī, *Ṭabā'iʿ al-ʿIstibdād* (Cairo: Kalimāt ʿArabiyya, 2011), 118.

80 Ibid.

81 Al-Raysūnī, *Fiqh al-Thawrah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kalimah, 2013), 39.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid., 38. See more similar citations in al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭāʿah al-Siyāsiyyah*, 255-257.

84 Al-Raysūnī, *Fiqh al-Thawrah,* 44.

85 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 263. For details on the significance of political obedience to authority, see al-Mughallis, *Al-Ṭā'ah al-Siyāsiyyah,* 36-40.

86 Ṣubḥī Sa'īd, *Al-Ḥākim wa-Uṣūl al-Ḥukm fī al-Nizām al-Islami*, (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1985), 188.

87 Lipson, *The Great Issues of Politics*, 55.

88 Narrated by 'Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib. Ibn Abī Shaybah, *Al-Muṣannaf,* 11: 244; al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām*, 6: 429; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Durr al-Manthūr*, 4: 501.

89 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah.* (Riyadh: Imam Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd Islamic University), 1: 547.

90 On the nature of the sultanate states and their social system, see al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Kharāj wa-al-Iqṭā' wa-al-Dawlah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 1 (1988): 152-174. On discussion about their legal status and the political realism of Islamic law, see al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 44; al-Faḍl Shalaq, "al-Faqīh wa-al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah: Dirāsah fī Kutub al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 3 (1989): 15-101. See also Riḍwān al-Sayyid, "Ru'yat al-khilāfah wa Bunyat al-Dawlah fī al-Islām," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 13 (1991): 39-45; and Ibrāhīm Bayḍūn, "al-Mamālīk wa Ma'ziq al-Shar'iyyah," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 22 (1994): 39-55; Omid Safi, *The Politics of Knowledge in Premodern Islam: Negotiating Ideology and Religious Inquiry.* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

91 Shalaq, "al-Jamā'ah wa al-Dawlah," 71-80.

92 Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad.* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993-2001), 1:333; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 358-359. Other similar traditions are in Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 8:416; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5: 225-229.

93 See, for example, Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 211-230; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī.* (Beirut: Dār al-Risālah, 2002), 3: 500-503; al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan al-Nasā'ī.* (Amman: Bayt al-Afkār al-Dawliyyah, n.d.), 437-442; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan Ibn Mājah.* (Cairo: Bābī al-Ḥalabī, n.d.), 954-955; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5:207-231; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Jāmi'*, 9: 459; 10: 82; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān.* (Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1993), 10: 411-431.

94 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253.

95 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 31: 125; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 1: 333.

96 Muḥammad al-Ḥākim, *Al-Mustadrak.* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1997), 3: 234.

97 See examples in al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 355-358.

98 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 238; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

99 Abū Farḥah, *Al-Khurūj,* 31.

100 Thomas Arnold, *The Caliphate.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), 47.

101 Ibid., 48-50.

102 William Muir, *The Caliphate*. (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1915), 600.

103 Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence, and Constitutional Theory*. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903), 58.

104 Quoted in Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 12.

105 Abū Ḥanīfah, the renowned jurist, sanctions rebellion against corrupt rulers, asserting the obligation to engage in "commanding the right and forbidding the evil" through verbal counsel and warnings. If these measures prove ineffective, the use of force becomes justified. It is reported that Abū Ḥanīfah encouraged the rebellions against the Umayyads by Zayd ibn ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn, in the year 122 AH and, later, against the Abbasids by Muḥammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyyah, in the year 143 AH. For legal and historical details on Abū Ḥanīfah's opinion, see Abū Bakr al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām al-Qur'ān,* 1:86-89; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Tārīkh Baghdād.* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī), 13:384-386; Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, *Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-ʿArabī, n.d.), 348-349.

106 See Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 68-99; Haykal, *Al-Jihād*, 1: 122; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 352-353; Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī, *Al-Ḥurriyyah aw al-Ṭūfān.* (2nd ed.). (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-ʿArabiyyah li-al-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 2008), 141-161; Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the Early ʿAbbāsids: The Emergence of the Proto-Sunnī Elite.* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 70-81; ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Badrī, *al-Islām bayna al-ʿUlamā' wa-al-Ḥukkām.* (Saudi Arabia: al-Maktabah al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1965).

107 See al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 216-219, 338-342. He quotes leading jurists and theologians who agree that the ruler never has privileges elevating him above the law or enjoys immunity from being brought to justice. Cf. Muḥammad Salīm al-ʿAwwā, *Fī al-Niẓām al-Siyāsī li-al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah.* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2006), 226-227; al-Muṭayrī, *al-Ḥūriyyah aw al-Tūfān*, 21-26; Muḥammad Ra'fat ʿUthmān, *Riyāsat al-Dawlah fī al-Fiqh al-Islāmī.* (Dubai: Dār al-Qalam, 1986), 435-438; Fatḥī al-Duraynī, *Khaṣā'iṣ al-Tashrīʿ al-Islāmī fī al-Siyāsah wa al-Ḥukm.* (Damascus: Mu'assasat al-Risālah, 1987), 183, 344; Ḥasan al-Turābī, *al-Siyāysah wa-al-ḥukm.* (Beirut: Arab Scientific Publishers, 2011), 97-120; ʿAlī Ḥasanīn, *Riqābat al-Ummah ʿalā al-Ḥākim.* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1988).

108 The Qur'ān, al-Nisā': 58.

109 Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāyah al-Bidāyah wa*, 9: 415.

110 It says, "The caliphate is thirty years, then followed by kingship." Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 36: 248. Cf. another tradition, 30: 356. On the difference between the caliphate and kingship, see Muḥammad ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb al-Tabaqāt al-Kabīr.* (Cairo: al-Khānjī, 2001), 3:285; Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 332-334; Abū al-Aʿlā al-Mawdūdī, *al-Khilāfah wa al-Mulk*, translated into Arabic by Aḥmad Idrīs. (Kuwait: Dār al-Qalam, 1978).

111 Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Al-Musnad*. (2nd ed.). (Damascus: Dār al-Ma'mūn, 1990), 2: 177-178.

112 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 10; Haykal, *Al-Jihad*, 1: 122.

113 Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmiʿ al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:313; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 253.

114 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4: 68.

115 Ibid., 4: 66.

116 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-ʿAmmah fī al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah*. (Beirut: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-ʿArabiyyah, 1993), 183.

117 Al-Nafīsī, *ʿIndamā Yaḥkum al-Islām*. (Kuwait: Āfāq, 2013), 162.

118 Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 238; Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 10: 45.

119 Ibid.

120 The primary objective of this distinction is to underscore the pivotal shift in the role of Islam in state governance and legal frameworks, rather than to imply a static or unchanging nature within the Islamic historical context. This periodization aims to draw attention to the transition from an era where Islam was the unifying and guiding force in governance to an era where secular ideologies took precedence, fundamentally changing the socio-political dynamics of Muslim societies.

121 Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 1: 278.

122 The Prophet described this phase as a period of kingship that follows the thirty-year Caliphate. Ibn Ḥanbal, *Al-Musnad*, 36: 248. This era of kingship was associated with oppression and despotism. See Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Al-Musnad*, 2: 177-178.

123 John Esposito, *Islam and Politics*. (4th ed.). (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 28.

124 The dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate precipitated a profound and extensive transformation in the perception and dynamics of the Arab and Islamic realms. The subsequent developments and occurrences in these regions during the initial decades of the twentieth century were significantly shaped by this event. The geo-political landscape of the Islamic world underwent fragmentation and dispersal, with European powers assuming predominant roles in shaping political alignments and affairs. On the collapse crisis and different responses of thinkers of the Arab and Muslim world, see Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought*. (Kuala Lumpur, Islamic Book Trust, 2001), 78-103; Muḥammad. M. Ḥusayn, *al-Ittijāhāt al-waṭaniyyah fī al-ʿadad al-muʿāṣir*. (3rd ed.). (Cairo: Maktabat al-ʿĀdāb, 1980), 2: 5-93; Zakī al-Mīlād, "Ṣadmat zawāl al-khilāfah al-ʿUthmāniyyah fī al-fikr al-Islāmī fī al-ʿishrīnāt," *al-Ijtihād*, no. 45-46 (2000): 275-294.

125 Haykal, *Al-Jihād*, 1: 138-139.

126 Sonia Alianak's book *Middle Eastern Leaders and Islam: A Precarious Equilibrium*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007) provides examples of Arab leaders using

Islam for expediency, including King Hussein of Jordan, the Saudi Royal family, Saddam Hussein, Hafez al-Assad, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat, and Hosni Mubarak. John Esposito's *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) discusses Muammar Qaddafi and Jaafar Nimeiri's manipulation of religion. For Tunisian leaders, see Kenneth Perkins' essay in *The Making of the Tunisian Revolution* (2013). On how Saudi Arabia and Iran use Islam in foreign policy, see Peter Mandaville and Shadi Hamid, "Islam as Statecraft: How Governments Use Religion in Foreign Policy" *Foreign Policy at Brookings*, November 2018.

127 Like Qaddafi, who argued that the word "*qul*" (say) at the beginning of the chapter of al-Ikhlās and other verses was unnecessary and advocated for its removal. Similarly, Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's first President from 1957 to 1987, actively sought to undermine Islamic pillars and ridicule Islamic norms and principles. See Muḥammad al-Zamzamī, *Al-Islām al-Ǧarīḥ fī Tūnis*; al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah wa Mas'alat al-Taghyīr*. (London: al-Markaz al-Maghāribī, 2000I), 40-41.

128 According to a number of recent media releases, notably from Israeli leaders, and commentators, the Syrian regime seemed to have been involved in a robust relation with Israel, and the destiny of the latter heavily depends on the necessary survival of the former. See evidence at "*Al-Ittijāh al-Mu'ākis*." (January 1, 2016). Al Jazeera. Retrieved February 8, 2016. *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XXcp3sNFPks*. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S2McfT4Gbvw.

129 From a realistic point of view, the majority of jurists recognized the legitimacy of the usurper who came to power by force rather than through a proper contract. See Haykal, *Al-Ǧihād*, 1: 165-202; *al-Mawsū'ah al-Fiqhiyyah al-Kuwaytiyyah*, "al-Imāmah al-kubrā." 6: 224-225; Abou El Fadl, *Rebellion and Violence*, 13, 158; al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 353-355.

130 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-'Ammah fī al-Dawlah*, 183.

131 Al-Nafīsī, *'Indamā Yaḥkum al-Islām*, 161-163.

132 Ibrāhīm Zayn, the Dean of Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, IIUM, interview by the author, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia. June 17, 2016.

133 Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Mīsāwī, Associate Professor, Department of Fiqh and Usul al-Fiqh, IIUM, interview by the author, Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia. January 27, 2017.

134 Ḥākim al-Muṭayrī, *Al-Ḥurriyyah aw al-Tūfān*, 315-316.

135 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥurriyyāt al-'Ammah fī al-Dawlah*, 183.

136 Ibid.

137 See these reports in al-Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 12: 222; Ibn al-Athīr, *Ǧāmi' al-Uṣūl*, 4: 61-72; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Ǧāmi'*, 10: 5-30; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, 5:216-225.

138 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 1: 556.

139 A tradition describes the relationship between evil-doing rulers and their subjects as that which is based on mutual hatred and curse. When the Prophet was asked whether this tense atmosphere allows rising against those rulers, he answered, "No, as long as the prayer is maintained." Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmiʿ al-Uṣūl*, 4:66.

140 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 242.

141 Imam ʿAbd al-Fattah Imam, *Thomas Hobbes*, (Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 1985), 330.

142 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1997), 36: 184. See a similar statement by ʿAbd Allāh ibn Masʿūd in al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10: 162-163. It is also reported that "A period of sixty years of a tyrant ruler is better than one night without a sultan." These reports hint to the fact that peoples' various affairs are best run under the state authority headed by the ruler and that order and stability are normally ensured by the existence of the ruler or leader, whether just or not. See al-Rayyis, *Al-Naẓariyyāt al-Siyāsiyyah*, 135-137; al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sulṭāniyyah*, 3.

143 The Prophet is quoted as saying, "The corrupt emirate is better than *harj*." When asked about the meaning of *harj*, the Prophet replied, "Killing and lying." Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-Muʿjam al-Kabīr*, 10:162-163.

144 Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmūʿ Fatāwā ibn Taymiyyah*. (al-Manṣūrah, Dār al-Wafā', 2005), 20: 54.

145 Ibid.

146 Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*. (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʿAṣriyyah, 1990), 1: 150-176.

147 Ibn Khaldūn, *Al-Muqaddimah*, 1: 277-282. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah criticized early rebellions that, despite noble intentions, proved misguided and led to detrimental outcomes. See his book *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, 4: 527-530.

148 Al-Ghannūshī, *Al-Ḥarakah al-Islāmiyyah*, 80.

149 Ibid., 80-81.

150 Ibid., 108.

151 Al-Ḥulaymī, *Al-Minhāj*, 9: 184.

152 Al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, 13: 8.