

THE POLITICAL THOUGHT OF MAWDUDI AS A TEMPLATE FOR DEMOCRATIC SUSTAINABILITY IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The inseparability of religion and politics is demonstrated in the involvement of prominent ulama (religious scholars) in politics directly or indirectly. Being an important stakeholder in politics, such scholars have been raising their voices on political matters and influencing political decisions in their respective countries. In some cases, such religious scholars performed oppositional role with a view to forcing the ruling government to check their actions which were contradictory to the dictate of their religion. The Islamic revolution in Iran is a living testimony to the fact that religious scholars are relevant to effect new sociological and religio-political paradigms for their countries. It is on this basis that this paper shall explore the political thought of a seasoned reforming Mogul whose thought is significant to democratic sustenance in Nigeria, Maulana Abul A'la Mawdudi (1903 -1979). This sage enunciated some political principles which if strictly studied and adhered to, will help in no small measure in ensuring sustainable democratic governance whose leadership will not regret leading its people and the populace will not eventually curse such a leader.

[Agama dan politik dalam banyak hal tidak dapat dipisahkan. Hal ini ditunjukkan antara lain oleh keterlibatan ulama dalam politik, langsung atau tidak. Menjadi bagian dari sistem politik, ulama dapat menyuarakan pandangan mereka dan mempengaruhi keputusan politik di negara masing-masing. Dalam beberapa kasus, para ulama juga melakukan oposisi untuk memaksa pemerintah melihat kebijakan yang bertentangan dengan ajaran agama. Revolusi Islam di Iran adalah contoh nyata dengan fakta

bahwa ulama memiliki peran yang erat terkait dengan paradigma sosiologis dan religio-politik baru bagi negara. Makalah ini akan mengeksplorasi pandangan Maulana Abul Ala Maududi (1903 -1979), tokoh reformist yang pemikirannya sangat penting untuk pengembangan demokrasi di Nigeria. Beberapa prinsip politik akan membantu dalam memastikan pemerintahan yang demokratis berkelanjutan, jika dipelajari dan diikuti dengan benar.]

Keywords: Mawdudi, political thought, Islam and democracy, Islam and politics, Nigeria

A. Introduction

The issue of good governance has been a concern for Muslim thinkers all over the world. This becomes imperative in view of the fact that such Islamic political terminologies deserved to be explicated on by them and because Islam is a religion that has its political ideology. To every Muslim thinker, Islam cannot be conveniently separated from politics¹ and indeed the *imamah* has a great role to play in the protection of religion. The political theory of Mawdudi has being a matter of serious discourse amongst scholars. His establishment of a religio-political party in 1941 and its supervision for more than three decades has made him a figure in the struggle of attainment of an Islamic state ruled by the dictate of the religion. The translation of his ideology to reality earned him the fame of being the most influential Muslim thinker in the contemporary period, as his political party became popular even beyond the Indian subcontinent where it started and maintains links and has organized sister organisations in the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK), and other parts of the world. According to Cheema, his ideological influence could also be felt in Central Asia, North Africa and Southeast Asia.²

Apart from the above, Mawdudi's political theory seeks to draw

¹ See the political thought of Al-Mawardi, Imam Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Sayyid Ahmad Khan, Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Iqbal, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Asad, and many others in Bello A, "Political Thoughts of Imam Al-Mawardi", in *Islamic Political Thought and Institutions*, ed. by Aisha Abdul-Isma'il and Salisu Shehu (Kano: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), pp. 1–230.

² Shahbaz Ahmad Cheema, "Problematizing the Religious Basis of Maududi's Political Theory", *Studies on Asia*, vol. 3, no. 2 (2013), pp. 52–82.

no line of demarcation between religion and politics as the two are inseparable. Religionization of politics was therefore the main focus of Mawdudi's ideology. This ideology was premised upon the fact that sovereignty belongs solely to God and not to any human being. Whereas in Nigeria, the instrumentality of religion has been used to influence politics in many ways, it is not constitutional to establish a political party along ethnic and religious influence. However, these two variables, namely religionization of politics as propounded by Mawdudi and secularization of politics as contained in the constitution of Nigeria, are attempted to be gummed together in this paper to achieve a political system that will allow the nation to progress in its democratization process. In other words, the paper does not intend to impose the latter's view but to create a synergy between implementation of religious teaching for sanitization of politics which is generally referred to as "dirty game".

Just as the abolition of the institution of the Caliphate in 1924, and the subsequent collapse of the *Khilafat* movement in India deepened Mawdudi's anxiety about the political future of Indian Muslims,³ Nigerians are equally tired of the democratic government which is only being enjoyed by those in the corridor of power and which drains the purse of the nation that it becomes difficult to pay workers salaries for months. As such, a call for alternative re-orientation of political practice becomes imperative as the nation could not afford witnessing degeneration in its resources by the acts of unfaithful corrupt leaders whose selfish interests have landed the nation in the ocean of poverty, joblessness and insecurity.

B. The Political Situation in Nigeria

A summary of the perception of Nigerians on attainment of political power is succinctly described by Sulaiman in the following statements:

Now in this country we have conceived power in its material terms alone, to the exclusion of its moral, spiritual and even social attributes. Hence, power is conceived as a means of exercising unlimited control over people,

³ Anthony J. Parel, "Lessons from South Asian Political Thought", presented at the Mahatma Gandhi Center for Global Nonviolence, James Madison University (Harrisonburg, 2 Apr 2008), pp. 1–22, http://www.jmu.edu/gandhicenter/wm_library/workingpaper4.pdf, accessed 5 Mar 2016.

a means of the attainment of worldly glory and a means of amassing wealth. Consequently every ruler, even down to a councillor in local government, sees himself as a god in his own right, and exercises power only to enrich himself, his family and his associates, and to indulge in self glory and self-aggrandisement. Thus, the more power rulers exercise in this country, the greater the suffering for the people.⁴

The political scene of the country is full of malpractices of high magnitude. To assume any political post, one needs to be fully prepared to step on toes. Usage of political thugs dominates the scene. Many technocrats as well as innocent citizens have lost their lives in the attempts of politicians to get rid of their opponents whom they see as stumbling blocks to attainment of political office. It suffices to mention the former Governor of Oyo State and a onetime Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Federation, Chief Bola Ige who was assassinated on December, 23, 2001⁵ and Chief Aminosari Dikibo, the National Vice Chairman (South-South) of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) assassinated in March 2003. A Gubernatorial candidate of the Peoples Democratic Society in Lagos State, Engineer Funsho Williams was also assassinated on July 20, 2006, while another Gubernatorial candidate of the same party in Ekiti State, Dr. Ayodeji Daramola also suffered the same fate in August 14, 2006, to mention but a few. In 1981, one Dr. Bala Mohammed, the political Adviser to the then Governor of Kano was also assassinated. Politics in Nigeria, in the words of Dzurgba has become militarised and political opponents are regarded as enemies who are to be defeated by all means even if it involves wiping them out completely.⁶ It is not therefore a surprise that small arms and light weapons become household materials in the hand of thugs who have no military training of handling such.

One of the ingredients of democracy is rule of law. This however has not been given the desired attention in Nigerian context

⁴ Ibraheem Sulaiman and Sa'idu Sulaiman, *Sustainable Governance: Selected Works of Ibraheem Sulaiman* (Kano, Nigeria: IIIT The International Institute of Islamic Thought Nigeria Office, 2000), p. 5.

⁵ P.O. Ajimotokin, *Thuggery in Politics: Slam on True Democracy* (Lagos: New Bay Ventures, 2003), pp. 1–30.

⁶ Akpenpuun Dzurgba, *Nigerian Politics and Moral Behaviour: A Study in Politics and Ethics* (Ibadan: John Archers, 2003), p. 51.

of democracy. The constitution is being manipulated to accommodate the wishes of those in power. There is no regard for rule of law as either those in power do not want to vacate the office even when they are no more popular, or the opponents are hell bent to take power by all means. Various methods of election rigging are therefore adopted by them. It is not an overstatement to say that politicians get prepared for rigging of election even at the point of population census and so plan to manipulate population statistics to plan electoral malpractices. In the same vein, there have been instances of a political party accusing its opponents of printing electoral materials. Some electoral officers also connive with crooked politicians to manipulate figures in their favour not minding the mandate of the electorate. The public declaration of late President Umar Musa Yar'adua that the election which took him to the presidential office could not be said to be free and fair is an attestation to the political manipulations in the country. Those who are expected to enforce the law have also become the breaker of the law. There have been instances of connivance between the police and armed robbers. In the Daily Sun of April 4, 2005, two policemen were said to have been caught in Plateau State for allegedly supplying arms to robbers. This is what probably informed the confession of the former Inspector General of Police, Sunday Ehindero to admit that there were armed robbers in the Nigeria Police Force.⁷

Looking at it from another dimension, it is observed that the political scene in Nigeria is dominated by the money-bags and who are ready to spend extravagantly for them to win elections. It is not a news to say that traditional rulers received their “share of the national cake” when the immediate past President toured some states visiting the traditional rulers in his bid to lure them into stamping his candidature as the president to succeed himself. At another angle, to obtain nomination form for any political post, thousands if not millions of naira were involved. For the All Progressives Congress (APC) Presidential aspirants, a sum of twenty seven million naira was charged,⁸ while the each of the Presidential

⁷ Tobi, Soniyi, & Sam, Akpe, “We have armed robbers in the Police – Ehindero” *The Punch*, December 15, 2005, p. 9.

⁸ Gbenga Faturoti, “Nigerians Condemn High Cost of Nomination Forms”, *Daily Independent (Lagos)* (27 Oct 2014), <http://allafrica.com/stories/201410272537.html>, accessed 9 Dec 2015.

aspirants in the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in the 2015 poll also paid twenty-two million naira to obtain nomination form.⁹ This exorbitant amount being charged makes it difficult for the poor who might have stuff to lead his people to fall victims of godfathers who are ready to sponsor him at any cost and for him to dictate the affairs of the state for him if he eventually wins. It is on record that some governors have been impeached through the influence of their god-fathers who felt their godsons were no more cooperating with them when they got to power.¹⁰ Apart from this, the huge money attached to obtaining nomination forms by intending political office holders, serves as a motivation for them to loot public funds for the purpose of gaining back what they had initially expended. No wonder then that Nigerian politicians believe that a quick mean to amassing wealth is their holding political office and not necessarily an avenue to serve their community. So, rather than concentrating on how to improve the standard of living of the people, politicians are busy looking for means of siphoning public funds, enriching themselves through dubious means like inflating contracts and prioritization of projects that have little or no impact on the people.

It is no gainsaying that Nigerian leadership seems to have legalised corruption and this has killed the spirit of accountability in them. The level of corruption has degenerated to the extent that it is now difficult for many of the state governors to pay the monthly salary of their workers. Although, they hide under the shortfalls in the monthly federal allocation accrued from crude oil which is the major source of revenue for the nation, it is believed that the shortfall was as a result of the fortunes few people were making from the oil resources illegally. Efforts at fighting corruption in the nation are therefore like embarking on a white elephant project. The inauguration of the Independent Corrupt Practice Commission (ICPC) and the Economic and Financial Crime Commission (EFCC) inaugurated in June 2000 and December 2002 respectively to wipe out corrupt practices have assisted in unfolding the unwholesome corrupt practices of some public and political office holders. Such included the then governors of Balyesa

⁹ *The Leadership*, Oct, 29, 2014 in leadership.ng/news, accessed on 12/09/2015.

¹⁰ Okoli Chukwuma and Isaac Otegwu, "Godfatherism and Political Crises in Nigeria, 1999-2006", *Mambaya House Journal of Democratic Studies*, vol. 2 (2010), pp. 78–93.

and Plateau States – Chief Diepriye Alamisyier and Joshua Dariye; the former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Tafa Balogun and many others. In the words of Mallam Nuru Ribadu, the first chairman of the EFCC, between 1960 and 1999, Nigeria officials had stolen or wasted more than \$400 billion an amount that is six times the Marshall Plan the total sum needed to rebuild a devastated Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War.¹¹ He therefore sees corruption as the main reason why it is difficult for kids to have access to good education, a bane to effective health facilities, a stumbling block to good roads, a cause of youth and graduate unemployment and a reason for gross insecurity in the nation.

C. Historical Background of Mawdudi

On 25 September 1903, the family of Syed Ahmad Hasan, a lawyer by profession was blessed with a bouncing baby boy and was named after his great ancestor Abul A'la Mawdudi, the first person from the family of Khawaja Qutb al-Din who migrated from Chishti to Indian subcontinent in the 15th century. His father, Syed Ahmad Hasan married the mother of Mawdudi, Ruqayya Khatoon in 1896 when he migrated to Hyderabad, Deccan in 1894 soon after the death of his first wife from whom he had two sons. He received his early education from his father who did not only expose him to the study of Islam and languages like Arabic, Persian and Urdu, but as well thoroughly exposed him to great Islamic scholars and several important scholarly works of his time.¹²

After completing his early education under the tutelage of his father, he was admitted to a high school named *Madrasah Fanqaniyyah* where he demonstrated his academic excellence and as well completed his education there at the age of thirteen years. He proceeded to *Darul Ulum* in Hyderabad for his undergraduate studies. His education was however disrupted by the illness of his father and when the father eventually died, he was faced with serious financial problems which consequently forced

¹¹ Nuhu Ribadu, *Capital Loss and Corruption: The Example of Nigeria* (Nigeria: the Center for Global Development; and former Executive Chairman, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of Nigeria, 2009).

¹² Zeenath Kausar (ed.), "Mawdudi's Philosophy of an Islamic State, Government and Citizenship: An Exploration and a Critical Appreciation", in *Contemporary Islamic Political Thought: A Study of Eleven Islamic Thinkers* (Kuala Lumpur: IIU Press International Islamic University, 2009), pp. 113–54.

him to drop out the school.¹³

Mawdudi decided to work for his living and so started his career as a journalist at the age of fifteen. He became the editor of a leading Urdu newspaper called ‘Taj’ published from Jabalpur and there he demonstrated his detestation of the western colonialism and so the newspaper was banned from circulation. Mawdudi therefore moved from Jabalpur to Delhi where he became the editor of *Al-Muslim* newspaper between 1921 and 1923 and also the editor of *Al-Jam‘iyyāt* Newspaper between 1925 and 1928. However, the *Muslim* newspaper was banned by the British government in 1923 due to serious condemnation of the British rule in the editorial notes of Mawdudi.

Mawdudi was prolific and this was demonstrated in his publication of three books while still serving as editor of the newspapers. Kausar submits that Mawdudi wrote on British history, the problem of Khilafah and the conditions of Christians in Turkey and that he translated some works from Arabic to Urdu and from English to Urdu.¹⁴ His scholarly work on Islamic law of war and peace “*al-Jihād fi’l-Islām*” was equally monumental as it was acknowledged by many learned scholars of his time. He later became the editor of the popular scholarly Islamic magazine *Tarjumān al-Qur’ān*, the opportunity he used to present Islamic alternatives to western concepts and as well give Islamic solutions on several socio-political and educational problems facing the Muslims in the Indian subcontinent in particular and the entire Muslim *ummah* in general.

In 1938, based on the invitation of the poet-philosopher Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938) to start a work on re-codification of Islamic law, Mawdudi decided to move to Pathankot (East Punjab, India). This project could not however see the light of the day, as its initiator, Iqbal died in the following month.¹⁵

It should be noted that Mawdudi did not believe only in theorising Islamic alternatives to issues, he went ahead to translate this into action in August 1941 when he facilitated a meeting attended by 150 men and 4 women from different parts of the Indian subcontinent. There, the idea to float an organization that would be championing the cause of

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Mustansir Mir, “Some Features of Mawdudi’s Tafhīm al-Qur’an”, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. II, no. 2 (1985), p. 223.

Islam was mooted and this consequently led to the establishment of the *Jama'at-i-Islami*. The *Jama'at* transformed to an Islamic political party in 1957. The party was formed with the sole aim of bringing about social change in accordance with Islamic principles.¹⁶ Mawdudi was appointed the first *Amir* of the *Jama'at* and he held the post till 1972 when he voluntarily resigned from the presidency due to ill health. The party was waxing strong when in 1947 the Indian subcontinent was partitioned into India and Pakistan and later Pakistan was partitioned into Pakistan and Bangladesh. The partitioning gave the party the opportunity to spread to Pakistan and Bangladesh from where it participated in the elections.¹⁷

With the partitioning, Mawdudi migrated to Pakistan and there he concentrated in producing books and pamphlets on various issues affecting the *Ummah* particularly to carry people along on the activities of the *Jama'at* and to ensure full Islamization of Pakistan. His efforts were however met with serious opposition by the secular rulers of Pakistan who saw him as a threat to their administration. He was therefore arrested and imprisoned several times. The harshest judgement against him however came in 1953 when he was sentenced to death for writing blasphemously about the Qadianis. However, the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment due to several internal and external pressures on the government. Luckily for him, he spent only two years and one month in prison before he was released. While in prison, he concentrated on his work on the Quranic exegesis *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* and some other writings.

As mentioned earlier, he was a prolific writer and his *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is regarded his monumental work. He also wrote on the biography of the Prophet. Most of his works have been translated into major world languages like Arabic, English, Turkish, Persian, Hindi, French, German, Swahili, Tamil and Bengali. An attestation to his erudition could also be appreciated in his visitation to various places lecturing and his serving in several academic and *da'wah* councils. According to Kausar, his academic and *da'wah* activities made him to travel widely to places like Makkah, Madinah, Jeddah, Kuwait, Rabat, Istanbul, London, New York, Toronto

¹⁶ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, *International Relations of an Islamist Movement: The Case of the Jama'at-i-Islami of Pakistan* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), pp. 5–9.

¹⁷ Asyraf Hj. A.B. Rahman and Nooraihan Ali, "The Influence of Al-Mawdudi and the Jama'at Al-Islami Movement on Sayyid Qutb", *World Journal of Islamic History and Civilization*, vol. 2, no. 2 (2012), pp. 232–36.

and several other places. He was also the advisor of Academic Council of the Islamic University of Madina and a member of the Foundation Committee of the Muslim World League in Makkah to mention but a few.¹⁸

Mawdudi however breathed his last due to heart attack on 22, September 1970 in Buffalo, America. His body was brought to Karachi Airport on 25 September where more than fifty thousand people offered the funeral prayer. He was finally buried in Zildar Park, Lahore on 26, September.

To Mawdudi, Islam is a comprehensive religion which touches all aspects of human affairs and on this basis all human affairs must be guided by the teachings of Islam and not any other man-made laws. The adoption of western ideology therefore must not be seen as being perfect. To him, the modern world has subjected itself to human principles and ideologies and as such prone to all sorts of evils, sufferings and calamities. To bail the modern world from total collapse therefore, Mawdudi believes that Islamic ideology is the only alternative. This is because it was adopted initially in the past and it was found to be successful during the time of the Prophet and the Caliphate period. He therefore calls for the revival of this system that was tested and trusted.

Mawdudi believes that the ideal Islamic past cannot be wholeheartedly adopted without considering modern developments and the relevance of the past to the present. He therefore calls for modernisation of Islamic political thought to meet the challenges of the modern world and so reinterprets various Islamic principles within the context of modern setting.¹⁹ This stand of Mawdudi made Wood to submit that he did not actually call for theocratic form of government, but “theodemocracy” or “democratic caliphate.”²⁰ That notwithstanding, he calls for proper examination of modern civilization by before adopting it, to avoid blind imitation of its culture, value and morals. He sees the Western scientific knowledge and the techniques of applying it to the practical problems of life as a common heritage of mankind which should

¹⁸ Kausar (ed.), “Mawdudi’s Philosophy of an Islamic State”, p. 150.

¹⁹ Muzaffar Hussain, “The Islamic Polity of Abdul A’la Mawdudi”, *VEAST Transactions on Islamic Research*, vol. 3, no. 1 (2014), pp. 13–21.

²⁰ Simon A. Wood, “Rethinking Fundamentalism: Ruhollah Khomeini, Mawlana Mawdudi, and the Fundamentalist Model”, *Journal for Cultural and Religious Theory*, vol. 2, no. 11 (2011), p. 194.

be borrowed by the Muslims.²¹

To Mawdudi, jihad is a key issue in Islamic revivalism. The jihad in this context is succinctly discussed by Parel when he writes:

It was not war in the secular sense. In the secular sense, war is an activity between states. The object of secular wars is the securing of the national interest of the state. Jihad by contrast is a religious activity, a struggle in “the way of God” or “for the Cause of God” (Maududi 1976: 7). It is the highest expression of Islam as a religion (din). Jihad has two aspects. First, it is the inner spiritual struggle to live as holy an Islamic life as possible. Second, it is an outer struggle against those who threaten Islam or are perceived to threaten Islam. The threat comes from various sources, comprehensively summed up under the heading “paganism” (jahiliya). The outer jihad will continue as long as there is paganism in the world.²²

In the perspective of Mawdudi, jihad is an instrument of change in any society. This is in line with the saying of the Prophet that whoever sees an act of abomination in a society should attempt changing it by his hand, and if his not capable to do this, then by his tongue and lastly by his heart. As such, he believes that jihad does not necessarily mean to take arm against those in authority, but to overthrow them by voting them out of office. It was therefore the aim of his Jama’at “to win over the society’s leaders, conquering the state, and Islamizing the government.”²³ The above hadith of the Prophet probably influenced why Mawdudi attempted to reform his society using his prolific writings to clear many confusions and mis-interpretations of Islamic concepts and criticising the social ills in the society. Confessing how his *tafsir* work influenced the society, Ushama and Osmani write:

His Tafsir played a significant impact on the hearts and minds of modern educated youths of Pakistan and through its translation even abroad. Previously, the people read the Qur’an for barakah and blessings. Mawdudi was able to change this attitude of the people and made them to read it for understanding and implementation. The educated generation loved the Qur’an, as they could understand it wonderfully through the great

²¹ Sayyid Abul A’la Maududi, *West Versus Islam* (New Delhi: Markazi Maktaba Islami, 2000), p. 167.

²² Parel, “Lessons from South Asian”, p. 7.

²³ Seyyed Vali Reza Nasr, “The Rise of ‘Muslim Democracy’”, *Journal of Democracy*, vol. 16, no. 2 (2005), p. 16.

work of Mawdudi. They found that the Qur'an solves modern problems and is fully relevant in today's realities as it was relevant in the time of the Prophet.²⁴

D. Mawdudi's Thought on Democracy and Political Issues

1. *Consultation*

To Mawdudi, in addition to mutual consultation with the people who would be ruled by the leader to be chosen, the administrative or legislative functions of a leader revolve round effective consultation with people who give advice without fear or favour. This will check to a large extent, monarchy, despotism and dictatorship. To him, all the people concerned should be consulted directly or indirectly through their representatives. In case of appointment, it can take the form of people electing their representatives either by general election or through electoral colleges. If it is on issues of decision making, it can take the form of holding a referendum on important issues affecting them or making public inquiry into important proposal. It can also take the form of the representatives of the people forming the legislative arm of the government in which case such representatives should be men and women of impeccable character who are obedient to Allah and His Law.²⁵ Mawdudi further delved into some conditions for effective decision making, which are:

- Creation of environment conducive for decisions to be made. Such include freedom of speech and expression for all participants in decision-making and avoidance of "arm twisting" or "wheel-dealing" during the decision-making process.
- The decision-making group should select their leader on the basis of consensus. In other words, a leader should not be imposed on them and the leader to be appointed by the participants must be the one who is capable, qualified and sincere.

²⁴ Thameem Ushama and Noor Mohammad Osmani, "Sayyid Mawdudi's Contribution towards Islamic Revivalism", *IIUC Studies*, vol. 3, no. 0 (2006), p. 100.

²⁵ J.B. Badamasiy, "Constitutionalism and Representative Government in Islam", in *Shari'ah, Democracy and Governance in Islam*, ed. by Haruna Salihi, Baffa Aliyu Umar, and Hamza Ahmad Suleiman (Nigeria: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2011), pp. 190–95.

- All participants in decision making should be honest enough to enjoy the confidence of the group they are representing. In other words they should represent the interest of those they are representing rather than addressing their own interest.
- Participants should avoid “groupism” in decision-making, as “this leads to politicking and intense lobbying which invariably has disastrous consequences”.
- In case there are differences of opinion, decisions should be made based on a majority ruling.²⁶

The essence of consultation according to Mawdudi is to avoid a situation where a single individual enforces his dogma on others thereby overriding their rights for his selfish motives or considering himself important than others or that he is wise and others are foolish.²⁷ To substantiate this he made reference to the following statements of ‘Umar in his inaugural speech before the Consultative Council thus:

I have called you for nothing but that you may share with me the burden of the trust that has been reposed in me of managing your affairs. I am but one of you, and today you are the people that bear witness to truth. Whoever of you wishes to differ with me is free to do so, and whoever wishes to agree is free to do that. I will not compel you to follow my desires.²⁸

Closely related to the above is that the leader must create an atmosphere where individuals will be free to make their comments, and not only have opportunity to criticise the government constructively, but as well give mutual advice and have opportunity of healthy exchange of ideas to move their community forward. This was demonstrated by Caliph ‘Umar who was interrupted by a man publicly in the mosque. The Caliph acknowledged such interruption and thanked Allah who endowed the *Ummah* with such people who were bold enough to correct their leaders when they went astray.²⁹

²⁶ M.A. Shaikh, “Ethics of Decision-Making in Islamic and Western Environments”, *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences (AJISS)*, vol. 5, no. 1 (1988), p. 124.

²⁷ Hussain, “The Islamic Polity”, p. 660.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 661.

²⁹ Hussain, “The Islamic Polity”.

2. *Sovereignty*

Defining Allah's sovereignty, Mawdudi writes:

That His (Allah) writ must run supreme in the world: legal judgements must be based on His Shari'ah, the police must operate according to His commandments, financial transactions must be carried out in conformity with His laws, taxes must be levied as directed by Him and spent as specified by Him, the Civil Service and the army must obey His code, people must devote their abilities, capacities, and efforts to fulfilling His desires. Further, Allah alone must be feared, His subjects must submit to Him only and man must not serve anyone but Him.³⁰

The definition of democracy by Abraham Lincoln as the government of the people by the people and for the people³¹ gives the secular nature of this system of government, as it schemed out God from its operation and then became susceptible to all form of vices. In other words it separates religion from politics hence gives the impression that God has no say in the affairs of the people. Divorcing religion from politics therefore is seen by Mawdudi as a quick way of opening the way for scepticism in thought, confusion in values, expediency in standard, vulgarity in behaviour and opportunism in diplomacy.³² To Mawdudi, the first agent of corrupt leader is the system of government which ascribes to man absolute sovereignty. To him, sovereignty belongs only to Allah not only because He is the Creator of the universe but because He provides human beings with all they need to sustain themselves on earth and because He knows what is good for them and what will harm them on earth.³³ He therefore does not see any reason why any law could be used to govern man on earth except the law made by God Himself for man. He therefore submits:

Do you find it reasonable that the land be owned by one being but another

³⁰ Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1985), p. 299.

³¹ R. I. Adebayo, "Islam, Democracy and Good Governance: A Glimpse of the Islamic Political Thought", *Orita Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. XLII, no. 2 (2010), p. 10.

³² Sayyid Abul A'la Mawdudi, "The Political Theory of Islam", in *Contemporary Debates in Islam*, ed. by Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2000), p. 7.

³³ Shahzadi Aroosh Khan and Muhammad Saeed Akhtar, "Understanding Syed Abul Aa'la Mawdoodi's Educational Thoughts", *The Dialogue*, vol. X, no. 3 (2015), p. 279.

being rules over it, that a property belongs to one person but some other person is treated as its owner, that the subjects belong to one sovereign but another sovereign reign over them? Such things clearly run contrary to reality, reason and justice. And because of this, wherever and whenever such a situation is found, the results are always disastrous.”³⁴

Furthermore, Mawdudi strongly believes that the fallibility of human beings as well as the limitation of their knowledge could not make them make laws that will make life bearable for their subjects. In addition, the fear of God is seen as the beginning of wisdom, as this will make them to be conscious of whatever they do. However, rulers who do not see themselves accountable to God would assume absolute powers and rule ruthlessly. To him, rulers who are not God conscious will not rule with truth and justice. Such will use public funds with impunity; they would usurp people’s rights, accumulate illegal wealth and subjugate God’s creation to their own desires. Mawdudi therefore established four principles that a true Islamic state must follow: they are: the principle of sovereignty of Allah; the principle of the Prophet’s authority; the principle of a state in which sovereignty would be expressed in the name of Allah, and the principle of political consultation system.³⁵

3. *Rule of Law*

Mawdudi relies extensively on the administrative styles of the four-Rightly Guided Caliphs as an epitome of Islamic democracy. These caliphs adopted equality before the law and there was no sacred cow in their adjudication of justice by them. The caliphs were leaders who were ready to stand before judges and would not tolerate preferential treatment from any of the judges. To drive home this point, Mawdudi cited two instances of the appearance of two caliphs before judges. In the first instance, ‘Umar the caliph had a case with Ubayy bin Ka’b and the case was to be heard at the court of Zaid bin Thabit. Upon citing ‘Umar, Zaid rose from his chair to offer ‘Umar his own seat and when he was to talk, Zaid was expected to ask him to swear an oath, which he did not do. ‘Umar decided to sit beside Ubayy and he swore an oath. On

³⁴ Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims*, p. 289.

³⁵ Liu Zhongmin, *Commentary on “Islamic State” Thoughts of Islamism*, vol. Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies (in Asia), no. 7 (2013), p. 28.

the basis of these, ‘Umar concluded that Zaid was not fit to be a judge as ‘Umar and an ordinary man did not stand equal in his eyes.³⁶ At another instance, ‘Ali the caliph had a case with a non-Muslim citizen before the Judge Shuraih. However, when Shuraih saw the caliph, he rose to greet him and on the basis of this, ‘Ali remarked: “This is your first injustice.”³⁷

4. *Justice and Equal Rights*

Dispensation of justice by the government implies equal treatment of every section of the community or nation irrespective of their social class, tribal, ethnic or religious affiliation. It also involves the protection of the rights of the weak, the poor, minorities and even the non-Muslims.³⁸ In the view of Mawdudi, one of the distinctive features of an Islamic government is equal rights and fair treatment of people regardless of race, colour or tribal sentiment. This feature was demonstrated by caliphs Abu Bakr and ‘Umar during their tenure and this eventually eradicated the spirit of tribal prejudice which emerged immediately after the death of the Prophet in form of apostasy and false prophethood. The fear of favouritism grasped ‘Umar that he took some steps to avoid it before his death. He invited ‘Ali, ‘Uthman and Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas and addressed them: “If you succeed me as Caliph, do not allow the members of your clans to ride the necks of people.”³⁹ He also instructed the Elective Council of six appointed by him for the purpose of appointing his successor to make whoever emerged as Caliph take an oath that he would not show discrimination in favour of his own clan. Unfortunately, ‘Uthman who emerged as Caliph after ‘Umar was overtaken by the spirit of tribalism and this step consequently ate up the whole edifice of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs and this consequently led to his assassination.⁴⁰

To Mawdudi, what constitutes an ideal ruler manifests in what a ruler thinks of himself, his status, duties and what policy he follows. He alluded to this making reference to the inaugural speeches of both Caliphs Abu Bakr and ‘Umar when they assumed office as caliph. In addition,

³⁶ Hussain, “The Islamic Polity”, p. 663.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Salisu Shehu and Muslim Corpers’ Association of Nigeria, *Social Justice and Leadership Responsibility in Islam* (Kano: Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2007), p. 43.

³⁹ Hussain, “The Islamic Polity”, p. 663.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

the instructions of ‘Umar to the governors he sent to different provinces speak volume of how the governors should conduct themselves. He said at an instance: “I have appointed you governor over the followers of Muhammad (on whom be peace) not to make you masters of their persons and properties but to enable you to lead them to establish prayer, dispose of their affairs with justice, and dispense their rights among them with equity.” ‘Umar was so serious about this point that he publicly announced that whoever had a charge of injustice against any of his governors should come forward to complain.⁴¹

5. *Trust*

Political offices are considered a trust which must be occupied by those who are conscious of God. By virtue of the fact that a person in the post of authority has access to the treasury, he is not expected to turn such to his personal property or even use it to achieve his own selfish end. To drive home his point, Mawdudi refers to some statements of Caliph ‘Umar on how to generate funds to the treasury, how to expend it as well as the sacredness of the funds thus:

I do not regard anything correct in respect of this trust of yours but three things: that it should be taken by right, that it should be expended by right, and that it should be withheld from wrong. My position regarding this property of yours is the same as that of an orphan’s guardian with the orphan’s property. So long as I am not needy I will take nothing from it. When I am needy I shall take as it befits one to take from an orphan’s property under his care.⁴²

To Mawdudi, it is an aberration of trust on the part of a leader who has access to public funds and rather than using such funds to improve the standard of living of his subjects decided to spend such on frivolities and on projects which do not have direct impact on his people.

6. *On Hereditary and Democratic Governance*

Establishing the fact that hereditary government is not in line with the political teaching of Islam, Mawdudi goes memory lane to declare that the Prophet did not bequeath any decision regarding the question

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

of his successor as an indication that he did not support hereditary government. To him, the Prophet demonstrated his sense of democracy by leaving the *Ummah* to have a leader of their choice after him. On the basis of this, he frowns at assumption of political office by force as against the spirit of Islam⁴³. He then analysed different democratic measures through which the early caliphate particularly the four rightly-guided caliphs assumed office as caliph. While Abu Bakr was proposed Caliph by ‘Umar and accepted by the inhabitants of Madinah, he Abu Bakr in turn towards the tail end of his administration proposed ‘Umar, a non-relative of his, as his successor with the approval of the people of Madinah. When ‘Umar was approaching his end, he came up with an Elective Council of six members who were most influential and enjoyed the widest popularity to decide on the issue of succession. He also gave them some conditions to be followed in the process namely that nobody should impose himself on the people and that his son should not be considered for election into the post lest the office should become a hereditary right. After much deliberations and wide consultations, the lot fell on the side of ‘Uthman who consequently took over from ‘Umar after his death.⁴⁴

To further establish his stand on democratic governance as a means to good governance, he made reference to the instance which brought ‘Ali to the throne as a Caliph. With the sudden death of ‘Uthman, a group of people attempted to install ‘Ali as Caliph but which he rejected on the basis that election should not be carried out secretly but with the consultation of the Muslims. In the same vein, ‘Ali refused to choose his son as his successor and so declared, “I will leave the faithful in the condition in which the Prophet of God left them.”⁴⁵

It can be deduced from the discussion above that Mawdudi does not see anything wrong in an incumbent ruler choosing his successor and in him constituting an electoral college for purpose of deciding or administering the election exercise. It is important to note that the Prophet did same during his briefings to the expedition of the battle of Mubah when he appointed Zayd bn Harithah the vice commander of the

⁴³ Sayyid Abul A’la Mawdudi and Sherif M.M, “Political Thought in Early Islam”, in *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Marrassowitz, 1966), p. 659.

⁴⁴ Mawdudi and M.M, “Political Thought in Early Islam”.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 660.

Muslim troop. He then appointed Ja'far bn Abi Talib as his successor in case Zayd fell. In case Ja'far also fell, the Prophet appointed Abdullah bn Rawahah to succeed him. He then left the troop to appoint their leader in case Abdullah also fell in the battle. Interestingly, all the appointed leaders died at the battle and so the troop appointed Khalid bn al-Walid as their commander.⁴⁶ The stand of Mawdudi on free choice of a leader is in line with that of Sayyid Qutb who also submits that the position of authority must be by the completely and absolutely free choice of all Muslims and not necessarily by any bound by any compact with his predecessor and not by heredity.⁴⁷

7. *On Bad and Corrupt Government*

The assignment of vicegerency imposed on man has different categories. To Mawdudi, those in power or in the helm of affairs of a country are those who actually have all it takes to carry out this responsibility. The accessibility of those in authority to power and resources of their nations, their influence on the laws of their territories, their control of administration and possession of the instruments of coercion like the police and army are therefore supposed to be used by them to impact positively on their subject.⁴⁸ As if Mawdudi knows what operates in Nigeria, he writes:

Oppression prevails throughout the world. The weak are denied justice. The poor find life a harden burden. Courts have become shops where justice can be bought in return for money. Exorbitant taxes are levied upon people, which are then wasted on high salaries for public officials, on giant buildings, on armaments and on other extravagances.⁴⁹

To Mawdudi, the root of all evils is corrupt leaders who despite having all it takes to check corruption condone it. Instances of adultery, prostitution and interest are on the increase because those in government are participating in the acts. To him, there is no amount of preaching against such practices as adultery, fornication, pornography and other vices that can work unless those in position of authority declare such

⁴⁶ A, "Political Thoughts", pp. 28–9.

⁴⁷ Sayyid Qutb, Hamid Algar, and John B. Hardie, *Social Justice in Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2010), p. 121.

⁴⁸ Mawdudi, *Let Us Be Muslims*, p. 286.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 287.

forbidden.⁵⁰ He writes further:

Likewise, merely exhortations and good counsels will not help if you want to eradicate exploitation of man by man, prevent misuse of human wealth and talent, stamp out oppression and establish justice, erase corruption, stop bloodshed, give dignity to the down-trodden, restore equality, prosperity and peace to all. What is needed is a demonstration from those in power that corruption, oppression, injustice, exploitation, immorality and godlessness will not be tolerated; and that positive actions will be taken in accordance with God's law to promote the creation of a just, God-fearing and God-loving society.⁵¹

To get rid of the bad leaders, Mawdudi called for appointment of "men possessed of faith and integrity and a clear vision of the Islamic order, people who are in the vanguard of man's intellectual life and have the competence to run the affairs of the world" to assume the reins of leadership.⁵² He likened the role of the leadership to that of the driver of a railway train who has the discretion to determine how to drive the passengers unless the passengers protest to get him replaced by another one. He however is conscious of sanctity of life and property, hence does not call for change in government through bloody coup. In other words, assumption of political office is not a matter of life and death; it should be through free and fair election and determination of the electorates to change their non-performing leaders.

E. Lessons Learnt for Nigeria

One of the steps taken by Mawdudi to translate his political dream to reality was his establishment of a political party, the Jama'at -i-Islami. There is no doubt that this party was floated by Mawdudi on the basis of religion believing that having access to political authority is a prerequisite to carrying out his religious manifestoes. The question then is that will this step not divide the country on religious line if adopted in Nigeria? Or can we have such parties like Christian Party of Nigeria or Islamic People's Party? A quick answer to this is that the constitution of the

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 288.

⁵² Khurshid Ahmad and Zafar Ishaq Ansari, *Islamic Perspectives: Studies in Honour of Maulana Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi* (Leicester: Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1979), pp. 360–65.

country does not permit a party to be registered in the name of a religion. Indeed, the sensitivity of Nigerians to religion is informed by the choice of the Presidential or governorship candidates of parties to be Muslims and Christians alternatively. In other words, where the President is a Muslim, his deputy will be a Christian and vice-versa. This is however not the case in some states where a particular religion dominates. Take for instance, in states like Kano and Sokoto where the Muslims dominate, the Muslim-Muslim ticket is the order. This is also the case in Bayelsa, Cross-River and Rivers states where the Christians dominate.

Floating a party on the basis of a particular religion, to us, cannot divide the country. This is because, having a religious political party does not in any way suggest that all adherents of the religion will belong to that party. This is exactly what happened to the Jama'at of Mawdudi in Pakistan. Despite being a religious party and despite the fact that the country is Muslim dominated, the party has not been able to seize power in Pakistan since its inception. The benefit of having a party on the platform of a religion is mentioned by a onetime Catholic Archbishop of Abuja and President, Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), Onaiyekan when he writes:

I personally do not see why people cannot decide to form a political party on the basis of their religion. The fact is that religion is already very much involved in political parties whether you admit it or not. Probably if those who want religious parties are allowed to form their own, things will be clearer and masks will be removed. I know for sure that if anyone founds a Christian Party of Nigeria, there is no guarantee that all Christians will flock into that political party. Similarly, I believe that anyone who forms an Islamic Party of Nigeria might be disappointed to find that many Muslims have not become part of his party. It may indeed be the best way to isolate all those extremists who are destabilizing our political environment. I believe again in this case, it should be possible to make rules regulating the activities of Political Parties in such a way that they actually do the right thing and promote positive values in the community.⁵³

To drive home his point, Onaiyekan made reference to European countries like Italy and Germany which for many years after the 2nd World War, had a party called the Christian Democratic Party and which

⁵³ John O. Onaiyekan, *Dividends of Religion in Nigeria: A public Lecture presented at the University of Ilorin on 12, May, 2010* (Ilorin: Department of Religions, 2011), pp. 26–7.

ruled those countries for more than 30 years.⁵⁴ That notwithstanding, we observe that floating a party in the name of a religion has not been helpful to the Muslims in recent time. For instance, the Islamic Salvation Front in Algeria which was believed to have won an election in the country was not allowed to rule, as the election was annulled and the enthronement of a popular democratically elected government was not allowed to see the light of the day. In the same vein, the purely Islamic Taliban regime was not allowed to operate successfully in Afghanistan. The recent dethronement of the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt is another testimony to the fact that floating a party in the name of religion is seen by some people as being undemocratic hence the attempts to frustrate the government of such party if voted in or denying such party from taking the mandate given them by the electorate.

One major factor that can hamper having an Islamic political party in Nigeria is the complex nature of the country, namely its multi-religiosity, laws and multi-ethnicity. Though the Muslims constitute about 50% of Nigeria population, they are geographically divided hence the uneasy relationship between the Muslims in the South and those in the North. This explains why Oloyede submits that the political configuration of the country was established on a “diametrically conflicting mix of religion, politics and law.”⁵⁵

The unpredictable nature of election results in the recent past also indicates that religion does not always influence the choice of people. An example of this could be seen in the 2003 election where Olusegun Obasanjo a Christian from the South-western Nigeria and Muhammadu Buhari, a Muslim from the North contested. Majority of the votes for Olusegun Obasanjo were from the Northern and Muslim dominated states. Indeed, the former military President, a Muslim who annulled the June 12 1993 election which was believed to have been won by another Muslim, late Moshood Abiola, threw his weight behind President Obasanjo’s candidacy.

Apart from the above, there is also the need to strike balance between justice, merit and equal representation in political office as they

⁵⁴ Onaiyekan, *Dividends of Religion in Nigeria*.

⁵⁵ I.O. Oloyede, “Politicising the Divine, Theologising the Mundane: The Cross-Currents of Law, Religion and Politics in Nigeria”, in *Topical Issues in Arabic and Islamic Studies: Essays in Honour of Late Professor A.A. Gwandu* (NATAIS, 2014), p. 4.

affect Nigeria. The fear of the minority being dominated by the majority might probably be the reason for adoption of federalism in Nigeria. For administrative convenience, the colonial administration had reinforced the three political administrative divisions – the North, the East and the West under the appropriate constitutional arrangement. The status quo is allowed to remain even with the exit of the colonial masters. In spite of the federal system of governance adopted, Adegboye observes some challenges bedeviling the federalism of Nigeria. These are the problems of integration, accommodation of various ethnic groups, unification of all parts of the federation, sharing of the national cake equitably, and maintenance of adequate balance among the various ethnic or religious groups in the country coupled with the fear of domination.⁵⁶ That notwithstanding, it is believed by the proponents of federal character that the system is the only solution to peace and stability in the country and the only way to sustaining democratic principles of participatory politics in Nigeria. The question then is what will be the case where the candidate from minority race fails to measure up to expectation in competitive post; will the country have to lower the standard of performance to afford such candidate to occupy the post? If the answer is in the affirmative, it means that the principle of federal character will conflict with the principle of merit which Mawdudi was agitating for. It needs to be mentioned that the principle of federalism in whatever nomenclature it is called – quota system or equal representation, is being applied to admission into federal schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities and this to us is downplaying the spirit of justice, equity and merit. In the same vein, emphasis should be laid on voting for the right person who is competent and who will discharge his official responsibility with utmost integrity and impartiality. In our own view, any political office is a trust which must be discharged without fear or favour.

F. Concluding Remarks

So far, efforts have been made to discuss the political thought of a prolific writer a political activist and a Muslim reformer with a view to bring to limelight some of his principles for political office holders

⁵⁶ Adegboye M.B, “Federal Character in Nigeria: Any Controversy?”, *Journal of Human Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1996), p. 28.

in Nigeria to emulate. The atrocities of many politicians in Nigeria are attributed to their wrong perception of the office they aspire to hold or are holding, seeing it as a means to accumulate wealth and exercise their superiority over their subjects. It is discovered that Mawdudi though a politician, was conscious of the enormity of tasks attached to leadership, sought it to promote the standard of living of his people through legitimate means. His concept of Jihad was to effect change from the top in form of evolution and not revolution. He believed that politicians in position of authority have all it takes to sanitise the community and rid it off its vices. Their failure to do this is an indication that they too actually participate in such vices. From this however, one concludes that it is very difficult to divorce religion and politics and as long as they are not married, politics will continue to be a dirty game played by dirty people. Also, floating a political party in the name of a religion in Nigeria may be an effort in futility in contemporary Nigeria due to the complexity of the country ethnically, religiously and geographically. If a Muslim party could not flourish in a Muslim dominated country, one wonders the thriving of such a party in a multi-religious nation like Nigeria.

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