

Islam's Ideal Form of Democracy

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As to which of these administrative forms is acceptable to Islam, we have said earlier that if democracy in legislation means that whatever is approved by the majority of people - that is, 50% plus 1 - is a credible, official and binding law even if it were against the text of the Qur'an, then Islam does not accept such democracy in legislation. Islam that has its own explicit laws in various administrative affairs, judiciary, economics, management, and related to other organs of the country does not allow a law against the explicit text and fixed decree of the Qur'an to be recognized officially. To officially recognize such a law is tantamount to rejection of Islam.

What needs further explanation and which I promised to discuss is the executive dimension of democracy, the role of the people in electing those who want to enact the laws within the framework of Islamic foundations, viz. the deputies in the Islamic Consultative Assembly. In cases where Islam has not enacted fixed and permanent laws, there is the need to enact new laws for new issues and needs, Islam has authorized the legitimate government apparatus to enact necessary laws for this domain while observing the general principles and standards of Islam and not contradicting the framework of Islamic laws, labeled by the late Shahid (Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir) Sadr as "free zone" [mantaqah al-firagh]. The driving and traffic laws stipulate the side to move - right or left - and the speed of a vehicle. Evidently, the Qur'an and traditions have no text in this regard.

The people's role in determining the legislators and executives that enact and implement temporary laws can be materialized by observing Islamic standards. In other words, democracy and the vital role and participation of people are practiced in our country observing limits and conditions set by Islam by electing those who qualify. Electoral candidates must be Muslims committed to Islamic laws and observe Islamic standards in enacting laws and rules. In addition to the conditions set for deputies in the Islamic Consultative Assembly, with the exception of a few deputies of religious minority groups, the rest of the representatives must be Muslims committed to observe Islamic laws.

Lest there were negligence and shortcomings and Islamic laws were not observed in enacting laws, a number of experts constituting the so-called Council of Guardians are duty-bound to conform the ratified bills of the Majlis to the Constitution and religious standards and then validate them. In the case of their nonconformity, the said bills are returned to the Majlis for

review. This is the type of legislative and executive mechanism accepted in our country and no one opposes it.

Similarly, executives with the President at top must observe Islamic laws and standards. First of all, the President must possess the conditions, qualities and merits mentioned in the Constitution which are taken from Islamic laws, and in taking charge of the government he must be, so to speak, authorized by God, the Exalted in the sense that after garnering the majority vote and endorsement of the people, he must be designated by the wali al-faqih. In this case, his government shall be legitimate and credible. This is something which is implemented in our country.

With the aim of understanding the role of the people and the domain of their involvement in the Islamic system, let me cite an example. Let us assume that we were living during the caliphate of the Commander of the Faithful('a) and in our own city we knew of a righteous person who deserved to be the city ruler and we endorsed him to the Imam ('a). After receiving the endorsement, the Imam ('a) possibly designated him as the new ruler. Now, if the majority of people had such endorsement, the Imam('a) would highly regard their view and designate the said person as governor of one of the regions under his jurisdiction.

So, the role of the people in the government structure and administrative decision-making, in terms of theory and legitimacy, is that people decide who is the most meritorious in enacting or enforcing the law and then cast their vote in his favor. The vote of the people is equivalent to a recommendation to the leadership. In reality, it is a pact they forge with the wali al-faqih that if he designates the recommended person to the presidency, they will obey him. It is on this basis that during the time of the eminent Imam ('a), when the majority of people elected a person to the presidency, he would say, "I do hereby designate him, who is endorsed by the people, to be the President." That is, "the vote of the people is like an endorsement for me to accept him."

This is the theory of the Islamic government which has no contradiction whatsoever with the second meaning of democracy. It is functioning in our country since the Revolution and no (theoretical) problem has ever emerged. Yet, if democracy means that religion should have no role in the affairs of society and none of the religious symbols be seen in the government institutions, such a thing is incompatible with Islam!

Democracy in its third sense, as interpreted by the Global Arrogance that wants to impose it on others is absolutely opposed to Islam, for it means the negation of Islam. However, democracy in its second sense has been accepted by observing the conditions set by Islam for rulers, legislators, implementers, and judges. That is why the people should seriously elect individuals who deserve to legislate and implement laws, and thus, prove their cooperation and support for

the Islamic state and regard themselves as participating in the affairs of the country. This form of democracy is accepted in Islam and practiced in our country. If there are violations in some cases, they are also committed elsewhere, and one should be vigilant lest they are repeated