

TAHA JABIR AL-ALWANI: ISSUES IN CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC
POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Abstract

Dr. Taha Jabir al-Alwani's political thought emphasizes revitalizing Islamic governance through Qur'anic universals, contextual interpretation, and tolerance. He calls for freeing the study of the higher objectives of Shariah (maqasid) from narrow jurisprudential confines. In his view the Qur'an's supreme aims are *tawhīd* (God's unity), *tazkiyyah* (social purification), and *'umrān* (civilizational order), values that transcend specific legal issues. This broader maqasid approach underpins his understanding of Islamic governance. Al-Alwani strongly affirms pluralism and diversity as integral to Islam. He notes that God "has created the human race with a diversity of perceptive and intellectual capacities" leading to "a multiplicity of opinions and rulings". He praises Islamic tradition for integrating this diversity: whereas modern societies merely acknowledge pluralism, Islamic civilization "has actually integrated such diversity, transforming it into a factor which catalyzes human growth". He also underscores the Qur'anic injunction "there is no compulsion in religion" (Q. 2:256), insisting that Islamic governance must protect individual conscience rather than enforcing orthodoxy. In Al-Alwani's view, tolerance (*ikhtilāf*) is not a weakness but a divinely ordained feature of the *ummah*. On governance and democracy, Al-Alwani urges caution about importing Western models. He explicitly warns against equating *shūrā* (consultation) with modern democracy or equating a republican system with the caliphate. Such conflation, he argues, distorts Islamic concepts. Instead, policy and leadership must be rooted in Islamic values, mutual consultation and accountability, rather than historical analogies. He observes that Muslim history saw the *ummah* (community) eclipse by state-centric politics: "concern for the state [has] eclipsed concern for the *ummah*...to the point where the *ummah* was essentially replaced by the state", with communities fragmenting into tribes and sects. These historical analyses inform Al-Alwani's advocacy of collective *ijtihād* and communal decision-making as antidotes to authoritarianism and sectarianism. Overall, Al-Alwani's writings argue for an Islamic polity that upholds Qur'anic higher objectives while meeting contemporary challenges. He stresses that consultation, justice, and freedom are consistent with Islam, and that scholars and communities should engage in *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) to adapt governance accordingly. In practice he envisions an Islamic state where the

maqāsid al-sharī'ah are realized, safeguarding faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property, and where diversity is treated as a divine trust rather than a threat.

INTRODUCTION

Taha Jābir al-'Alwānī (1935–2016) was a prolific Islamic legal scholar and reformer whose work aimed to reconcile traditional Islamic jurisprudence with the challenges of the modern world. An Iraq-born Azharī-trained jurist, al-'Alwānī served as president of the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) and of the Fiqh Council of North America and founded the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences (GSISS) in the United States (Alalwani, 2010). In his many books and articles, he addressed issues of governance, democracy, pluralism, and the objectives (maqāsid) of Sharī'ah, always emphasizing Islam's eternal principles (tawḥīd, 'adālah, etc.) while engaging contemporary realities. For example, he insists that “the absolute sovereignty of Allāh and exclusiveness of revelation” must underlie any Islamic legislative system (Alalwani, 2010). At the same time, he urged Muslims to revive Islam's traditional spirit of tolerance and ijtihād (independent reasoning) so that lawful diversity could flourish. His writings such as *The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam, towards a Fiqh for Minorities, Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah*, and *Reviving the Balance* articulate a dynamic, contextual approach to Islamic political and legal thought (Alalwani, 2010). This article surveys al-'Alwānī's thought on governance, democracy, pluralism and shūra, grounded in his overarching view of Sharī'ah objectives, and places it in historical and critical context.

Biographical Background

Taha Jābir al-'Alwānī was born in 1935 in Fallujah, Iraq. He studied at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, earning a B.A. (Honors, Shāri'ah and Law, 1959), an M.A. (1968) and a Ph.D. in Uṣūl al-fiqh (1973) (Al-Alwani, 2020). After teaching Islamic jurisprudence for a decade at Imam Muḥammad ibn Sa'ūd University in Riyadh (1975–1985) (Al-Alwani, 2020), he emigrated to the United States in 1984. There he founded the Graduate School of Islamic and Social Sciences

(GSISS) in Virginia, serving as its president and holding the Imam al-Shāfi'ī Chair in Islamic Legal Theory (Alalwani, 2010). He also served two terms as president of IIIT (Herndon, VA) and became founding chairman of the North American Fiqh Council (Alalwani, 2010). Al-'Alwānī's institutional leadership coincided with prolific writing: over his career he published numerous books on fiqh (Islamic law) and 'ulūm al-sharī'ah (legal theory), including *Source Methodology in Islamic Jurisprudence* (1987), *Ijtihād* (1992), *Towards a Fiqh for Minorities* (2003), *Maqāsid al-Sharī'ah* (2001), and several works on the Qur'ān and Sunnah (Al-Alwani, 2020). He was also deeply involved in interfaith dialogue and Islamic social organizations, sitting on bodies such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy (OIC) and advising Muslim community institutions in North America. Al-'Alwānī passed away in March 2016, leaving a legacy as “one of the top Islamic ideologues of modern times” who championed ijtihād, pluralism and maqāsid-based reform (Al-Alwani, 2020).

Governance and Authority

Al-'Alwānī's vision of governance is rooted in the principle of *ḥākimiyyat Allāh*, God's exclusive sovereignty. He insists that in Islam the ultimate authority belongs to Allāh and His revelation, not to any human ruler. For example, he cites the Qur'ānic verse “*And in whatever you differ, its ultimate decision is with Allāh*” (5:49) to underscore that disputes must ultimately be resolved by divine guidance (Al-Alwani, 2006). He summarizes the Islamic political ethos as follows: “**The absolute sovereignty of Allah and exclusiveness of revelation (waḥy) [are] the source of legislation**”, supplemented by revelation and the natural world as sources of knowledge, with reason and experience as tools for understanding (Al-Alwani, 2006). In other words, legitimate governance must be grounded in Sharī'ah objectives (maqāsid) and divine law, not merely secular power.

Al-'Alwānī sharply contrasts this with modern secular models. He criticizes views that limit Islam to a “spiritual” realm and reduce its political concepts to Western equivalents. For instance, he notes that some thinkers casually equate *shūra* (consultation) with Western democracy and *khilāfah* (stewardship) with republicanism (Al-Alwani, 2006). He warns that such analogies risk confusion, because Western secular ideologies have very different foundations. He points to utilitarian and Marxist theories as examples: he describes how, say, Jeremy Bentham’s utilitarian state aimed at “unlimited accumulation of money and exploitation of nature” as the path to happiness, a doctrine he calls a “parody of the Islamic concept of ‘umrān (civilizational welfare)” (Al-Alwani, 2006). In his view, a government that treats religion as irrelevant or that pursues material gain alone is contrary to Islamic values. Instead, he holds that Muslim governance must pursue justice, mercy and the public good in accordance with Divine law.

Practically, al-'Alwānī emphasizes *sharī'ah* principles like *‘adl* (justice) and *rahmah* (mercy) as the normative goals for governance. He repeatedly invokes the famous “letter to Malik ibn al-Ashtar” from ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, in which the Caliph instructs his governor to treat subjects with compassion, whether “brethren in religion or equal in creation”, and to pardon the faults of the governed just as one hope for God’s forgiveness (Alalwani, 2011). For al-'Alwānī, such historical exemplars show that Islamic rule should combine firm adherence to Divine law with benevolent treatment of all people. In one essay he writes that the *model for the exercise of political power* is encapsulated in these instructions from ‘Alī, which command mercy toward both Muslims and non-Muslims under one’s rule (Alalwani, 1996). Thus, governance in al-'Alwānī’s thought is not ideology-free democracy nor authoritarian theocracy, but a Sharī'ah-guided polity aimed at realizing *tawhīd* (unity of God) and *‘umrān* (civilizational welfare) under ethical constraints.

Democracy

Al-'Alwānī engaged extensively with the question of democracy in Muslim societies. He noted that

many contemporary Islamic thinkers are formulating syntheses between Islam and democratic ideals. “Many Islamists have written on democracy, proclaimed their acceptance of it, and found precedents for it in authentic Islamic sources,” he observes, adding that several have even embraced political pluralism and civil liberties as part of Islam’s agenda (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 188(2)). For example, he cites Tunisian scholar Rashīd Ghannūshī approving *naturalization* (citizenship) as compatible with Islam. These developments show a significant shift: Islamic intellectuals increasingly view democracy’s mechanisms (elections, pluralism) as potentially consonant with Islam.

Nevertheless, al-'Alwānī cautions that Western democracy and Islamic governance stem from different philosophical premises. He famously warns against naively approximating democracy to *shūra* (consultation). He writes:

“One example of this is approximating western democracy to Islamic *shūrā* (mutual consultation), thus neglecting the major differences between these two cultural and epistemological paradigms. Democracy emanates from liberal individualism and rests on containing conflict; *shūrā* is based on communal unity and rejection of conflict altogether. (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 239(2)).

In his analysis, democracy’s roots in individual rights and competition contrast with Islam’s emphasis on community cohesion and harmony. Thus, while democratic procedures may be borrowed (such as voting or representative assemblies), they must be carefully framed by Islamic norms. Al-'Alwānī repeatedly stresses that the “logic of Islamic thought” relies on its **constant** values (*tawhīd*, justice, mercy, etc.) and not on transient cultural practices (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 188(3)). He argues that Muslims can adopt certain institutional forms from the modern world only *within the framework of Islam’s unchanging principles*. In his words:

“The Islamic agenda for civilization looks at these variables [borrowed concepts] within the framework of those constants.” (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 188(3))

In practical terms, al-'Alwānī urged Muslims not to reject democracy outright (since secularists may

do harm), but neither to embrace it indiscriminately. Instead, he advocated a critical *ijtihad*: keeping Islam's core intact while allowing creative adaptation in governance. For instance, in his collected essays he contends that Muslim societies should work out constitutional and legal arrangements (e.g. constitutions, citizenship rights, elected bodies) that are inspired by Islam's emphasis on consultation, justice and accountability, even as they differ from purely Western models. This approach sees democracy as one potential *mode* of governance that must be subordinated to Islamic objectives.

Pluralism

Pluralism, both intra-Muslim diversity and interfaith coexistence, is a central theme in al-'Alwānī's thought. He insists that pluralism is built into Islam's very fabric. In one lecture he emphasizes "an inbuilt fundamental pluralism in Islam," noting that "there are different ways of reading the *Qur'an*; there are different ways of reading the *Sunnah*." He cites the *Qur'an*'s injunction to "compete with one another in doing good" (Q. 5:48) as an acknowledgment that "there is no theological way to resolve religious differences", ultimate judgment is left to God (Sachedina, 2010, p. 160(1)). In other words, diversity of legal and theological opinion among Muslims is not only inevitable but can be praiseworthy, provided it is exercised with good intent. Al-'Alwānī's own book *Adab al-Ikhtilāf fī al-Islām* (published in English as *Bridging the Divide: Beyond the Ethics of Disagreement*) elaborates this point historically: he shows how the early Muslim community valued respectful debate as a "revitalizing force," and he laments that later juristic conflicts led to bitter division (Al-Alwani, 2016). His message is that modern Muslims should revive the ethos of *taṣāḥul wa ḥilm* (forbearance and tolerance) exemplified by the Salaf, so that intellectual diversity becomes a source of strength, not discord.

On religious pluralism (Muslim-nonMuslim relations), al-'Alwānī also offers an optimistic vision. He frequently cites the famous letter of Caliph 'Alī to his governor Malik al-Ashtar, which commands mercy towards all subjects, whether "brethren in religion or your equal in creation,"

assuring them of pardon as one hopes for God's forgiveness (Sachedina, 2010, p. 160(1)). Al-'Alwānī regards this directive as a paradigm for Islamic governance in multi-faith contexts. In his view, Muslim rulers must recognize the humanity of non-Muslims under their authority. He argues that even when truths are claimed to be "singular," believers must nonetheless honor common moral bonds. As one commentator notes, Shaykh Al-Alwānī "stood out as one of the fine scholars who argued about the different ways in which we, as members of different communities, could come together in terms of our spiritual connections and common moral destiny as human beings" (Sachedina, 2010, p. 160(1)). In sum, he teaches that Islam inherently permits and even requires a degree of pluralism: differences of belief cannot be coerced, only addressed through wisdom, dialogue and exemplifying good deeds.

Al-'Alwānī also engaged the concept of political pluralism. He observes that many Islamic reformers now see pluralism (multiparty politics, freedom of belief, civil society) as compatible with Islam's higher goals (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 189(1)). But he again tempers enthusiasm with caution: borrowing too readily from "a civilization with pagan roots" risks diluting Islamic constants (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 200). Thus, he calls for an Islamically rooted pluralism, one that allows diversity of community and opinion yet remains anchored in *tawḥīd* and moral values. For him, genuine pluralism is an ethical choice, not merely a political expedient.

Shūrā (Consultation)

The concept of *shūrā* (consultative decision-making) is central to al-'Alwānī's political thought, but he carefully distinguishes it from Western democracy. He defines *shūrā* as an Islamic principle with its own logic: it assumes collective deliberation aimed at achieving consensus and avoiding conflicts, rather than the majority-rule system of democracy. In one of his essays he warns that conflating the two leads to misunderstandings. He criticizes "the tendency to align oneself with the victor," noting the error of "approximating western democracy to Islamic *shūrā*," which ignores their different

epistemological bases (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 239). Democracy, he says, is born of liberal individualism and is structured to manage conflict among competing interests, whereas *shūrā* seeks communal unity and reconciliation. This view implies that an Islamic polity would practice *shūrā* in a broad sense, seeking counsel from knowledgeable members of society, but not necessarily replicate competitive elections in the Western sense.

Historically, al-'Alwānī traces *shūrā* back to the Prophet Muḥammad's practice and the early Caliphate, when the Muslim community was consulted on major decisions (e.g. Abu Bakr's succession). However, he notes that classical jurists never treated *shūrā* as a rigid formula for government; rather, they saw it as a general principle of collective interest (*maṣlaḥah*). Contemporary he argues that *shūrā* can coexist with modern institutions if understood properly. For example, he often points out that even the Qur'ān links *shūrā* with divinely resolved difference: "and on whatever you may differ, the verdict thereon rests with God" (42:10) (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p.170). The Sunnah (Prophetic tradition) then "clarifies" how *shūrā* was practiced, not as a fixed procedure but as the early Muslims consulting experts (*ḥukamā'*) and elders. Al-'Alwānī thus endorses *shūrā* as an Islamic ideal of governance (advisory councils, family councils, community elders, etc.), but he refuses to say it *must* take the same institutional form as Western parliaments. He emphasizes that *shūrā*'s goal is moral and communal unity, and that its permissive nature, "*consult among yourselves*", allows flexibility (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 241).

In practice, al-'Alwānī's approach to *shūrā* means that Muslim governments should ensure participation and consultation, but within Islamic ethical bounds. He asserts that those who "opt for outright rejection" of Western models should not simply romanticize the past, but rather critique history analytically (else Islamic culture remains "marginalized" today) (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 247). In other words, *shūrā* in his thought is a creative principle: it legitimates input from scholars, experts and citizens, but always with the ultimate aim of upholding justice and revelation.

While he stops short of prescribing a detailed constitution, he believes that any Muslim polity should incorporate *shūrā* in its spirit, for example through advisory bodies (*fiqh* councils, community assemblies, etc.) and through the duty of rulers to seek counsel (as commanded in Qur'ān 38:26). Hence, in the debate over democracy and *shūrā*, al-'Alwānī's message is that Muslim society should strive for participatory decision-making guided by Sharī'ah objectives, not mimic secular democracy uncritically.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah

Underlying all of al-'Alwānī's political ideas is the theory of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law). He was convinced that the Sharī'ah's highest aims must guide legal and political judgments. Drawing on Qur'ān and Sunnah, al-'Alwānī famously identified three "supreme and prevailing" *maqāṣid*: **tawḥīd** (the affirmation of God's oneness), **tazkīyah** (moral and spiritual purification), and **'umrān** (civilizational development) (Taha Jaber Al-Alwani, 2007, p. 25). These correspond roughly to divine worship and social well-being. In his view, every legal or governance decision should be evaluated against these ends. For instance, he understood *'umrān* to mean that Islam not only mandates worship but also actively promotes societal welfare, science and progress (similar to Maqdisi's term *ḥaṭāmah* for human development). Likewise, *tazkīyah* implies that law must support moral education and justice, not mere ritual compliance.

He elaborated these ideas in his book *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, presenting Islamic law as fundamentally purposive. He argued that a static, formalistic approach to jurisprudence had led to crises of legal rigidity; only by returning to the *maqāṣid* can *ijtihād* (renewed reasoning) be revived. In practical terms, this means that governance and policy must achieve real benefits (*jalb maṣlaḥah*) and avoid harm (*daf' mafsadah*) in line with the *maqāṣid* (Taha Jaber Al-Alwani, 2007, p. 39). For example, he would judge a particular law or policy valid if it unifies the community under monotheism and justice, or if it enhances societal well-being, and invalid if it contradicts those goals. This *maqāṣid* framework underlies his tolerance of pluralism:

because ultimately God's unity and mercy are the goals, differing opinions that sincerely seek those goals can be tolerated.

Al-'Alwānī's maqāṣid ideas also lead him to affirm many modern values: education, public health, technological advancement, and even certain civil liberties all serve Islam's purpose of human and societal flourishing. Yet he always emphasizes that such values must be rooted in sharī'ah guidelines. Thus, his vision of governance and pluralism is not lawless liberalism, but an *Islamized* pluralism, with democracy and consultation functioning as means to the higher ends of tawḥīd, tazkiyah, and 'umrān. As one of his students notes, al-'Alwānī's methodology treats the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and even modern disciplines as "sources of knowledge" to be integrated under tawḥīd (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 232). In sum, the concept of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah is the linchpin of al-'Alwānī's political thought: it ensures that governance, law, and social change all serve the holistic objectives of Islam, rather than ideological ends.

Recommendations and Future Directions

Building on al-Alwani's holistic Islamic vision, we propose actionable steps for scholars, educators, policymakers, and the Muslim community. These recommendations align with his emphasis on maqāṣid al-sharī'ah (higher objectives of Sharī'ah), principled ijtihād, and an inclusive, pluralistic outlook. The following guidance, addressing political practice, research, education, youth, and interfaith relations, is grounded in al-Alwani's published thought and is intended to bridge immediate needs and longer-term reforms.

Islamic Political Practice

Al-Alwani saw Islamic governance as serving universal moral goals (tawḥīd/unity of God, tazkiyah/self-purification, and 'umrān/social welfare) (Mawardi, 2020. P. 393). In practice, Muslim leaders should evaluate policies by how well they advance justice, freedom and public well-being (values he identifies beneath those higher objectives) (Mawardi, 2020. P. 403). Policymakers ought to incorporate maqāṣid-based reasoning in legislation and administration: for example, welfare programs and legal reforms should explicitly aim to promote social solidarity ('umran

and moral education (*tazkiyah*), in the spirit of Islam's higher aims. Consistent with al-Alwani's advocacy of political pluralism, Muslim governments can formally recognize and work within pluralistic structures. In particular, his development of *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* (jurisprudence for Muslim minorities) shows the value of making Muslims "partners in these societies in happiness and unhappiness" (Mawardi, 2020. P. 394). Accordingly, lawmakers in Muslim-minority contexts should use *ijtihād* to adapt Islamic norms to local conditions, for instance, by accepting naturalized citizenship and civil rights as compatible with Sharī'ah, echoing ideas of Tawḥīd al-Ghannūshī cited by al-Alwani (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 288). Grassroots Muslim organizations and civil society should also apply his ideas: forming consultative councils or civic forums that interpret Islamic principles for contemporary issues. These bodies could mobilize community input on elections, public policy, and social welfare, ensuring that al-Alwani's **taḥkīm al-maqāṣid** (governance by objectives) guides practical politics.

Academic Research and Scholarship

Al-Alwani himself was a tireless reformer of Islamic thought through *ijtihād* and knowledge integration (Majid, 2017). His example recommends a robust research agenda. Universities and think-tanks should pursue interdisciplinary studies that unite Qur'anic ethics with modern social sciences, continuing his *Islamization of Knowledge* program (Othman & Hassan, 2020). In particular, scholars should deepen work on maqāṣid theory: investigating how al-Alwani's ultimate objectives (unity, moral refinement, public welfare) can frame solutions to issues like governance, economics, and human rights (Mawardi, 2020). Comparative analyses (for example, contrasting al-Alwani's views with contemporaries like al-Qarādāwī) will clarify different reform trajectories. Research on *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* should be expanded, documenting successful models of minority jurisprudence and integration. Funding bodies and academic journals can spearhead this by sponsoring conferences and publications on *maqāṣid*, *ijtihād*,

and the **etiquette of disagreement**. In keeping with his two-reading methodology, research projects should literally integrate “Revelation and the real-existential” (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019; Othman & Hassan, 2020): for instance, projects that pair Qur’anic exegesis courses with modern policy analysis or that introduce data science into Islamic studies. By institutionalizing al-Alwani’s approach, blending *naqli* (scriptural) and *‘aqli* (intellectual) knowledge, scholarship will continue his legacy of thoughtful renewal and produce guidance relevant to today’s global challenges.

Curriculum and Education Reform

Al-Alwani called for reforming Muslim curricula to restore balance between revelation and reason (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019). Education programs (from madrasas to universities) should embed his concepts explicitly. Textbooks and courses must go beyond rote learning and *taqlīd* (unquestioning imitation); instead, students should be taught to apply *ijtihād* within traditional methodology (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019; Majid, 2017). For example, curricula can include a required course on **maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah**, presenting *tawḥīd*, *taḥkīm*, and *‘umrān* as foundational aims (Mawardi, 2020). Islamic law programs should likewise teach *fiqh al-aqalliyāt* and the historical use of *ijtihād* in minority contexts. To reflect the “two readings” approach, schools of Islamic studies should introduce integrated curricula: merging Islamic theology and law with modern disciplines (e.g. psychology, economics, environmental science) under a Qur’anic worldview (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019; Othman & Hassan, 2020). Teacher-training and faculty development must emphasize al-Alwani’s methods (such as deriving laws by reading the Qur’an through the Qur’an and Sunnah). On a policy level, educational authorities could fund programs that build a contemporary Islamic epistemology, as al-Alwani urged, so that students learn science, history and civic education through the lens of Islamic values (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019; Othman & Hassan, 2020). These reforms would prepare future scholars and

citizens to carry forth an Islam that is both rooted in tradition and engaged with the modern world.

Youth Engagement

Implementing al-Alwani’s vision requires energizing young Muslims as carriers of renewal. Youth outreach should highlight his calls for dynamic *ijtihād* and responsible pluralism. Community centers and student associations can run workshops on civic ethics inspired by his thought, for instance, seminars on the Islamic case for civic participation or the environment, grounded in *maqāṣid* reasoning. Digital media projects (webinars, podcasts, social media series) can make his ideas accessible: explaining concepts like *maqāṣid* and the ethics of disagreement in youth-friendly language. Organizations might establish fellowships or internships for young researchers to work on projects about *maqāṣid*, knowledge integration, or *fiqh al-aqalliyāt*, following models like the upcoming IKI forum on his ideas (Institute of Knowledge Integration, 2019). Imams and youth mentors should foster dialogical learning, encouraging students to debate issues respectfully (reflecting al-Alwani’s own *Adab al-Ikhtilāf*). Practically, communities can create youth advisory councils in mosques or local Muslim civic bodies so that young people have input on social projects, a living application of making Muslims “partners” in society (Mawardi, 2020). In the short term, such engagement will galvanize activists; in the long term it will cultivate a generation of Muslim thinkers who carry al-Alwani’s integrated, pluralistic ethos into all spheres of life.

Interfaith and Pluralism

Al-Alwani’s writings reaffirm that Islam historically embraced diversity within a universal ethical framework (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 261(1)). This encourages contemporary Muslims to actively promote interfaith understanding. Community leaders and scholars should emphasize Islam’s role as “a force of attraction” that “welcomes variety and shuns sectarian division” (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 261(2)). Practical steps include organizing joint service projects and dialogues with other faith groups,

framing common efforts (such as poverty relief) in terms of shared maqāṣid (compassion, justice). Religious education can teach Qur'anic principles that align with pluralism, for example, the verse commanding humanity to “know one another” (49:13) reinforces al-Alwani's view of diversity as divinely intended. In sermons and classes, imams might reference his idea that unity of the ummah is achieved by focusing on fundamental values rather than trivial differences (Alalwani, 2011). Policymakers in Muslim-majority countries can also reflect his thought by safeguarding religious liberties for minorities, treating them as full citizens in line with maqāṣid-based governance. Overall, by internalizing al-Alwani's message that Islam can “enfold all religious and cultural pluralities” into its universal discourse (Taha & Al-Alwani, 2005, p. 263), Muslim communities can present a principled, attractive Islam to the wider world and strengthen social harmony at home. Each of these recommendations embodies al-Alwani's pluralistic and purpose-driven approach. By pursuing them, Islamic scholars and practitioners alike can translate his rich intellectual legacy into concrete reforms and enduring progress (Al-Alwani, 2001).

Conclusion

Taha Jābir al-'Alwānī's contribution to contemporary Islamic political thought lies in his balance of fidelity to Sharī'ah with openness to modern challenges. He affirmed that Islam mandates *Ḥakimiyyat Allāh*, God's ultimate authority, and that all political life must be judged by whether it advances tawḥīd, justice, and civilizational welfare. Yet he also insisted that early Islamic tolerance and diversity of opinion should be emulated: there is “an inbuilt fundamental pluralism in Islam,” he taught, recognizing “different ways of reading the Qur'ān [and] different ways of reading the Sunnah”. Accordingly, he encouraged Muslim societies to engage democracy, citizenship, and pluralism, not as uncritical imports, but as ideas to be reinterpreted under Islamic guidance. His analysis of shūrā versus democracy, his endorsement of political pluralism conditioned by Islamic constants, and his emphasis on maqāṣid all reflect

a coherent vision: Islam provides the ultimate framework, but its application requires ijtihād, mercy, and respect for diversity.

In the current debates over Islam and governance, al-'Alwānī's writings remain influential. They appeal to Muslims seeking to uphold religious principles while living in plural societies and engaging global norms. His legacy is a call to revive Sharī'ah's objectives, divine unity, moral refinement, and human welfare, and to apply them with wisdom and tolerance. As one scholar observes, al-'Alwānī “introduced a very important idea about coexistence among faith communities,” inspiring dialogues on pluralism and democracy. Whether as president of the Fiqh Council or as an author, he strove to bridge gaps, between madhāhib, between faiths, between tradition and modernity, in a spirit of compassion and justice. In doing so he affirmed a vision of Islam as a dynamic, pluralistic civilization, and he challenged Muslims to live up to that vision in political life.

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