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NATION-STATE AND SOVEREIGNTY IN CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DISCOURSE: SYED ABUL ALA MAWDUDI'S CONCEPT OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Junaid Amjad[*]

Abstract: Sovereignty has had fundamental importance in modern political discourse. Politically, the term indicates "absolute overlordship or complete suzerainty." Sovereignty is associated with the rise of the modern system of sovereign states, usually dated to the Westphalia treaty (1648). "The fundamental norm of Westphalian sovereignty is that states exist in specific territories, within which domestic political authorities are the sole arbiters of legitimate behaviour."[1] Modern nation-states embrace sovereignty limited outside a specific territory but absolute inside the territory. In the Muslim world, after experiencing modern nation-states, the question arises whether sovereignty belongs to a single authority, a political body – the state's "artificial person" or sovereignty entirely belongs to God alone. This question has been discussed in the Muslim world since the 20th century. Syed Mawdudi is branded by his intense efforts to discuss the concept of political legitimacy, authority and "Divine sovereignty" in the nation-state context. Mawdudi's innovative interpretation of God's sovereignty (*Hakimiyat-ilahiya*) contextualised it in modern political discourse, which implies that sovereignty belongs to God alone, the Law-giver. The idea of God's sovereignty has been a fundamental debate in the political dialogue of the Muslim world. Therefore, focusing on God's sovereignty, this article sheds new light on the attribution of this idea and how it has been developed as a political concept in modern nation-states.

Keywords: *Mawdudi*, *sovereignty*, *popular sovereignty*, *God's sovereignty*, *theocracy*, *theo-democracy*

INTRODUCTION

The colonisation of Muslim territories and collapse of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the rise of modern nation-states in Muslim-majority territories in the 20th century. Muslim nations in this situation faced several ideological issues and intense debates triggered by the challenge of modernity, popular sovereignty in contrast with God's sovereignty, *umma* and the caliphate. Because of these ideological challenges, new arenas for dynamic political

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[1]   Stephen Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (United Kingdom: Princeton University Press, 1999), 20.

thought have emerged in the political environments. In these circumstances, two competing schools of Islamist political doctrine developed in the early 20th century. The first school belonged to Muhammad Rashid Rida, a prominent scholar of the Salafiyya movement, and Ali Abd al-Raziq continued the second school with the tradition of embracing various ideas. Rida contended that adopting the Western nation-state and nationalism founded on ethnicity destroyed Islam's normative societal foundation and practises.[2]

Consequently, he advocated for the restoration of the caliphate. He argues that God's sovereignty should be acknowledged in the caliphate and the laws of God should be followed in its governance. In a state based on Islamic principles, the interpretation of religious texts should be delegated to the *ulama*[3] so the *shura*[4] system could effectively govern the state. His proposed Islamic state posed a challenge to two core concepts of modern statehood: popular sovereignty and legislated laws emanating from human sources.[5] Rida's views on the state, nationalism and sovereignty profoundly impacted the resurgence of Islamic politics during the early 20th century. However, the most pre-eminent intellectual authorities and ideologues are Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi and Syed Qutb, who can be classified as proponents of God's sovereignty. The idea of God's sovereignty, as understood by Mawdudi, refers to the belief that God is the ultimate authority and ruler over all aspects of creation, including human beings' individual and collective lives. Mawdudi was a prominent Islamic scholar and thinker known for his contributions to Islamic revivalism and politics.

These intellectuals contribute to a variety of discussions – philosophical and practical – concerning Western modernity. The critical discussions were about the state's nature, secularism and sovereignty, and the position of Sharia in contemporary society. Rather than denying the inevitability of nation-states, they aim to Islamise the foundational values of nation-states. Islamists recognise democratic systems of government and take part in the democratic process. They simultaneously affirm God's authority, denying popular sovereignty and supporting political and religious integration yet opposing secularism. It was a shared belief that politics and religion are intrinsically linked; a notion derived from the Islamic faith in the unity of God (*tawhid*). This idea is the basis for the conception of the absolute sovereignty of God.

The state is the most fundamental community institution for collective life connection and civilisation. It is the political entity through which a country's people build their shared border amid a stable government. Therefore, people have recognised the need for a state from the beginning of civilised life and throughout human history, including the foundation and stability of the state and history of its development and evolution. The scope of the state is expanding evenly in modern times because of the growth of practical procedures and the path

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[2]   Hamid Enayat, *Modern Islamic Political Thought: The Response of the Shi'i and Sunni Muslims to the Twentieth Century* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2005).

[3]   Muslim scholars who are recognised as having specialist knowledge of Islamic sacred law and theology.

[4]   *Shura* or "consultation" means the form of a council or referendum. Islam encourages Muslims to decide their affairs in consultation with each other. The Qur'ān says "Who respond to their Lord, establish prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation, and donate from what We have provided for them" (42:38).

[5]   Ibid.

of new complications in communal life. The state's job in nearly every country today is to preserve law and order, and build collective justice and social welfare.[6]

Generally, a modern nation-state is diversely named a "country," "nation" or "state."[7] However, theoretically, "it is a specific form of state (a political entity on a territory) that governs a nation (a cultural entity), and which derives its legitimacy from successfully serving all its citizens."[8] Therefore, a nation-state entails a nation and government. The modern nation-state is relatively new and was created after the Reformation and the Westphalian treaty (1648). It relies on the notion that the state can handle many people fairly by enforcing the law using bureaucratic procedures. Mansoor Moaddel, in his book, argues that "in liberal democratic theory, the modern state is considered legitimate insofar as it represents the common interests of the individuals living within the national borders."[9] During the 19th and 20th centuries, certain modern states that experienced economic success were extolled as exemplary governance. As a result, organisations such as the *League of Nations* and *United Nations* have established the nation-state's community.[10]

Historically, sovereignty is associated with the rise of the modern system of sovereign states, usually dated to the Westphalia treaty.[11] As scholars stated, "the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 which recognised the state as the supreme or sovereign power within its boundaries and put to rest the church's transnational claims to political authority."[12] Mass society's developments, such as mass literacy and media, aided these ideas' expansion. For example, the printing press allowed publishing of literature in national languages. According to scholarly discourse, the concept of a territorial nation-state expanded contagiously against the empires.[13] It further claims the sovereign state system brought technological changes in economies and societies.[14]

The state's populace expresses its loyalty to the cultural identity of the sovereign state. It argues, at the state level, the population could be viewed as homogeneous, despite diversity at lower levels of social and political structure. The modern state functions appropriately to build the nation and protects its distinct national identity. In addition, on the one hand, it can be observed that the modern nation-state demonstrates a greater degree of territorial area and

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6   Syed Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat (The Islamic State: Philosophy, System and Principles of Governance)* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1967).
7   Gordon Anderson, "The Idea of the Nation-state is an Obstacle to Peace," *International Journal on World Peace* 23, no. 1 (2006), https://www.jstor.org/stable/20753518.
8   Ibid., 75.
9   Mansoor Moaddel, "Secular Politics, Liberal Values, and National Identity," in *The Clash of Values: Islamic Fundamentalism Versus Liberal Nationalism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2020), 85.
10   Anderson, "The Idea of the Nation-State."
11   Stephen Krasner, "Compromising Westphalia," *International Security* 20, no. 3 (1995).
12   Mark Zacher, "The Decaying Pillars of the Westphalian Temple: Implications for International Order and Governance," in *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics*, ed. James N. Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 59.
13   Andreas Wimmer, *Ethnic Boundary Making: Institutions, Power, Networks* (Oxford University Press, 2013).
14   Maryann Love, *Beyond Sovereignty: Issues for a Global Agenda*, 4th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2010).

demographic size than the historical "city-states" of ancient Greece or medieval Europe.[15] Those "states'" governance was based on interpersonal relationships conducted in person, frequently among individuals residing within the city's boundaries.[16]

On the other hand, modern nation-states are distinct from empires, which usually have extensive territories comprising several states and ethnic groups bonded by intense military and political authority and collective economic interest.[17] Similarly, when the state governs a community, the idea of sovereignty becomes unavoidable. The topic of ultimate power, what that entails and how it rests takes on fundamental and possibly continuing significance.[18]

The debate about Muslim nations and sovereign state interaction is not new. It has been discussed in the Muslim world with the rise of modern states since the 20th century. However, the writings of prominent Islamist thinkers, including Syed Mawdudi, are characterised by their intense efforts to discuss the concept of political legitimacy, authority and "Divine sovereignty" in the nation-state context. These are the substantial differences between Islamist politics and modern secular conceptions of the state. Modern nation-states embrace sovereignty limited outside a specific territory but absolute inside the territory.[19]

Secular politics is an essential component of liberal values and the most contentious issue in cultural warfare between secularists and Islamists in the contemporary period. This issue is currently at the centre of a significant ideological struggle over the country's future in Muslim nations. The formation of modern states in the Muslim world in the 1920s was the political outcome of the nationalist movement that began in the late 19th century. These states, in turn, provided further support for creating and maintaining a new cultural environment in which secularism was the dominant discourse, shaping the view of intellectual leaders and informing state policies. Connected to these developments were: (1) the rise of an assertive critical attitude towards Islam, Islamic institutions and traditional culture; and (2) the implementation of a series of policies purportedly aimed to modernise and standardise the court system to establish and foster secular education.[20]

However, these changes spawned fundamentalist reactions from religious activists. Moreover, state-initiated and sponsored cultural programs to promote secular institutions and endorse national identity in contradistinction to religious and institutional laws contrary to Sharia appear to have contributed to the perception among the faithful that their religion was under siege. As a result, their core values were offended and their freedom to engage in religious rituals was frustrated. This historical background has examined the changes in the Islamic theory of government, ranging from belief in the caliphate as unifying religious and political authority to acceptance of the institutional separation of religious and political leadership (which had become the modus operandi of Muslim politics in the pre-modern

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[15]   Anderson, "The Idea of the Nation-State."
[16]   Ibid.
[17]   Ibid.
[18]   Francis Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 2nd ed. (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
[19]   Andrew Nolte, "Sovereignty, Islam, and the Modern State: A Comparative Historical Analysis" (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2017).
[20]   Moaddel, "Secular Politics."

period), and to the embrace of constitutionalism and parliamentary democracy by Muslim theologians in the early 20th century.

In this case, Mawdudi uses modern political terms for communication facility; initially, a contemporary understanding of Muslim thought such as state, sovereignty, democracy and the constitution. However, what does it mean to him? Mawdudi also provides meanings for all these terms and criticises their definitions, which are prevalent in Western political thought. This study has been involved in the idea of God's sovereignty. Moreover, how it has been invoked in religious and political arguments, and how this idea explains the law and politics of Islam in the modern world.

SOVEREIGNTY IN MODERN POLITICAL DISCOURSE

The Qur'ān repeatedly speaks of the command and authority of God, as "It is only Allah Who decides. He has commanded that you worship none but Him."[21] However, it is not simple quibbling to note the concept of sovereignty has a distinct history in European political thought, emerging concurrently with the rise of the modern state. When Islamists assert that God is the only ruler and sovereign power, they use it as political sovereignty. The notion of God's sovereignty has been central to Islamist notions of the state, politics and law. Thus, an "Islamic state" is founded on acknowledging God's sovereignty, implying that no law other than God's has any implication on people and failing to submit to God's sovereignty is disbelief.[22]

However, in political science, "sovereignty" is used as "absolute overlordship or complete suzerainty." Scholars define it that "the idea of sovereignty entails is that there is a political authority in a community which has undisputed right to determine the framework of rules and regulations in a given territory and to govern accordingly."[23] The concept of sovereignty possesses two different parameters, dealing with the "internal" and "external"[24] aspects of sovereignty. The first kind means a political entity formed as sovereign has the right to exert "supreme command"[25] across specific territories and within that environment, the government requires "final and absolute authority."[26]

In his most significant work, *Six Books of a Commonwealth* (1576), Jean Bodin established perhaps the most famous explanation of sovereignty: "the right to impose laws generally on all subjects regardless of their consent" and "nothing else than the command of the sovereign in the exercise of his sovereign power."[27] Bodin's new interpretation states

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[21]   Qur'ān 12:40.
[22]   Muhammad Zaman, "The Sovereignty of God in Modern Islamic Thought," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 25, no. 3 (2015).
[23]   David Held, *Political Theory and the Modern State: Essays on State, Power, and Democracy* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000), 215.
[24]   Ibid.
[25]   Ibid.
[26]   Ibid.
[27]   Jean Bodin, *Six Books of a Commonwealth*, trans. and ed. M. J. Tooley (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1967).

"sovereignty is the defining characteristic or constitutive power of the state."[28] Bodin regards it as paramount absolute in that regulations and any restrictions or limitations wholly unconstrain it. Thomas Hobbes presents a great work, *Leviathan* (1651), stressing "ultimate absolute sovereignty."[29]

Another scholar, John Lock, defines that the common good must have a "sovereign political entity," with legitimisation from the common public of the community, who have surrendered their natural human rights.[30] In contrast, in his work *Social Contract*, Rousseau centres on people's sovereignty.[31] He posits that sovereignty is the people's collective will and an inalienable and indivisible legislative power that cannot be delegated to any individual or organisation less than the entirety of the group.[32]

Thus, if a person or institution is to be sovereign, it follows that the word of that institution or person is the law. Krasner succinctly describes it as: "The fundamental norm of Westphalian sovereignty is that states exist in specific territories, within which domestic political authorities are the sole arbiters of legitimate behaviour."[33]

Sovereignty resides in the people of a nation, and as a community of people and as sovereigns, we assume they have the right to change the fundamentals of law when they deem it necessary. Therefore, scholars have defined sovereignty as a political and legal concept in contemporary political discourse. First, however, scholars term the "basic legalo-political concept"[34] and the "concept of sovereignty is a basic concept of law and politics."[35] Further, a definition of sovereignty sums up the inseparable link between the political and legal contents:

> Sovereignty means the capability to make collectively binding decisions autonomously for a number of persons. In the history of political thought, sovereignty is, therefore, primarily identified with the legislature as the supreme state authority. This underlines that sovereign power is exercised by means of positive law.[36]

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[28]　Held, *Political Theory*, 220.

[29]　Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

[30]　John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1963).

[31]　Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968).

[32]　Ibid.

[33]　Krasner, *Sovereignty*, 20.

[34]　Dieter Grimm, "Souveränität—zur aktuellen Leistungsfähigkeit eines rechtlich-politischen Grundbegriffs" [Sovereignty—On the Current Performance of a Basic Legal-Political Concept], in *Souveränität, Recht, Moral Die Grundlagen politischer Gemeinschaft*, ed. T. Stein, H. Buchstein and C. Offe (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2007), 304–310.

[35]　Matthias Mahlmann, Gründungsmythos und Autonomie—Aspekte der Souveränitä" [Founding Myth and Autonomy—Aspects of Sovereignty], in *Souveränität, Recht, Moral Die Grundlagen politischer Gemeinschaft*, ed. T. Stein, H. Buchstein and C. Offe (Frankfurt/New York: Campus Verlag, 2007), 270–279.

[36]　Peter Niesen, "Souveränität" [Sovereignty], in *Handbuch der Politischen Philosophie und Sozialphilosophie*, ed. S. Gosepath, W. Hinsch and B. Rössler (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter Verlag, 2008), 1205.

Political sovereignty, consequently, "refers to the existence of a supreme political power, possessed of the ability to command obedience because it monopolises coercive force."[37] Legally, sovereignty has been involved in exercising the law by right. "All substantial claims to sovereignty, therefore, have a crucial legal dimension…Legal authority, in other words, is underpinned by the exercise of power."[38] In the global framework, sovereignty implies that "states should be regarded as independent in all matters of internal politics, and should in principle be free to determine their own fate within this framework."[39]

In understanding the Islamic and Western thoughts of sovereignty and state in Islamic and Christian history, observing shifts prompted by significant events, after which a new social evenness was recognised in Islamic and Western political thought, may be helpful. Based on their different past experiences, the conceptual basis of sovereignty in the Western and Islamist traditions diverges from one another. Religion became detached from politics in Christianity, which influenced the transition of power from God to the emperor/king and the people. In contrast to the Western paradigm, Islamic political history has not witnessed such a shift in authority from God to people. Theological foundations are the primary source of the prevalent claim in this respect. It claims the Islamic faith provides no room for building a political entity distinct from religion. As the scholar mentions, Islam reversed, contrary to Christianity, which proceeded to a separation of faith and politics.[40] Islamic scriptures and political practises of caliphs, the intersection of politics and religion, created a system of governance in the early Islamic period.

Subsequently, the Reformation period firmly stated "absolute" and complete sovereignty. According to Bodin, the city is formed by the people's unity in a sovereign government, not by the territory or the people.[41] Hobbes describes ultimate absolute and complete sovereignty. He contends that people do not need to rely on God's order to carry out worldly duties; instead, they can do so with a spontaneous agency.[42]

John Locke proposes the notion of popular sovereignty, emphasising the autonomy of individuals. He argues that individuals possess the authority to determine when violation of trust has transpired and are entitled to oppose the governing authority.[43] Likewise, Rousseau persists in stating that sovereignty should reside with the people. Although Bodin and Hobbes contend that a sovereign is autonomous from the public, Rousseau contends a sovereign stays with the community contract. Rousseau's famous piece says:

> Sovereignty cannot be represented for the same reason that it cannot be alienated…the people's deputies are not and could not be its representatives; they are merely its agents, and they cannot decide anything finally. Any law which the people has not ratified in person is void; it is not law at all. The English people believes itself to be free; it is gravely

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[37]   Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory: An Introduction* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 91.
[38]   Ibid., 92.
[39]   Held, *Political Theory*, 216.
[40]   Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 2002).
[41]   Bodin, *Six Books of a Commonwealth*.
[42]   Hobbes, *Leviathan*.
[43]   Locke, *Two Treatises of Government.*

mistaken; it is free only during the election of Members of Parliament; as soon as the Members are elected, the people is enslaved; it is nothing.[44]

Regardless of knowing that defining sovereignty is challenging, presenting a reasonably precise definition for any study is feasible. Therefore, this study relies more on the definition of "the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community."[45]

MAWDUDI'S IDEA OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Hyderabad Deccan, born Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-79), was a prominent Islamic thinker and philosopher; however, he established a *Jamat* (Party) to promote Islamic values and principles and establish *deen* (Islam) as a system. Mawdudi was involved in the critical issues of his era and provides Islamic notions on nationalism, sovereignty, state, society and politics. Sovereignty (*hakmiyyah*) became Mawdudi's central concern in his writings and his innovative interpretation of God's sovereignty (*hakimiyat-ilahiya*) contextualised it in modern political discourse, which implies that sovereignty belongs to God alone, the Law-giver, and to refuse this leads to idolatry (*shirk*).[46] Therefore, according to Mawdudi, God's sovereignty is absolute and comprehensive. It encompasses all spheres of life, including personal, social, political and economic realms. He argues that Islamic principles should guide every aspect of society and Muslims should establish a state governed by Sharia (Islamic law) principles.[47]

Mawdudi's stance on God's sovereignty can be found in his writings; however, the main argument he discusses in *Qur'ān ki chaar bunyadi istlahein* (Four Key Concepts of the Qur'ān) is that "Allah Almighty is the Rabb and the Ilah; that there is no ilah but He, nor is there any other rab…Nor, lastly, does anyone have the least share in His Sovereignty and Authority."[48] Mawdudi supports this argument with the Qur'ānic verse: "Right and Mighty is Allah, the True Sovereign; then, is no ilah but He, the Lord of the Sublime Throne."[49] Mawdudi further argues that God is the only ultimate sovereign and states, "Allah's being the Supreme Sovereign, the Fountainhead of authority, the Supreme Law-giver, and the Supreme Lord of all creation."[50] He also claims this is indivisible authority; "hence, it is essential that all authority and power should and does vest in one, central authority, in one sovereign."[51] The Qur'ān mentions this: "Say (O Prophet): I seek refuge with Him who is Rabb of all mankind, the Sovereign of all mankind, and the Ilah of all mankind."[52]

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[44]   Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*, ed. V. Gourevitch (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 141.
[45]   Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, 1.
[46]   Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat*.
[47]   Ibid.
[48]   Syed Mawdudi, *Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 2000), 1-6.
[49]   Qur'ān 23:116.
[50]   Mawdudi, *Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms*, 72.
[51]   Ibid., 26.
[52]   Qur'ān 114:1-3.

Popular sovereignty arises from the separation of politics and religion, whereas in Islam, God's sovereignty emerges from the combined power of religion and politics. Mawdudi argues that humankind is bound to obey his Lord, who creates everything and holds ultimate power. He states:

> His alone is the word, and in Him alone vest all power and authority. Everything that exists, whether animate or inanimate, is bound by the laws made by Him and is, to that extent, subservient and submissive to Him, willingly or unwillingly. No one besides Him is possessed of any such authority, nor does anyone else dispose of the affairs of the universe. No one else knows the secrets of the creation or its organisation or the manner of its proper management. Nor, lastly, does anyone have the least share in His Sovereignty and Authority.[53]

Mawdudi's book *Islami Riyasat* (The Islamic State: Philosophy, System and Principles of Governance) describes politically and theologically that there is only one God with sovereignty and He is the Absolute Sovereign.[54] Sovereignty refers solely to God, according to Mawdudi's idea, which is his finest contribution to Islamic political theory. On the one hand, Mawdudi aligns with the Western perspective on the meaning of sovereignty; it denotes sovereignty is the ultimate authority, law-giver and above all. He, however, differs from the sovereign's determination. He claims the perfect sovereign is unattainable in the universe. Whatever authority a monarch wields or how a leader in a democracy governs a state, they are limited in some ways. According to Mawdudi, when political experts escort a pure concept of sovereignty and find its real example in human society, they face severe trouble; no entity of this stature exists in the realm of humanity and creatures.[55] "He cannot be questioned for His acts, but they will be questioned (for theirs)."[56] "In Whose Hands is the authority over all things, protecting all while none can protect against Him if you really know?"[57] Therefore, God alone is the sovereign and ultimate authority.

Therefore, after Pakistan's independence, Mawdudi demanded the state acknowledge God's sovereignty in the constitution and perhaps in all the legislation.[58] Accordingly, in 1949, the Objectives Resolution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan, which, among other things, declared sovereignty as God's prerogative. In his book *Islami Riyasat,* chapter *Islam, ka nazriya I siyasi* (The Political Concept of Islam), Mawdudi argues that "sovereignty (*hakimiyyat*) rests only with God. God alone is the law-giver."[59]

It is clear from these explanations that the concept of Mawdudi's *hakim-e-Ala* (sovereignty belongs to Allah) and the legislature is, in fact, a refutation of Western notions. On these points, he further claims the Islamic system is not a Western-style secular democracy. In Western democracies, sovereignty is in the hands of the people and laws are

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[53]   Mawdudi, *Four Basic Qur'ānic Terms*, 20.
[54]   Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat*, 336.
[55]   Ibid.
[56]   Qur'ān 21:23.
[57]   Qur'ān 23:88.
[58]   Mohammad Rehman, "Nation as a Neo-Idol: Muslim Political Theology and the Critique of Secular Nationalism in Modern South Asia," *Religions* 9, no. 11 (2018): 355.
[59]   Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat*, 137.

made and changed according to their wishes and opinions. In contrast, Allah makes a higher law through his Messenger Prophet (pbuh), which the state and nation must obey. Therefore, it cannot be called a democracy because Islam sets the boundaries for enslaved people and they cannot transgress them.

MAWDUDI'S NOTION OF THEO-DEMOCRACY

Mawdudi agrees with the principle of democracy that the formation and replacement of the government should be by the people's will. The head of state must be appointed with the advice and consent of the Muslims and they must administer the system of government in consultation.[60] The Qur'ān mentions, "who respond to their Lord, establish prayer, conduct their affairs by mutual consultation."[61] However, Mawdudi principally disagrees with liberal democracy based on the sovereignty question. According to him, the people are not absolute regarding the state's law, principles of life, and internal and external politics. The supreme law of God and the Prophet (pbuh) maintains control over people's desires with its principles, limits and moral precepts. The state follows a set path and the administrator, judiciary, legislature and nation do not have the power to pass a bill unless the nation decides to break its covenant – that is, to get out of the faith.[62] Therefore, Mawdudi introduced "theo-democracy," as contrasted with liberal democracy, which rests on a belief that sovereignty resides solely in God. Mawdudi adopted theo-democracy for modern Islamic political ideology, in which Muslims have limited popular sovereignty under God's supreme authority. In this ideology, the executive and legislature are formed by the opinion of the Muslims and only they have the power to remove it.

Mawdudi has defined that the Islamic system is not a Western-style secular democracy; in Western democracies, the sovereignty rests with the people and laws are made and changed according to their wishes. On the contrary, in Islam, Allah gives a supreme law through His Messenger, which the state and nation must obey.[63] Nasr quotes Professor Khurshid Ahmad, a prominent leader of Jamat and Mawdudi's intimate patron, who describes sovereignty according to their understanding of democracy:

> We have certain reservations about Western democracy on ethical/moral principles, especially over where sovereignty lies. But that does not mean that Muslims are "fascists." Muslims believe in the rule of law, human rights, and shura, all of which are also important to a democracy. We have problems of accommodating democracy, but our faith is not antithetical to it.[64]

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[60]   Ibid.
[61]   Qur'ān 42:38.
[62]   Syed Mawdudi, *Khilafat o Malokiyat* [Caliphate and Monarchy] (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1966).
[63]   Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat*.
[64]   Syed Veli Raza Nasr, Mawdudi and The Making of Islamic Revivalism (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 88.

In Mawdudi's, theo-democracy has relied on God's sovereignty, with limited sovereignty to humans. Therefore, theo-democracy relies on the Qur'ān's term of *khilafah* or the "vice-regency of humans" to God:

> Allah has promised those of you who believe and do good that He will certainly make them successors in the land, as He did with those before them; and will surely establish for them their faith which He has chosen for them; and will indeed change their fear into security.[65]

According to the Qur'ān, the proper form of human government is the *khilafah*. In the previous lines, it has become clear that Mawdudi refers to a democratic government as based on Muslims' consensus under the sovereignty of God, in which Muslims collectively live individual lives.[66] Mawdudi explains, according to the Qur'ān, the command of God and the Messenger is the supreme law against which believers can only adopt the attitude of obedience. In matters where God and the Messenger have given their verdict, no Muslim can make their decision and deviating from this is against the law.[67] Therefore, the first basic rule of this state was that sovereignty belongs only to Allah and the government of the believers is the "*khilafah*," which does not have the right to work with totalitarianism but must obey this law of God.[68]

The basic principle, then, is that no force is allowed to rule Muslims; it is evident this is the spirit of the Islamic style of governance. Therefore, Mawdudi describes the Khilafah Rashida as a "democracy," even though it has all the abovementioned features. Explaining this principled style of governing, Mawdudi writes that the only proper form of human government, according to the Qur'ān, is for the state to recognise the legal supremacy of God and the Prophet, relinquish sovereignty in its favour, and accept the status of "caliphate" (representation) under the absolute ruler. Whether legislative, judicial or administrative, its powers must be limited to that [set by God].[69]

Thus, according to Mawdudi, the ordinary person has an equal share in forming the collective system of Muslims, which Maulana calls the "collective caliphate." Moreover, this principle separates the Islamic Khilafah from the class rule and religious leadership and turns it towards democracy. Therefore, this principle has proper Islamic guidance and differs from the Western theocracy. Theocracy is "a system of government in which priests rule in the name of God or a god" (Oxford Dictionary). In Islam, theocracy is impossible because it negates the Qur'ān's guide to human/civil equality.[70] The Qur'ān states, "It is not appropriate for someone who Allah has blessed with the Scripture, wisdom, and prophethood to say to people, Worship me instead of Allah."[71] Syed Maududi also criticises theocracy. He states

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[65]   Qur'ān 24:55.
[66]   Mawdudi, *Khilafat o Malokiyat*.
[67]   Ibid.
[68]   Ibid.
[69]   Ibid.
[70]   Saleena Karim, *Secular Jinnah and Pakistan: What the Nation Doesn't Know* (Dublin: CheckPoint Press, 2010).
[71]   Qur'ān 3:79.

that Europe is aware of the theocracy in which a particular religious group (priest-class) enforces its laws in the name of God. However, the theocracy built by Islam is not ruled by any specific religious (priest) class. Instead, the community runs the state following the Book of God (Qur'ān) and the *sunna* of His prophet, Muhammad (pbuh). This is a theo-democracy because citizens have been given "limited popular sovereignty" under the "sovereignty of God" and the willpower of ordinary Muslims chooses the executives and legislators who are accountable to them.[72]

The Qur'ān explains this clearly: "So woe to those who distort the Scripture with their own hands then say, 'This is from Allah'—seeking a fleeting gain! So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they have earned."[73] This proves that the Islamic government system is neither a theocracy nor an oppressive government of any particular religious sect (priest-class). Instead, it is in the name of the implementation of the highest human moral principles of Sharia.

Furthermore, according to Mawdudi, no person, family, class or group but the entire state population does not possess sovereignty. Therefore, the sovereign is only Allah; all others are merely subjects.[74] Moreover, only God has the power to legislate. Therefore, even Muslims cannot make any law for themselves nor amend any law made by Allah.[75] An Islamic state would, however, be based on the law given by Allah to his Messenger, and the government administering the state would deserve obedience (by people) only if it were to enforce God's law.[76] Nasr describes this:

> In defining the Islamic state, Mawdudi attempted to accumulate the Islamic doctrines of tawhid (unity of God), understood as the absolute sovereignty of God, risalat (prophecy), understood as the ideal Islamic state; and Khilafat (caliphate), understood as a viceregency of mankind on behalf of God and, hence, the reproduction and perpetuation of the Islamic state in the post-prophetic Era, to support his position.[77]

The interpretations of Mawdudi's God's sovereignty and the legislature deny Western concepts of sovereignty and democracy. Mawdudi refers to a verse of the Qur'ān:

> O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution.[78]

Thus, according to Mawdudi, the Islamic government system is based on the sovereignty of God, meaning the ultimate authority in the system rests with God alone, and God's sovereignty implies that human beings are accountable to God for their actions. Furthermore, in Mawdudi's view, the Islamic government is not a theocracy in the traditional sense, where religious/priest leaders hold direct political power. Instead, it is a system where the laws and

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[72]   Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat*, 140.
[73]   Qur'ān 2:79.
[74]   Ibid.
[75]   Ibid.
[76]   Ibid.
[77]   Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism*, 89.
[78]   Qur'ān 4:59.

principles of Islam guide the governance, and the government operates within the framework of Islamic principles. The government's function is to implement the laws derived from Islamic sources and ensure justice and welfare for its citizens.

Moreover, Mawdudi's theo-democracy envisions a government system where elected representatives make decisions within the boundaries set by Islamic principles. He believes that a just society could be achieved by implementing Islamic teachings in all aspects of life, including governance. Consequently, according to Mawdudi, liberal democracy places human beings at the centre of decision-making and allows them to legislate laws and policies based on their desires and interests. He considered this to be a form of "man-made law" that usurps the sovereignty of Allah and leads to the disregard of Divine guidance.

CONCLUSION

This article investigated the idea of God's sovereignty of Mawdudi, which argued that the Islamic conception of *tawhid* (oneness of God) is the core of God's sovereignty argument. Furthermore, the idea of God's sovereignty, as understood by Mawdudi, referred to the belief that God is the ultimate authority and ruler over all aspects of creation, including human beings' individual and collective lives. In the Islamic tradition, God's sovereignty is drawn from belief, instrumentalising the justification from Islam's mutual relation with politics; in contrast, religion's separation from politics in Western thought enlightens popular sovereignty. Furthermore, Mawdudi agreed with the principle of democracy that the formation and replacement of the government should be by the people's will. However, Mawdudi principally disagreed with liberal-democracy based on the sovereignty question. He maintained the people are not absolute regarding the state's law, principles of life and internal and external politics. In liberal democracies, sovereignty is attributed to the people, meaning the ultimate authority rests with the majority's will. However, Mawdudi believed that sovereignty should belong to Allah alone and Islamic law, known as Sharia, should be the supreme authority guiding the state and society. Furthermore, Mawdudi believed that God's sovereignty should be realised through implementation of an Islamic system of governance, which would ensure justice, equality and welfare for the people. He advocated for a comprehensive understanding of Islamic law, which would govern not only personal matters, such as prayer and fasting, but also social and political affairs.

In Mawdudi ideology, the Islamic government system is neither a theocracy nor an oppressive government of any religious sect (priest-class). Instead, Mawdudi's theo-democracy has relied on God's sovereignty, where citizens have been given limited popular sovereignty under the sovereignty of God, and the willpower of ordinary Muslims chooses the executives and legislators who are accountable to them. Hence, the primary fundamental principle of this state asserts that sovereignty exclusively belongs to Allah and governance of the believers is embodied in the concept of *khilafah*, which is not authorised to dictatorial practises but is obligated to adhere to the Law of God. Therefore, the interpretations of

Mawdudi's God's sovereignty and the legislature deny Western concepts of sovereignty and democracy.

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