

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Democracy and Voting

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, we seek His help and His forgiveness. We seek refuge with Allah from the evil of our own souls and from our bad deeds. Whomsoever Allah guides will never be led astray, and whomsoever Allah leaves astray, no one can guide. I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger. And as to what follows:

Today's lecture is about democracy and voting. Recently, there has been much discussion on this topic, with many Muslims and shuyookh bringing it up and presenting various arguments to justify participation in contexts similar to ours. Some even encourage Muslims to engage in voting, making it essential to examine this issue thoroughly from the ground up. Insha'Allah, with Allah's help, we will address the following main points:

1. A brief history of democracy and its connection to the philosophical ideologies that form its foundational basis.
2. A historical perspective on democracy's implementation, focusing on its use and impact, especially when it conflicts with interests pursued by the Western world, including its ties to colonization.
3. The reality of democracy and how it functions, covering definitions, parliamentary members, elections, voting, and types of elections (parliamentary and municipal).
4. The Islamic and Shari'ah ruling on democracy.
5. The Islamic and Shari'ah ruling on parliamentary members.
6. The ruling on voting according to Islam and Shari'ah.
7. An analysis of alleged textual evidence used to justify democracy, addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings of these texts.

History of Democracy

Regarding the main point on the history of democracy and its correlation with philosophical ideologies, I want to acknowledge that much of what I'm about to discuss may already be well-known to those born, raised, and educated in the West. However, this perspective is often unfamiliar in many Muslim-majority countries. In other words, most Muslims are not very familiar with the democratic system's origins and inner workings.

Democracy began in Greece, which, from a Western perspective, is synonymous with the origins of their civilization. When Muslims discuss our historical foundations, we reference the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the four Rightly Guided Caliphs

(Khulafaa' ar-Raashideen). In contrast, when the Western world discusses its roots and ideals, it frequently looks back to Greece, its philosophers, scientific achievements, military strength, and advancements in various fields. It is here that the concept of democracy first emerged. Democracy, derived from the Greek term meaning "rule of the people," indicates that the power to make decisions rests with the people—not with a God or a king.

From this origin, we see a correlation between democracy and secularism. Secularism can be categorized into three areas: in economics, it manifests as capitalism; in social life, as liberalism; and in politics, as democracy. A central tenet among secularists is the belief that religion should not influence politics—that God has no place in political matters. This idea has sparked tensions in several Islamic countries, often leading to conflict between Islamic and secularist groups, and in certain cases, even armed confrontations.

Over time, politicians in our home countries have largely abandoned the explicit use of the term "secularism," as it has lost appeal among ordinary Muslims and is now perceived as ineffective. Instead, they have shifted toward promoting "democracy," which, in reality, bears no significant difference from secularism; the two are merely different sides of the same coin.

Democracy evolved over time, and some Western philosophers began exploring its philosophical foundations in depth. Notable philosophers such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) discussed how democracy began with humans living in a primitive state, without leaders or governing laws to guide them. As human society progressed, the need for a structured system became apparent to maintain peace and order, leading people to agree to sacrifice certain rights to protect others. This agreement formed the basis of a state where representatives chosen by the people held governing power, leading to the concept of elected politicians whose authority derives from the people and who create laws with public involvement rather than divine authority.

This theory, known as the "social contract" (in Arabic, "نظرية العقد الاجتماعي"), describes an implicit agreement where people recognize the need to change their way of life collectively. Already here, one can see a rejection of a fixed moral or religious framework, as the social contract lacks a definitive foundation of justice, truth, or ethics; these concepts, according to this view, can change and evolve. Philosophers like Rousseau and Locke argued that humans were initially primitive and that morals emerged as society developed, contrasting with religious perspectives that uphold the idea of an innate disposition (fitrah) given by Allah.

In this context, Darwin's theory of evolution has also been influential, providing an 'unnaturalistic' foundation for various Western ideas in politics, economics, social life, and psychology—ideas that diverge from principles rooted in divine revelation. Darwin's theory proposes that life began with single-celled organisms, which evolved over time into worms, then fish, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and eventually apes, culminating in humans through further evolutionary development.

Therefore, in democratic and secular theories, there is no fixed moral framework, unlike the concept of fitrah described in Islam, where Allah created humans with an innate understanding of moral truths. Philosophers like Rousseau and Locke viewed human laws and morals as self-constructed, with no

divine origin, marking a divergence from religious teachings that assert a God-given moral framework that remains constant. Thus, the foundations of democracy are deeply intertwined with atheism.

Democracy and Colonization

First and foremost, one should understand the relationships between people and how they correlate with each other. When Allah created Adam, what did the angels say?

أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَن يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ

“Will You place therein those who will make mischief therein and shed blood?” (Al-Baqarah 2:30)

Allah mentions in the Qur’an that the conflict between truth and falsehood will not cease. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: “A group from my Ummah will continue to fight for the truth, prevailing until the Day of Judgment.” (Saheeh Muslim)

If one studies history, one will realize that war has always existed, everywhere. Although the Western world has, for the past few decades, promoted democracy and called for peace, we should ask: when has there ever truly been peace? They are often the ones who initiate conflicts globally—not only against the Islamic world but also against other nations. Their words about peace serve merely as a form of anesthetic, intended to pacify those they have already subdued. The ultimate goal behind these wars is to seize resources and ensure their civilization and culture dominate worldwide.

Once they establish these two aims, they no longer need direct colonial control. Instead, they rely on representatives within our countries and other non-Western nations—individuals who govern in alignment with their interests and remain loyal to them. At this point, they begin to speak of a peaceful world. However, when individuals or nations attempt to become independent of their influence, these entities often face swift punishment, regardless of whether they come from an Islamic or non-Islamic background. This pattern occurs not only in our own nations but worldwide.

Democracy, as a system, is deeply entwined in this strategy. Who are the primary proponents of democracy today? It’s them. While they advocate for democracy, they also ensure it serves their own interests and objectives.

Let’s consider some examples. The first time democracy was implemented in our home countries was at the end of the Ottoman reign. Towards its collapse, two parties emerged: *Hizb ash-Shari’ah Muhammadiyyah* and *Hizb Ittihaad at-Talaqqi*. The first group had Islamic objectives and remained loyal to the Sultan, who had become weak and had lost much of his power. The second group, known as “Union and Development,” consisted mostly of Europeans-educated individuals, including lieutenants and generals in the military, who were loyal to this party. Numbering 20,000, they orchestrated a revolution against the Sultan, restricting his influence, gradually removing Shari’ah, and ultimately declaring a secularist state. This new state had no Islamic foundation and instead embraced a

pre-Islamic, or *Jaahiliyyah*, heritage, similar to how we see secularists in Egypt celebrating their Pharaonic past.

The leader of this movement was Kemal Atatürk. Atatürk did not begin by openly opposing Islam; instead, he implemented changes gradually. Initially, they operated within a democratic framework, but was he the one who introduced these changes? Unfortunately, no. The process had already started toward the end of Sultan Abdul-Hameed's reign, when the Ottoman Empire was weakening and known in the West as the "sick man of Europe." Western powers anticipated its collapse and prepared to influence these lands. They allowed the Ottoman Empire to linger, gradually weakening it by exerting pressures on its government. One form of pressure was diplomatic: the Western embassies in our home countries operated outside local laws, allowing ambassadors to move freely, arrange meetings with secular-minded locals, and plan the Empire's decline.

The second pressure was to adopt a democratic system, leading to the formation of a parliamentary government. Although the law was not immediately secularized, this new system allowed individuals with secular views to influence politics, seeking to remove Islam and Shari'ah altogether. They gained a platform for their opinions, beliefs, and ideologies, and any attempt to suppress them faced diplomatic pushback under the banner of freedom of speech. This situation parallels what we see happening in our home countries today.

In this way, they weakened the Ottoman Empire significantly before it ultimately collapsed. We can see that democracy itself became a tool for colonial powers to fulfill their objectives in our home countries and gain control over them. After Atatürk gained power and gradually secularized the country, some, like a prominent shaykh named Mustafa as-Sabri, the last Mufti of the Ottoman Empire, played a major role in opposing the secularists and modernists. May Allah have mercy upon him.

Mustafa as-Sabri noted that some members of *Hizb ash-Shari'ah Muhammadiyyah* had entered the parliament to protect Islam and Shari'ah, hoping to prevent it from being dismantled piece by piece. When Atatürk's supporters proposed a policy in parliament that was strongly opposed, Atatürk took matters into his own hands. He brandished a gun and said, "Whether you decide or not, this is what decides." He then forced the implementation of the policy, regardless of opposition.

The situation was similar in Egypt, as colonization in our home countries took place in two stages. The first stage was called "protection." Initially, they claimed, "We did not come to colonize you but to protect you for your own good." This was done overtly, without immediately deploying military forces in our countries, but through pressure and threats. Financial support was also provided to ensure that those in political power remained loyal to them. During this period, Egypt operated under a democratic and voting system, and significant efforts were made to spread secularism across all aspects of society—not only in politics but also in literature, education, and social life.

One prominent figure who played a key role in this was an Azhari shaykh, who became highly valued for his influence. He was the leading force behind modernism in the Islamic world. Imagine the variety of his students: some were Muslims who became modernists, others were secularists, Christians, and Jews. His impact pleased even the British and their representatives, one of whom saw his death as a

great loss for Britain. Though he was celebrated as a “reformer” of al-Azhar, his work ultimately weakened the institution to its destruction. This major figure was shaykh Muhammad Abduh, who is now regarded as an imam by modernists, including shaykh al-Qaradawi. During that time, the democratic system was implemented—to whose benefit? Obviously, it served their interests.

And every time democracy brings forth something they don’t favor, they oppose it. We’ve seen this clearly in Egypt. Tunisia is experiencing a similar situation, though it’s somewhat milder. This isn’t the first instance, either. It also happened in Algeria when Islamic parties achieved a significant victory in elections against secularists. Who intervened? The military staged a coup, and even the French were involved. The president at that time, François Mitterrand (1916-1996), stated, “We have 80,000 troops ready to parachute in and colonize it once again if necessary.”

This is why some scholars (‘ulama’) have compared democracy to a “date idol.” According to a narration (though disputed by some), ‘Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) once smiled unexpectedly. When asked about it, he recalled a practice from his days of Jaahiliyyah: when traveling, they would make small idols from dates and worship them. But, when they became hungry, they would eat the idols. Democracy, they argue, is like the “date idol” — they create, use, and spread it, but when it no longer serves their interests, they discard it.

This phenomenon hasn’t only occurred in our home countries; it has also been seen in South America.

The Reality of Democracy

All of the shuyookh who assessed voting in relation to legislation have assessed it incorrectly, resulting in an illegitimate fatwa. The root cause of this mistake, which I will explain, was not considered from the proper perspective. How this error occurred will be addressed at the end. That is why it is essential to focus on what follows.

All previous scholars (‘ulama’), jurists (fuqahaa’), and muftis agree on a foundational approach: when issuing a fatwa, Islamic knowledge, particularly the principles of jurisprudence (usool al-fiqh), serves as a critical tool. In this discipline, five main points are essential. The first point is the source of judgment (i.e., Allah). The second is the ruling itself (such as waajib, haram, etc.). The third is the evidences used (Qur’an, Sunnah, etc.). The fourth pertains to how rulings are derived and extrapolated from textual evidences (i.e., linguistic indications). The fifth relates to the mufti (such as the requirements and qualifications).

Among these, when a fatwa is to be issued, scholars return to the Qur’an and Sunnah, deriving the ruling using the framework of usool al-fiqh. However, this process is not the first step; it is the second. So, what is the first step? It involves understanding the case in question—what it is, its reality, its components, and its definition. A thorough understanding is critical, as scholars say, “A well-formed question is half of knowledge.” If the question is inaccurately posed, there is a risk of obtaining a wrong answer—not due to a mistake by the scholar but because the questioner has inadequately described the case, potentially omitting crucial details.

Once the case is accurately described to the scholar, they work to define it. This definition is paramount. How do they arrive at this definition? First, they refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah to see if the case is defined therein. For example, terms like salah and zakah are well-defined in these sources. But if a case is not defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah, where do they turn next? They refer to the Arabic language, the language in which the Qur'an was revealed. For example, if the question concerns terms such as sea water or wolf's meat, and these are not explicitly defined in Qur'an and Sunnah, scholars would turn to Arabic linguistic usage for clarification.

To illustrate the importance of accurate definitions, imagine that in one region people call a pig a "bull." When they read in the Qur'an that pig is haram, yet see in the Sunnah that bull is permissible, they might mistakenly conclude that the animal they call "bull" is halal. This error results from an incorrect definition.

If a matter is not defined in the Arabic language, such as democracy, where should scholars turn? They look to 'urf (customary practice). This approach is legitimate in Islam. Therefore, it is incorrect to dismiss traditions or practices of our parents or communities as inherently contradictory to Islam unless they genuinely oppose Islamic principles. Only practices that oppose Islam are discarded, while other customs may even be incorporated into jurisprudential considerations. For instance, if it is customary in a particular city for a man to gift gold jewelry (mahr) as a bridal gift upon marriage, this becomes a binding requirement, even if it is not explicitly mentioned. Allah says about women, i.e., wives:

وَعَايِشُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ

Meaning: Live with them according to 'urf. (An-Nisaa' 4:19)

As a side note, this is why, in interpreting the meaning of the Qur'an, this Ayah is often translated as "honorably," "fairly," or "kindly," since these terms effectively capture the essence of the customary practice ('urf) recognized as good. Consequently, the understanding of 'urf may vary significantly from one country to another. For example, you may do an act of kindness that may be considered objectionable in other countries.

One should define democracy, parliamentary membership, elections, and voting according to 'urf. There are some customs that are universally recognized, while others are specific to certain regions. Some customs may be known only within a country, or even to particular groups, such as business professionals. Democratic 'urf is defined and understood by politicians; therefore, when discussing democracy, it must be defined based on those who practice it, not according to personal desires, intentions, or objectives. Although these elements may be considered later, the initial focus should be on the reality and definitions of democracy, parliamentary membership, elections, and voting according to the customs of those who implement them.

For those educated in the West, this concept is well understood. However, in our home countries, there is often a lack of understanding on these issues. Democracy signifies governance by the people, where they hold the right to legislate. This includes the three powers: judicial, legislative, and executive, all linked to the people's authority. According to democratic principles, people hold the "right to legislate."

Emphasizing this wording is essential, as much of its meaning can be lost in Arabic translation. In the democratic system, having a "right" implies the ability to permit, justify, implement, and achieve objectives, something for which people are expected to strive.

In a democratic context, legislation involves creating laws, determining what is permitted or forbidden (analogous to what is halal or haram in Islam), and setting punishments. In Islam, however, only Allah has the right to legislate, just as He alone is worthy of worship. This principle applies to parliamentary membership, elections, and voting: here, the people hold the right to legislate. Since direct participation by all people is not feasible, representatives, known as parliamentary members, are elected. Their primary role—though there are others—is to legislate.

What about municipal elections? In Europe and other Western countries, there is little difference, with municipalities acting as minor parliaments. Though their legislative scope is limited, they still legislate. Therefore, in Western contexts, parliamentary and municipal elections are essentially the same. However, in our home countries, municipal elections are purely administrative, which is why many scholars who oppose parliamentary elections permit municipal elections when they benefit Muslims. These are two completely different functions: one involves legislation, while the other is administrative.

In this discussion, I will focus on “parliamentary elections” due to their relevance. In Western countries, parliamentary and municipal elections are considered equivalent because both involve legislation. Municipalities in these countries perform legislative functions, unlike in our own countries, where there is a clear distinction.

What does voting mean? Voting involves taking a piece of paper, marking it with a pen, and placing it in a box. On the surface, it might seem similar to discarding a used tissue in the toilet, but in reality, according to its ‘urf, it’s entirely different. In the democratic system, voting is defined as selecting a representative to legislate on your behalf, based on your “power” to influence governance. The representative is thus granted the authority to legislate in place of the voter.

[It’s important to note that there is no substantial distinction between parliamentary, presidential, and congressional elections in this context; therefore, the Islamic judgment on voting applies consistently to all three throughout this article.]

In fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), a *wakeel* is someone you entrust with your money to purchase something on your behalf. Similarly, in voting, the elector grants authority to the chosen representative to legislate. This representative, in the democratic system, holds the power to make legislative decisions, embodying the essence of what voting represents.

Keep this foundational concept in mind, as the next three points will refer back to it. This is the core principle upon which all other aspects are based. Ignoring, misunderstanding, or overlooking this concept, or bringing in intentions and objectives prematurely, will lead to confusion.

Ruling on Democracy

To address democracy as a whole system, we will consider six key points.

The First Point: Democracy is neither Allah’s legislation nor that of His prophets. Since this is the case, it is considered a form of legislation based on *Jaahiliyyah* (ignorance), which refers to the pre-Islamic period before the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent. Supporting this view, one of the scholars of the Salaf said, "Whoever judges by other than the judgment of Allah judges by the judgment of Jaahiliyyah." This understanding is derived from the Ayah in which Allah says:

أَفَحُكْمَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ يَبْغُونَ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ حُكْمًا لِقَوْمٍ يُوقِنُونَ

“Do they then seek the judgement of (the days of) Ignorance? And who is better in judgement than Allâh for a people who have firm Faith.” (Al-Maa’idah 5:50)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) criticized all forms of *Jaahiliyyah*. It is reported in both *Saheeh al-Bukhari* and *Saheeh Muslim* that when a boy from the Muhaajireen struck a boy from the Ansaar during the campaign of Banu al-Mustaliq, the Muhaajir boy called out, “O Muhaajireen!” while the Ansaari boy cried out, “O Ansaar!” The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) heard this and said, “What is this call of the (days of) Ignorance?” They told him what had happened, and he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Leave it, for it stinks.”

Additionally, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Whoever calls with the call of the (days of) Ignorance will be among the heaps of Hellfire." (Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, who graded it as *saheeh*)

Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah described *Jaahiliyyah* as encompassing “all forms of ignorance, whether absolute or specific, whether relating to one person or another, whether it originates from people of the Book, idolaters, or others—anything that contradicts what was brought by the messengers” (*Al-Iqtidaa’*). Based on the Salaf’s descriptions, democracy falls into this category: a call to democracy is not a call to the Qur’an and Sunnah, nor to Islam, nor to Allah’s judgment or that of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). What is it, then? It is *Jaahiliyyah*, from which we must abstain. May Allah protect us from it.

The Second Point: Like Christianity and Judaism are considered religions, democracy is also a religion. How so? The Arabic word for religion is “*deen*.” In Islam, *deen* encompasses not only beliefs and rituals but also legislation and governance (*siyaasah* and *hukm*). Islam considers both religious beliefs and legislative practices as part of *deen*, countering the secular view of separating religion and politics. Supporting this is the Ayah in *Surah Yusuf* (12:76) where Allah says:

مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ

“He could not take his brother by the *deen* of the king”

As is known from the story of Yusuf (peace be upon him), when his brothers came to him, he recognized them, though they did not recognize him. To summarize, they agreed that any ruling should be based on the Shari’ah of Ya’qoob. According to Ya’qoob’s Shari’ah, a thief would become a slave to the person from whom they stole, which differed from the king’s law. This Ayah explains that Yusuf could not take his brother as a slave according to “the *deen* of the king,” or, as interpreted, “the law of the king.” Scholars of *tafseer* have clarified that the “religion of the king” refers to the king’s law, which is why it appears this way in the English translation of the Qur’an.

This Ayah illustrates that legislation is part of a system's *deen*, underscoring the comprehensive nature of *deen* in Islam. Since the king’s law is referred to as *deen*, and democratic law has no basis in Islam, it is accurate to describe democracy as a *deen*. Many scholars interpret it this way, including ad-Dahhaak (one of the Taabi’een), imam ibn Katheer, imam ibn Hazm, and imam ibn Hajar, among others. They affirm that legislation and governance are part of *deen*.

On this basis, just as it is extremely dangerous to adopt elements of Judaism or Christianity as religions or imitate them in their beliefs or rituals, it is similarly harmful to adopt democratic law as a *deen* or to imitate it. All of this falls under the hadith in *Sunan Abi Dawud* (3512): “Whoever imitates a people is one of them.” Imam ibn Hibbaan graded this hadith as *saheeh*. Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah explained that this imitation could constitute major or minor disbelief, depending on the extent of the imitation: “This at the very least indicates that it is haram to imitate them, although the apparent meaning is that the one who imitates them is a disbeliever.” (*Iqtidaa’ as-Siraat al-Mustaqem*, 237)

The Third Point: Democracy is, in and of itself, disbelief and a major *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) because it grants the right to legislate to the people. In other words, it allows people to create laws, making the law itself a form of *shirk*. How, then, can it be permissible to allow such a system? It is even worse than merely allowing it. For example, drinking wine is a sin, though not disbelief. However, declaring it as permissible (i.e., saying it is *halal*) constitutes disbelief. *Shirk* is more severe—whether one believes it is permissible or not, it remains disbelief. How much worse, then, to believe it is permissible?

This is the essence of the concept of "rule of the people" or "sovereignty of the people." In Arabic, sovereignty and those who hold authority are described in the same terms used in hadith. What does the Qur’an and Sunnah say about this? Allah states in *Surah ash-Shu’araa* (42:21):

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَوًا شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنُ بِهِ اللَّهُ

“Or have they partners with Allâh (false gods) who have instituted [shara’oo, i.e., legislate] for them a religion which Allâh has not ordained?”

This confirms that when others legislate outside of what Allah has revealed, it constitutes major *shirk*. What they legislate is also referred to as *deen*. Allah also says in *Surah al-A’raaf* (7:54):

أَلَا لَهُ الْخَلْقُ وَالْأَمْرُ

“Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command”

In Arabic, a simple phrase, "الخلق والأمر له" (meaning "creation and command are His"), could convey this, but the phrasing in the Ayah gives it stronger emphasis, meaning that creation and command belong to Allah alone. This mirrors the phrasing in *Surah al-Faatihah*: “إياك نعبد وإياك نستعين” (“*You alone we worship, and You alone we seek help.*”). A simple phrase might say, “نعبد إياك ونستعين إياك” (“*We worship You alone, and we seek help from You alone*”), but the Ayah’s wording adds emphasis, clearly indicating that Allah alone is worshipped and asked for help.

Therefore, the Ayah above confirms that Allah alone has the right to create and also the exclusive right to command and legislate. Just as He alone is worthy of worship, He alone holds the right to legislate. There is no difference between the two.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, as narrated in *Sunan Abi Dawud* and graded as having a good chain by imam ibn Muflih, “The Master is Allah, blessed and exalted,” meaning sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) also said, "Indeed, Allah is the Judge, and to Him belongs the judgment" (reported in *Sunan Abi Dawud*). The Arabic phrasing carries strong emphasis, similar to the previous examples.

All ‘ulama’ agree that allowing people to legislate is major *shirk*, even the *Murji’ah* agree and acknowledge this.

The Fourth Point: Democracy is based entirely on majority judgment, all the way through. I emphasize "all the way through" because some brothers have a misconception, thinking that relying on the majority is forbidden in all situations and areas. This is incorrect. There are situations in Islam where determining something by majority opinion is permitted, as it serves as an acceptable method for assessment and decision-making. This is evident in the biographies of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them).

What, then, is the difference? In democracy, the majority holds the power to legislate, which is a fundamentally different matter. In Islam, when a decision is made based on the majority, it applies only to issues that are already permissible within Islamic law; it does not mean that individuals are creating legislation on their own. The focus is on how to implement something that is already lawful, and in such cases, following the majority opinion is acceptable if it facilitates a better, mutually agreeable decision. Democracy, on the other hand, relies on majority rule to legislate from start to finish, which is not the case in Islam.

As Muslims, in certain areas, we make decisions based on what is already established in the Qur’an and Sunnah—not simply to appear, *masha’Allah*, as "civilized people" aiming to appease others. I mention this because, as noted, some brothers mistakenly believe that relying on the majority is entirely

forbidden and has no basis in the Sunnah or the practices of the Sahaabah. This is an incorrect understanding. Here, we are discussing the majority in democracy as it relates to legislation—determining right and wrong, permissible and forbidden—all by majority decision alone.

This reliance on majority rule for legislation has led to significant issues in these countries, such as economic crises that shook their foundations. Why? They had to contradict their principles; the "free market" system was no longer as it once was, and the government had to intervene, tightening laws to avoid collapse. This shift sparked debate about whether such measures align with democratic values, and whether deviating from them might mean abandoning democracy itself.

What does Allah say about such a principle in democracy? In *Surah al-An'aam* (6:116), He says:

وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ لِيُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ

“And if you obey most of those on the earth, they will mislead you far away from Allâh’s Path.”

And in *Surah al-Mu'minoon* (23:71), He says:

وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ

“And if the truth had been in accordance with their desires, verily, the heavens and the earth, and whosoever is therein would have been corrupted!”

Allah warns of the dangers and consequences of following majority desires, a principle on which democracy’s system of legislation is based.

The Fifth Point: Democracy, as a general system, grants people the freedom to choose which laws and legislation to follow. In our home countries, this remains largely theoretical, but it also applies to Islam and Shari'ah—meaning it’s left to the people to decide whether or not to implement Shari'ah. However, if there is a decision to implement Shari'ah, we may see the same outcome as in Algeria and Egypt, as these matters are ultimately about power, not about what people think or choose. This, in itself, constitutes clear major disbelief. May Allah protect us.

This situation is similar to telling a Muslim, "It's up to you whether you wish to remain in Islam or convert to Christianity, Judaism, or any other religion." There is no difference, and making such an assertion is clear, major disbelief. Just as Muslims are obliged to believe that Islam is the one and only true religion, all people are likewise obliged to accept and embrace Islam, even though we cannot compel them to do so. Nonetheless, this obligation remains, and if they do not embrace Islam, they will face eternity in Hellfire if they die in a state of disbelief.

When someone converts to Islam but later changes their religion to Christianity or Judaism, one cannot say, "I can't force him back." No, he should be forced back to Islam, otherwise there will be judgment on apostasy. In an Islamic Court within an Islamic state, the individual will be given a three-day opportunity attempting to convince him and if he insists upon disbelief, the individual will be executed.

This is clearly stated in the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him):
"Whoever changes his religion, execute him." (Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 2794)

That's why imam ibn Jareer at-Tabari, the imam of all *mufasssireen*, interpreted the Ayah:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ

“There is no compulsion in religion” (Al-Baqarah 2:256)

as follows:

Since this is the case—and it is not impossible to say, “There is no compulsion in religion” regarding those from whom the jizyah is accepted—there is no indication in the Ayah that it should be interpreted otherwise. Moreover, all Muslims have transmitted from their Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) that he compelled certain groups to accept Islam, refusing to accept anything but Islam from them, and ruling that they should be killed if they refused. This applied to idol worshippers among the Arab polytheists and those who apostatized from the true religion to disbelief, or others like them. However, he refrained from compelling others to accept Islam by accepting the jizyah from them and allowing them to remain in their false religion, as was the case with the People of the Book and similar groups. Therefore, it is clear that the meaning of “There is no compulsion in religion” is that there is no compulsion in religion for anyone from whom the jizyah is accepted, upon their payment of it and acceptance of Islamic governance.

There is no basis for the claim that this Ayah is abrogated by the permission for warfare.

If someone asks, “What do you say regarding what was reported from ibn ‘Abbaas and others that this Ayah was revealed concerning a group of the Ansaar who wished to compel their children to embrace Islam?” We say: The authenticity of that report is not denied, but an Ayah may be revealed concerning a specific situation, and its ruling may apply generally to all matters that share the same underlying meaning. The group for whom this Ayah was revealed, as mentioned by ibn ‘Abbaas and others, were people who adhered to the religion of the People of the Torah before Islam was firmly established for them. Allah, Exalted be He, prohibited forcing them into Islam and revealed this Ayah as a prohibition against compulsion, with a ruling that extends to all who are in a similar situation—those who follow a religion from which the jizyah can be accepted and whom may be allowed to remain upon their faith, as we have previously explained.

This sharply contrasts with how extreme modernists twist and misinterpret the meaning of the Ayah.

This also applies to Shari’ah: as Muslims, we are obliged not only to be Muslims but also to adhere to Islam. This obligation includes the political aspect, as adherence to Islam and to Shari’ah are one and the same. Shari’ah is not solely a political framework; it encompasses all aspects of Islam. We are all bound by it, even if we sometimes fall into mistakes, overcome by our desires or deceived by Shaytan. However, like our father Adam (peace be upon him), we repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness. But

if someone says, “It’s up to me whether I choose to follow Shari’ah or not,” whom would they resemble? Iblees, who rejected Allah’s command—this is clear disbelief. All scholars agree on this. Furthermore, all scholars agree that permitting legislation other than Shari’ah constitutes disbelief, and even the Murji’ah agree on this.

The Sixth Point: Democracy is a *taaghoot*. Before presenting the evidences for this, it is important to understand the meaning of *taaghoot*, as Allah clarified “*laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*” in relation to *taaghoot*. Understanding this will help one comprehend the true meaning of our testimony of faith. Allah says in Surah al-Baqarah (2:256):

فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا

“Whoever disbelieves in Tâghût and believes in Allâh, then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold that will never break.”

When interpreting "the most trustworthy handhold," ‘*ulama*’ in *tafseer* have provided three related interpretations, though they imply the same concept. Some said it refers to Islam, others to *eemaan* (faith), and others to “*laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*” (There is no god worthy of worship but Allah). All three interpretations are interconnected. Thus, scholars say that the first part of “*laa ilaaha ill-Allaah*” (There is no god worthy of worship) implies “*al-kufr bit-taaghoot*”—disavowing all false deities. Imam ibn Jareer at-Tabari explained:

“The correct opinion, in my view, regarding *taaghoot* is that it refers to anyone who transgresses against Allah and is worshipped instead of Him, either through coercion of those who worship him or through obedience from those who worship him—whether that worshipped one is a human, a devil, an idol, an image, or anything else.” He also said: “The root of the word *taaghoot* comes from the phrase ‘so-and-so has transgressed,’ meaning they have exceeded their bounds and overstepped their limits.”

Relevant:

- [Relationship between al-Kufr bit-Taaghoot and Its Takfeer](#)

The second part, "except Allah," implies belief in Allah. Notice that negation comes before affirmation, as imam ibn Jareer explained regarding our testimony of faith: "No deity is rightfully deserving of worship, fit for divinity, except Allah, to whom these attributes belong." This is why *shirk* is considered the greatest injustice. Allah says in *Surah Luqman* (31:13):

وَإِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

And [mention, O Muḥammad], when Luqmān said to his son while he was instructing him, "O my son, do not associate [anything] with Allāh. Indeed, association [with Him] is great injustice."

What does "injustice" mean here? It means assigning a right to someone who does not deserve it. *Shirk* involves worshiping anyone other than Allah, which is Allah's right alone. *Taaghoot* extends beyond worship to other domains such as legislation and judgment. Examples include the extreme Raafidhah and extreme Sufis, who are also considered *tawaagheet*. Additionally, secularist presidents in our home countries who implement secular and man-made laws are examples of *tawaagheet*. As imam ibnul-Qayyim explained, "Whatever leads a slave [of Allah] to exceed his limits, whether it is something worshipped, followed, or obeyed."

It should be clear that man-made laws are all considered *taaghoot*, and this also applies to democracy. Therefore, democracy is a *taaghoot*, which means that, as Muslims, we are obliged to disavow it and regard it as disbelief. Allah says in *Surah an-Nisaa'* (4:60):

يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُتَّخَذُوا إِلَى الظَّالِمِينَ وَكَذَلِكَ يُكْفَرُونَ بِهِ وَيُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَن يُضِلَّهُمْ صَلَائًا بِعِيدًا

"They wish to refer legislation to *ṭāghūt*, while they were commanded to reject it; and Satan wishes to lead them far astray."

The "far astray" here refers to disbelief and *shirk*. May Allah protect us. The 'ulama' have mentioned specific reasons for this revelation; however, as the principle states, "The consideration is given to the generality of the wording, not the specificity of the reason [for revelation]."

Note that Allah first says in the Ayah:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ يَزْعُمُونَ أَنَّهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَمَا نُزِّلَ مِن قَبْلِكَ يُرِيدُونَ أَن يُتَّخَذُوا إِلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

"Have you not seen those who claim to have believed in what was revealed to you, [O Muḥammad], and what was revealed before you? They wish to refer legislation to *ṭāghūt*..."

Similarly, imam ibn Katheer explains in his tafseer:

This is a condemnation from Allah, Almighty, toward those who claim to believe in what Allah has revealed to His Messenger and to the earlier prophets, yet they seek judgment for settling disputes from sources other than the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger. As mentioned in the reason for the revelation of this verse, it concerns a disagreement between a man from the Ansar and a man from the Jews. The Jew said, "Let Muhammad judge between us," while the other man said, "Let Ka'b ibn al-Ashraf judge between us." It is also said that it refers to a group of munaafiqeen who outwardly professed Islam but wanted to seek judgment from the arbiters of Jaahiliyyah. Other interpretations have also been mentioned, but the Ayah is broader than all of these. It condemns those who turn away from the Book and the Sunnah and seek judgment from anything else rooted in falsehood, which is what is meant by *taaghoot* here...

This explanation from imam ibn Katheer also applies to democracy. Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], "Worship Allāh and avoid tāghūt."

Notice that *taaghoot* involves not only disbelief and disavowal but also avoiding it entirely. Similarly, Allah forbids even coming near to *zina* (fornication); He does not simply say, "Do not commit *zina*," but instructs us not to approach it. (*Surah al-Israa* 17:32). In other words, anything that leads to *zina*, such as shaking hands, hugging, or being alone with the opposite gender, is prohibited as it can lead to *zina*.

Thus, calling people to avoid systems like democracy is part of the prophetic *da'wah* toward *tawheed* (the oneness of Allah).

Ruling on Parliamentary Members

This discussion involves four points.

The First Point: The Legislative Role of a Parliamentary Member

In the context of democratic 'urf (custom), the primary role of a parliamentary member—applicable also to those elected in presidential, congressional, or municipal elections—is to legislate. By assuming the right to legislate, the legislator positions himself as a partner alongside Allah. Just as accepting worship is setting oneself as a partner beside Allah, accepting the right to legislate also places oneself in partnership with Him. This is affirmed in *Surah ash-Shu'araa* (42:21), where Allah says:

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنُ بِهِ اللَّهُ

“Or have they partners with Allāh (false gods) who have instituted [shara’oo, i.e., legislate] for them a religion which Allāh has not ordained?”

As is evident in this Ayah, the legislator here is a mushrik.

The Second Point: Parliamentary Members Who Legislate

Allah has referred to those who legislate as "deen" in this Ayah. As previously established, democracy functions as a deen. Therefore, anyone who accepts another person’s right to legislate has chosen a deen aside from Islam. This person is like one who mixes purity with impurity, as *tawheed* is pure and *shirk* is filth.

The Third Point: The Legislator as a Taaghoot

According to the previously mentioned evidence, democracy is a *taaghoot*. Since man-made law is a *taaghoot*, judges who follow a law other than *Shari'ah* are also *taaghoot*, making it clear that legislators are *tawaagheet*. May Allah protect us. This confirms that we should declare *takfeer* upon these individuals, avoiding any association, support, or voting for them.

The Fourth Point: Parliamentary Members and Oaths to the Constitution

Parliamentary members, whether at the presidential, congressional, or municipal level, cannot assume a political position within the democratic system without swearing to uphold the constitution. They commit to abiding by it, practicing and implementing it, and showing respect for it. This implies respect for something filled with shirk and disbelief, which itself represents taaghoot. They preserve, protect, and ensure the perpetuation of this system. May Allah protect us from misguidance and disbelief.

A Small Tangent: In our home countries, some Islamic groups have unfortunately made a grave mistake by entering parliament. They justify this by saying things like, “In my eyes, democracy is disbelief, the law is disbelief, and I am openly disavowing it. I am not entering parliament to legislate at all, but rather to oppose any legislation that contradicts Shari'ah, to support anything with an Islamic basis to minimize harm, to counter secular agendas in our country, and to enjoin the good and forbid the evil.” These are the justifications they present.

When it is pointed out to them, “But you swore an oath to the constitution, committing to respect and follow it,” they respond with further excuses and misunderstandings. They claim, “The constitution states that Islam is the state religion, so when we swear this oath, our intention is to uphold only what aligns with Islam, not what contradicts it.” However, these justifications do not change the reality of democracy and parliamentary membership.

Such excuses are not found in Western countries, as their constitutions neither declare Islam as the state religion nor establish Shari'ah as a source of legislation. In some Western countries, one of the sources of legislation is implicitly—and, in certain cases, explicitly—based on Christian foundations. For instance, in the U.S., the First Amendment prohibits Congress from making any law “respecting an establishment of religion.” Therefore, when one swears to uphold, fulfill, preserve, and respect the constitution, there is no room for ambiguity—this is clear disbelief. May Allah protect us.

Moreover, simply holding a belief, whether one is a parliamentary member or not, that conveys contentment with something inherently rooted in disbelief is itself an act of disbelief. All scholars agree that, just as being content with a sin is sinful, being content with disbelief is itself disbelief, regardless of whether one acts upon it or not. May Allah protect us. All ‘ulama’ are unanimous on this.

Here, it is important to differentiate between laws based on a constitution that permits what Shari'ah prohibits (and vice versa) and punishments that do not align with Shari'ah—these are the issues under discussion. This should not be confused with administrative matters, such as traffic regulations or similar issues, which are entirely different. Respecting and abiding by regulations in administrative matters is not problematic.

Man-made laws that contradict the *Millah Ibrahim* (the path of Abraham), which Allah has commanded us to follow, are fundamentally at odds with our faith. Allah says in Surah al-Mumtahanah (60:4):

قَدْ كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ إِنَّا بُرَءُؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ وَبَدَا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلْعَدُوَّةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ

Indeed there has been an excellent example for you in Ibrâhîm (Abraham) and those with him, when they said to their people: "Verily, we are free from you and whatever you worship besides Allâh: we have rejected you, and there has started between us and you hostility and hatred for ever until you believe in Allâh Alone"

And Allah says in Surah al-Baqarah (2:130):

وَمَنْ يَرْغَبْ عَنِ مِلَّةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِلَّا مَنْ سَفِهَ نَفْسَهُ

“And who would be averse to the religion of Abraham except one who makes a fool of himself.”

In some Western countries, one of the sources of legislation implicitly—and in some cases explicitly—references Christian foundations. Regarding similar matters, ibn Kathêer (may Allah have mercy on him) stated:

"The one who forsakes the law that was revealed to Muhammad ibn ‘Abdullah, the Seal of the Prophets (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and refers for judgment to any other law that has been abrogated, has committed an act of kufr, so how about the one who refers for judgment to al-Yaasa and gives it precedence? The one who does that is a kaafir according to the consensus of the Muslims." End quote from al-Bidaayah wan-Nihaayah, 13/139.

Here, *al-Yaasa* (also known as *al-Yaasiq*) refers to the laws of the Tatar leader Genghis Khan, who forced people to refer to them for judgment.

There is consensus among the ‘ulama’, as mentioned by ibn Hazm, ibn Taymiyyah, and ibnul-Qayyim, that implementing falsified and abrogated laws, even from the Old and New Testaments, constitutes disbelief. Although these laws may have prophetic origins, following them in place of the revealed Shari’ah is an act of major disbelief.

How can someone who professes to be a Muslim accept being part of a government or constitution that has blasphemed our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and insists that it is their "right to freedom of speech"? May Allah protect us from disbelief.

Ruling on Voting

I want to remind you again about the reality of voting. It is not merely taking a paper and placing it in a box; one must always remember the meaning and implications of the democratic system and its 'urf (custom). This is the deciding factor—if one ignores this, then one has not adhered to the approach of our early ‘ulama’ when addressing similar cases.

In this matter, there is no room for the intentions and objectives of Muslims; their intentions and objectives do not alter the democratic ‘urf. Intention cannot make haram into halal; it cannot turn wine into water, cannot transform filth into something pure, and cannot make innovation (bid'ah) into Sunnah simply by intention.

This matter involves six points:

The First Point: One can recognize Allah's judgment on elections and voting according to their definition in the democratic ‘urf by carefully reading what Allah says in Surah ash-Shoora (42:21):

أَمْ لَهُمْ شُرَكَاءُ شَرَعُوا لَهُمْ مِّنَ الدِّينِ مَا لَمْ يَأْذَنُ بِهِ اللَّهُ

“Or have they partners [i.e., other deities] who have ordained for them a religion to which Allāh has not consented?”

This means that choosing a legislator is akin to making partners besides Allah. This is the implication of elections and voting within the democratic system. It is not a matter of personal opinion or decision; it is the reality of how this system functions. This clearly constitutes major shirk. May Allah protect us.

The above Ayah makes this matter clear. Given this, there is no room for ijtihaad (the exertion of effort by the faqeeh to deduce a presumptive shar’i ruling), as one cannot correctly assess this issue by disregarding the democratic definition of elections and voting and focusing solely on the intentions and objectives of Muslims. Doing so would result in a completely incorrect approach to the topic.

Remember, when we speak of *shirk*, it is described by Allah as the gravest injustice. Allah also says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ ضَلَّ ضَلًّا بَعِيدًا

“Indeed, Allāh does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills. And he who associates others with Allāh has certainly gone far astray.” (An-Nisaa’ 4:116)

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "Shall I not inform you of the greatest of the major sins?" He repeated this three times. They said, "Yes, O Messenger of Allah." He said, "Associating others with Allah." (Agreed upon)

The Second Point: Concerning elections and voting on matters involving legislation, it is important to emphasize the distinction. In other words, voting to determine who excels in a competition is a completely different matter, as is voting on who will govern or who will best serve guests. Here, we are specifically addressing voting in the context of legislation, whether in presidential, congressional, parliamentary or municipal elections.

As Allah says in Surah al-An’aam (6:164):

قُلْ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ أَدْبَعِي رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

Say: "Shall I seek a lord other than Allāh, while He is the Lord of all things?..."

And Allah says in Ayah 14:

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اتَّخِذُ وَلِيًّا فَاطِرِ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ

Say, "Is it other than Allāh I should take as a protector, Creator of the heavens and earth..."

And in Ayah 114:

اَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ اُبْتَغِيْ حَكْمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِيْ اَنْزَلَ اِلَيْكُمْ الْكِتٰبَ مُفَصَّلًا

[Say], "Then is it other than Allāh I should seek as judge while it is He who has revealed to you the Book [i.e., the Qur'ān] explained in detail?"

Ibnul-Qayyim said in [Madaarij as-Saalikeen](#):

These three positions are the pillars of Tawheed: not taking anyone other than Him as a Lord, not taking anyone other than Him as a deity, and not taking anyone other than Him as a judge [حَكْمًا].

Just as we affirm that Allah alone is the Lord (*Rabb*) and the only One deserving of worship, it is equally important to affirm that He alone has the right to legislate. This principle is in direct contradiction to the reality of elections and voting in legislative matters.

The Third Point: As Allah mentions in Surah al-Kahf (18:38):

وَلَا اَشْرِكُ بِرَبِّيْٓ اَحَدًا

"... and I do not associate with my Lord anyone."

Allah also mentions in Ayah 26:

وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِيْ حُكْمِهٖٓ اَحَدًا

"... and He shares not His legislation with anyone."

In the recitation of ibn 'Aamir (which, of course, traces back to the revelation from Allah to the Prophet ﷺ):

وَلَا تُشْرِكُ فِيْ حُكْمِهٖٓ اَحَدًا

"... and do not associate anyone in His legislation."

For this reason, shaykh Muhammad Ameen ash-Shanqeeti stated in his tafseer: "Associating others with Allah in His legislation is like associating others with Him in worship."

This concept aligns with the reality of elections and voting on legislation according to the democratic system and customs.

The Fourth Point: According to the reality of elections and voting in relation to legislation, this implies that one has taken the legislator as a god. May Allah protect us. Allah says in Surah at-Tawbah (9:31):

أَتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ

“They take their rabbis and their monks for their lords apart from Allah...”

How did this happen? The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) explained, as narrated in Sunan at-Tirmidhi: "Indeed, they did not worship them [directly], but rather, when [their rabbis and their monks] made something lawful for them, they accepted it as lawful, and when they made something unlawful for them, they accepted it as unlawful."

This is equivalent to the reality of elections and voting in legislation, where something forbidden can be made lawful, and vice versa. This is why the reality of elections and voting in the democratic system, when it pertains to legislation, is what? It is to consider the legislator as a god. May Allah protect us.

The Fifth Point: Once again, elections and voting in relation to legislation constitute a form of worship to the *taaghoot*. This is indicated by what Allah says in Surah Yusuf (12:40):

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

“Legislation is not but for Allāh. He has commanded that you worship not except Him.”

This Ayah establishes the connection between legislation and worship. Why do I describe it as a form of worship rather than worship in itself? The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “They did not worship them [directly].” Does this mean it is free from all aspects of worship? No, the Ayah affirms that it is indeed a form of worship. Allah says about the *taaghoot* in Surah al-Maa'idah (5:60):

وَعَبَدَ الطَّاغُوتَ

“and those who worshipped Tâghûṭ”

The Sixth Point: This point refers to a hadith found in both *Saheeh al-Bukhari* and *Saheeh Muslim*, a long hadith in which the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Stay with the jamaa'ah of Muslims and their imam." I asked, "What if they have neither a jamaa'ah nor an imam [i.e., leader]?" [meaning there is no Islamic State implementing Shari'ah]. He replied, "Then distance yourself from all of those sects, even if you have to bite to the root of a tree until death overtakes you in that state."

What does "distance yourself from all of those sects" mean here? Does "sects" refer to the same as when speaking of the seventy-three sects within the Ummah, all but one destined for Hell—the saved sect that follows the path of the Prophet and the Sahaabah? That is not the case. If it were, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would not have instructed us to distance ourselves from all sects, as there is the saved sect that one should strive to be part of, which will never cease to exist. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, *"A group from my Ummah will continue to fight for the truth, prevailing until the Day of Judgment."* This group is part of *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah*, meaning that *Ahlu-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah*, as a sect, will endure.

However, this does not apply to the Islamic State, as the hadith indicates that the state itself can cease to exist. So, what does "sects" mean here? One interpretation is that it refers to the opposite of the Khilafah, the Islamic State—that is, a state that implements laws other than Shari'ah. This is what we are commanded to distance ourselves from, and it also applies to democratic parties.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, *"even if you have to bite to the root of a tree,"* indicating that one may face great pressure and trial, so severe that one would need to hold firmly to this principle, as if clinging to the root of a tree. Is there an allowance to participate in such systems due to emergency or dire necessity? No. Instead, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed to bite firmly until death overtakes one in that state. This confirms that there is no benefit in these democratic parties; even if they appear to offer some benefit, the harm undoubtedly outweighs it. For this reason, in cases of necessity, such involvement can never be genuinely beneficial.

All of this confirms that elections and voting related to legislation based on secular constitutions are strictly forbidden. It is shirk, major haram, and something to be avoided entirely, with no benefit whatsoever.

Addressing Alleged Evidence for Voting

We will now address some misunderstandings that have been presented by certain shuyookh. Numerous misconceptions have been circulated; while we will not address all of them, we will focus on the most significant ones, as they are frequently repeated in various contexts. Additionally, there are two extra matters to discuss.

The First Misunderstanding: Alleging there is no disagreement among 'ulama'

A common misunderstanding is the claim made by some shuyookh that "All 'ulama' agree that elections and voting in parliamentary elections are permitted; it is not known that any 'aalm has declared it haram." Unfortunately, some have made such a claim. The individual they refer to is someone they believe they understand, but in reality, they do not. However, others are aware of his position, as it has been confirmed in various ways: in books, lectures, articles, and through direct communication. I have personally consulted with one of them. Some claim that it is only the shuyookh with extreme views who dissent, not others, which is an egregiously inaccurate claim.

I will list some ‘ulama’ widely recognized in the community. Among the major figures are shaykh ‘Abdullah al-Ghunayman, shaykh ‘Ali al-Khudayr, shaykh Sulayman al-’Ulwan, shaykh ‘Abdullah as-Sa’d, shaykh Naasir al-Fahd, shaykh Ahmad al-Haazimi (albeit extreme in takfeer and considered a *khaariji*), shaykh Mustafa al-’Adawi, and shaykh Muhammad Shaakir ash-Shareef. Of these, the last two are generally known as shuyookh, but I am not certain of the extent of their knowledge. Other notable names include shaykh Sulayman al-Kharraasi and others, some of whom are specialists in hadith, such as shaykh Sulayman al-’Ulwan, shaykh Mustafa al-’Adawi, and shaykh ‘Abdullah as-Sa’d.

Furthermore, when someone asserts, “All ‘ulama’ agree that it’s allowed; no known ‘aalim considers it haram,” they effectively deny any disagreement among the ‘ulama’. Whether or not this disagreement is valid is another matter, but it exists nonetheless. To confirm the opposite of this, there are three well-known and respected ‘ulama’ who have acknowledged disagreement on this issue. Major figures in this group include shaykh Hamood al-’Uqlaa’ ash-Shu’aybi, under whom both shaykh al-Fawzan and shaykh al-’Uthaymeen studied. Shaykh al-’Uthaymeen even formally conducted an examination for shaykh al-Fawzan in the traditional scholarly manner, emphasizing their shared studies under shaykh Hamood.

Relevant:

- [السيرة ذاتية لسماحة الشيخ حمود بن عقلاء الشعبي](#)
- [حمود بن عقلاء الشعبي... الإمام الضرير والعالم النحرير](#)

Shaykh Aa’idh al-Qarni, a daa’iyah, has also mentioned this disagreement, as has another well-known daa’iyah in Egypt, shaykh Muhammad al-Maqsood. Although both are known for permitting voting, they acknowledge that there is disagreement on the matter. I mention this because last year, a shaykh from England highlighted this issue at a conference.

The Second Misunderstanding: Were there many ‘ulama’ who said it’s permitted?

Unfortunately, yes. We’re not discussing modernists here, but trustworthy ‘ulama’. So where did this fundamental mistake arise? We mentioned this at the outset, and we’ll reiterate. One key issue is that many people are unaware that when discussing elections and voting in Western countries, it’s a major error to apply fatawa from trustworthy ‘ulama’ supporting voting in our home countries directly to these Western contexts.

It’s important to differentiate between modernists and trustworthy ‘ulama’. As for the modernists, they attempt to present a version of Islam “made in Europe,” which is highly problematic. They don’t interpret the Qur’an and Sunnah as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and the Salaf understood them. When ‘ulama’ have differing opinions, these modernists don’t seek the strongest view based on evidence; instead, they pick and choose opinions that cater to people in Western societies or align with international laws. They aim to fit Islam within a cultural framework, selectively referencing fiqh from early scholars, and, if they don’t find what they want among Ahlus-Sunnah, they even turn to Shee’ah or ‘Ibaadi fiqh sources to make their views seem within the Islamic

tradition. These sources, however, are neither considered evidence nor the strongest available evidence. Modernists represent a different approach altogether, and one example of a scholar following this path is shaykh al-Qaradawi—may Allah guide him and forgive him. (At the time of this recording, he was alive, so may Allah forgive him.)

In this discussion, we are referring to trustworthy ‘ulama’ who addressed specific cases and countries, such as shaykh ibn Baaz, shaykh ibn ‘Uthaymeen, and others—may Allah have mercy upon them. They are not the only ones who spoke on these matters. When asked about situations where secularists sought to gain power and Islamic groups aimed to implement Shari’ah with confidence of electoral victory, these scholars permitted and supported participation in such elections to prevent secularist dominance. However, they referred only to these specific instances, not to the Western context.

This is why, when the same ‘ulama’ were asked about swearing an oath to the constitution, they responded that the intention behind such an oath should align with Islam, noting that the constitution in these cases declares Islam as the state religion and Shari’ah principles as sources of legislation. This is what these ‘ulama’ intended, not what modernists advocate in the West.

Modernists don’t believe that Islam has a fixed framework for legislation and politics. They see only fixed principles, considering legislation itself flexible, believing it acceptable to borrow from cultural sources or, in other words, to choose from fiqh books as they wish and even integrate elements of democracy, socialism, or similar systems. Some modernists are more extreme than others. While some attempt to stay within general fiqh books, others disregard them altogether, adopting instead the details of Western legislative systems.

For instance, one of them, during the period of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, argued, “Some people tried to implement Shari’ah; who says we don’t have Shari’ah in Egypt? We have 100% Shari’ah.” This statement reflects a complete misinterpretation of what Shari’ah actually means.

Their major deviation is confirmed by the well-known hadith in *Sunan at-Tirmidhi*, which imam an-Nawawi included in his *Forty Hadith*: “Adhere to my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Khulafaa’ ar-Raashideen.” When we speak of “the Sunnah of the Khulafaa’ ar-Raashideen,” it pertains to the entirety of the Deen, and specifically, the Sunnah in their roles as Caliphs—particularly in the political domain. This hadith affirms that there is a fixed framework in Islam, and the study of fiqh books alone makes this evident.

So, when speaking of our trustworthy ‘ulama’ who, unfortunately, supported this practice in our home countries, we should consider their objectives, the justifications they provided, the way they addressed the topic, and the evidence they used. This is completely different from what is happening here in the West, which is why it is wrong to use their names in the context of voting in Western countries. Some may argue, “There are differences of opinion on the matter; why are you criticizing me?” This is a significant mistake in fiqh and indicates ignorance. Imam ibn ‘Abdul-Barr, in his book *Jaami’ Bayaan al-’Ilm wa Fadlih*, states, "Difference of opinion is not an argument according to the fuqahaa’ (i.e., scholars) of the Ummah, except for someone who lacks insight and knowledge, and whose words cannot be used as evidence [i.e., they carry no authority]."

For instance, if one ‘aalim says something is haram and another says it is halal, and someone then justifies an action by saying, “Because there is a difference of opinion,” this is a misuse of scholarly disagreement. Shaykhul-Islam ibn Taymiyyah mentioned a consensus among the ‘ulama’ that one cannot selectively choose opinions based on personal preference. ([Source](#)) Rather, one should follow the strongest evidence. If one is an ‘aalim or a qualified student who can research a matter, they should seek the strongest evidence. If not, they should ask a trustworthy ‘aalim, then follow the strongest opinion. This is why one cannot use differences of opinion among the ‘ulama’ as evidence in this matter (or any other matter). The differences among the ‘ulama’ are not all on the same level, and there are two main types.

This division is well-known and has been mentioned by many ‘ulama’ like ibn Daqeeq al-’Eid, ibn Taymiyyah, and others. When speaking of differences of opinion, it is divided into two categories: recognized disagreement, where both sides of the debate have strong evidence. In such cases, hearing either side may lead one to think both are correct. This is a situation where, due to limited knowledge, one may not be able to discern the truth. In such cases, imam ash-Shaafi’ee said, “My opinion is correct but could be wrong, and the opinion of others is wrong but could be correct.” Here, scholars cannot be sure which is correct, as there cannot be two truths. Imam Malik stated, “The truth is only one. Two differing statements cannot both be correct. The truth and the correct position are but one.”

To give an example of two differing opinions: When the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) returned from the campaign of al-Ahzaab, Jibreel came to him and instructed him to go to Bani Quraydhah, who had broken the treaty. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) told his companions, “None of you should pray ‘Asr until he reaches Bani Quraydhah.” They set out from Madinah to Bani Quraydhah, concerned about missing the ‘Asr prayer. Some delayed the ‘Asr prayer until they arrived, praying it after the time had passed, as the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) instructed. Others prayed ‘Asr on time, believing that the Prophet’s intention was for them to hasten, not to delay the prayer. Those who prayed on time were correct. The Prophet’s command had one intended meaning, but it served as a lesson for the Ummah: when a recognized disagreement exists, one should not rebuke either side or show enmity toward the other.

In contrast, in cases of unrecognized disagreement, either neither side has strong evidence, or only one side does. In these instances, for example, one ‘aalim may declare something Sunnah based on an authentic hadith with a clear meaning (indicating he has a strong opinion), while another ‘aalim, not having received this evidence, resorts to ijtihaad (indicating a weaker opinion). When ‘ulama’ meet and discuss such matters, it is well-known that the one with weaker evidence will concede to the stronger opinion. Respect for the ‘ulama’ remains, even if the criticism among them is sometimes harsh. This criticism is between ‘ulama’ and is not for laypeople. This confirms that one cannot justify voting, especially when it binds one to a legislative system, merely by citing differences of opinion. Some disagreements are recognized, while others are not. Shaykh al-Ghunayman and others have mentioned that some disagreements hold little weight.

However, the ‘ulama’ never disrespected each other over such mistakes, as many youth today unfortunately do. When hearing mistaken opinions on voting from trustworthy ‘ulama’, they did not demean, undermine, or declare them as misguided, kuffaar, or mushrikeen.

When there are two established scholarly opinions on a matter, one cannot simply create an entirely new opinion, as there is a principle that states: “*It is not permissible to introduce a third opinion.*”

As you can see, just as there is a framework for differences of opinion and guidelines for how one should approach them, one cannot simply skip, ignore, or circumvent the issue.

As for seeking out every lenient opinion and permissive stance of scholars, it is a serious error that scholars have warned against, due to its dangers for the individual. Ibn Hazm said: “*They agreed that seeking the lenient position in every interpretation without clear evidence from the Qur’an or Sunnah is a type of sin and is not permissible.*”

It is possible that the scholar himself is excused and rewarded for his opinion, in contrast to the one who selectively follows his mistake or lenient opinion out of desire or convenience. Ash-Shanqeeti said: “If it is an issue of ijtihaad where no clear text exists, then one does not accuse any of the differing scholars of committing something objectionable; the correct one among them is rewarded for being right, and the one in error is excused.”

Relevant:

- [المسألة فيها خلافٌ](#)
- [لا إنكارٌ في مسائل الخلاف](#)

A Small Tangent: When discussing unrecognized disagreements, or in other words, weak opinions, there are two types. Some weak opinions have some rationale, even if limited, while others seem far-fetched to the point that one may wonder how an ‘aalim could make such a mistake. These cases are found even among the most notable scholars, including the Sahaabah and other prominent figures of the Salaf. This is why scholars have said, “Every ‘aalim has a *zallah* (i.e., mistake).”

This leads to an important question: What is the wisdom behind such cases? Allah has allowed these matters to happen, and one wisdom behind this is to show that no one is perfect, not even the most trustworthy ‘ulama’. May Allah have mercy on them all. Another wisdom is that it serves as a test from Allah for those who recognize the mistake. Who will they choose? Will they follow the judgment of Allah, or will they follow the mistake if it suits their desires? This wisdom is confirmed in the narration of ‘Ammar ibn Yaasir in *Saheeh al-Bukhaari* concerning the fitnah between the Sahaabah, specifically the conflict between ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib and Mu’aawiyah (may Allah be pleased with them both). When our Mother of the Believers, ‘Aa’ishah, sided with Mu’aawiyah (may Allah be pleased with them), those with ‘Ali ibn Abi Taalib were surprised, asking, “How can we be in the right if our Mother is with Mu’aawiyah?”

What did ‘Ammar ibn Yaasir say? "By Allah, she is the wife of your Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) in this world and the Hereafter, but Allah, Blessed and Exalted, is testing and trying

you through her to see if you will place obedience to Allah—and to the leader obeyed in what is right—above obedience to her." By "her," he referred to ‘Aa’ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) and acknowledged that she had made an erroneous interpretation. Though her intent was noble—to pursue justice against ‘Uthman’s killers—the caliph at the time had postponed this pursuit to first restore stability in the land before pursuing ‘Uthman’s killers. May Allah be pleased with him and all the Companions of the Messenger of Allah.

This narrative illustrates the wisdom that even the major and trustworthy ‘ulama’, whom we are obligated to love and respect as part of our Deen and the Sunnah, could fall into such mistakes. The wisdom is that the Muslims are being tested.

Relevant:

- [التَّحذِيرُ مِنْ زَلَّاتِ الْعُلَمَاءِ وَالْمَوْقِفُ الصَّحِيحُ مِنْهَا](#)

The Third Misunderstanding: The major misconception affecting all

This misunderstanding concerns the objective, definition, and reality of voting within a democratic system as it relates to legislation. If one skips or ignores these foundational definitions and fails to begin by acknowledging them, setting aside the intentions of Muslims, the entire issue will be misinterpreted. The main error here occurs when people begin their consideration with Muslim intentions rather than the reality of voting itself.

We’re not just dealing with secularists here, but Muslims—including modernists and even some Sunnis affected by modernist thinking. Their understanding of Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa’ah beliefs, principles, and methodology is often very general and superficial. Whether extreme modernists or Sunni Muslims, they all make the same fundamental mistake. When they present what they consider evidence, they miss the point because they bypass the core definition of voting and start by examining the intentions and objectives of Muslims regarding voting.

The error of this approach is confirmed by the fact that they do not align with how early scholars approached such issues. The early ‘ulama’ would first define the matter itself, then consider the intentions involved if applicable, but never the other way around. In contrast, these contemporary scholars and shuyookh begin with intentions and objectives, often prefacing their stance with, “We believe democracy is disbelief, we believe the right to legislate belongs to Allah alone, and that allowing people to legislate or judge by anything other than Shari’ah is disbelief. We have no doubt about that. But we are under threat from secularists who oppose us and plot against us, so our intention is to support Shari’ah or at least minimize harm and increase benefit.” They emphasize these objectives and intentions but overlook the intrinsic reality of voting itself.

To better understand how even many ‘ulama’ could make such mistakes, we must consider that democracy as a system has long been unclear to many. Scholars with the most insight on this issue have often been from Egypt, where the interaction between Islamic groups and secularists is very pronounced. In other regions, however, the understanding is more superficial. In contrast, those raised

in the West tend to have a deeper awareness of this reality, having gone through Western education and experienced the system firsthand.

Consider how an ‘aalim might discuss this matter with another ‘aalim or a student. Imagine, for instance, you’re debating with someone who engages in grave worship (may Allah protect us). To convince him, you would begin by clarifying that calling upon anyone other than Allah, regardless of what they name it, whether *istighaathah* or otherwise, is an act of worship and therefore shirk. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Du’aa’ is worship.” Narrated by at-Tirmidhi, (3372), Abu Dawud, (1479) and ibn Maajah (3828). But when discussing voting, can you argue in the same way? No, because you must first clarify what voting represents within the democratic ‘urf. When ‘ulama’ address similar matters, they start by defining the issue itself, considering intentions only afterward if applicable.

Unfortunately, most of the ‘ulama’ who have permitted voting have approached the matter from the perspective of intentions and objectives, rather than from the perspective that accurately defines the reality of voting. This is why, when reading their fatwas, you’ll notice that they emphasize intentions, almost as though participating in parliament is akin to joining a club with both good and bad members. In their view, voting is just about deciding who will control this room, and they regard it as simply choosing a volunteer, with votes cast by placing a piece of paper in a box. This, in itself, seems harmless, as it doesn’t explicitly involve legislation and is therefore permissible in Islam. Thus, whether one raises a hand, presses a button, or marks a ballot paper, they see it as unrelated to legislation.

These ‘ulama’ treat voting as primarily permitted, focusing on intentions—the secularists having bad intentions, and the Islamic groups having good ones. This is why they endorse and support the actions of the latter. This focus on intentions rather than definitions is where the fundamental error lies. Recognizing this key distinction can clarify much of the confusion around this matter, which isn’t as straightforward as issues like shirk in grave worship. This foundational misunderstanding has led to great confusion and complexity around the issue. May Allah help us.

However, if the reality of it is shirk, this does not mean one should take it lightly. Nor does it mean one should shout and create a scene to make people pay attention, urging them to stay away from it by attempting to convince them that it’s dangerous and without benefit, or that it could bring about Allah’s punishment on all of us. Rather, it should be addressed with wisdom and knowledge.

There are two aspects to consider when determining whether something is permitted or not, whether it’s right or wrong: one is the intention, and the other is the action itself. Regarding the first, the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Actions are but by intentions.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (1) and Muslim (1907). This means that intentions should be correct. However, does having the right intention mean that every action you take is automatically correct and permissible? Obviously not, as there is another aspect to consider—the action itself. This is where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, “Whoever does an action that is not in accordance with this matter of ours will have it rejected.” Narrated by al-Bukhaari (2697) and Muslim (1718).

As stated, a good intention does not change haram to halal, filth to purity, evil to good, or shirk to tawheed.

One should also be aware, when discussing the alleged claim of benefits in voting, that there is an important question to address with those brothers who have misunderstood this matter: What benefit are we actually talking about? Who said that what you're claiming is beneficial in Islam? Just as declaring something halal requires evidence, so too does declaring something haram, or stating that something is Sunnah or an innovation. Similarly, claiming something as beneficial requires evidence. Not everything that seems beneficial or valuable to us is necessarily beneficial in the Shari'ah or something approved by it. Unfortunately, those who address this topic often repeat the word "benefit" without defining it. So, what benefit? What is the evidence that this particular action is beneficial?

When one speaks of evidence, it should be a very clear Ayah or hadith that specifically addresses the particular benefit being claimed. The evidence could also be a general Ayah, hadith, or a principle within the Shari'ah, but there should be evidence to support it nonetheless. When discussing evidence, one should remember that "benefit" in Islam refers to something approved by the Shari'ah. If an action involves harm that cannot be separated from it, and if this harm outweighs the benefit, then this action is no longer approved in Islam. This is confirmed by Allah's words in Surah al-Baqarah (2:219) regarding wine and gambling:

قُلْ فِيهِمَا إِثْمٌ كَبِيرٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَإِثْمُهُمَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِمَا

Say, "In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit."

If the harm is greater than the benefit, then the action is forbidden. So, when someone claims that something is beneficial and brings forth evidence, it is necessary to examine whether it is associated with harm and which is greater. Let's imagine, in some cases, there is indeed evidence supporting a benefit that is free from any harm or where the benefit outweighs the harm, and this benefit is also approved in the Shari'ah. However, if it is tied to shirk, all other considerations fall apart. Why? Because shirk is the greatest harm, and no one can claim otherwise. Just as tawheed is the greatest benefit—no matter the harm it may result in—preserving it and holding onto it takes priority without considering any potential harm. Similarly, shirk, despite any apparent benefits it may bring, must be abandoned due to its inherent harm.

This is further confirmed by Allah's words in Surah an-Nahl (16:106):

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ

"Whoever disbelieved in Allâh after his belief, except him who is forced thereto and whose heart is at rest with Faith"

What does this mean? The only exception Allah mentions for committing an act of disbelief is in cases of coercion. When considering harm and benefit, coercion is not just a matter of necessity. Necessity

does not always equate to coercion; coercion is the most extreme form of necessity, but not all necessities involve coercion.

Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah have mercy upon him) mentioned that shirk cannot be committed under necessity, nor should any potential benefits be taken into consideration. Ibn Hazm, Ibn Taymiyyah, and Ibnul-Qayyim all stated a consensus among the ‘ulama’ that the only exception for committing an act of disbelief is under coercion—and that is the only one.

Ibn Hazm said: “The scholars are unanimously agreed that the one who is forced to say words of disbelief when his heart is at rest with faith is not subject to any blame before Allah, may He be exalted.” (Maraatib al-Ijmaa‘, 61)

Shaykhul-Islam Ibn Taymiyyah said: Among the prohibitions are those that it is certain the Shari'ah has never permitted under any circumstances, neither out of necessity nor otherwise, such as shirk, immoral acts, speaking about Allah without knowledge, and pure injustice. These are the four mentioned in Allah's words:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ رَبِّيَ الْفَوَاحِشَ مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَمَا بَطَّنَ ۖ وَالْإِنْتِمَ وَالْبَغْيَ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَأَنْ تُشْرِكُوا بِاللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا ۖ وَأَنْ تَقُولُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allāh that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allāh that which you do not know." (Al-A'raaf 7:33)

These acts are forbidden in all divine laws, and Allah sent all the messengers with their prohibition. They have never been permitted in any situation or at any time, which is why this Ayah was revealed in this Makkan Surah. (Al-Fatawa 14/470-471)

Ibnul-Qayyim said: “There is no disagreement among the Ummah that it is not permissible to allow the utterance of a word of disbelief for any reason, except in the case of coercion, provided that the heart remains firm in faith.” (I'laam al-Muwaqqi'een, 3/178)

So long as elections and voting are bound by legislation rooted in shirk, there is no coercion, nor can coercion even be imagined, at least for the vast majority of people, so there is no excuse to engage in it. When discussing benefits, there are two types: religious benefit and worldly benefit, with the latter only permissible if it aligns with Shari'ah. If we are discussing benefit in terms of worldly gain that is approved in Shari'ah, is this truly the goal of voting?

Imagine there is an excuse to participate in voting—what kind of benefit should one focus on? It would mean focusing solely on religious benefits. This is because it is highly dangerous to engage in such matters for the sake of worldly benefits, like a better job or more opportunities. Especially in these countries, which are already well-known for having conditions far better than many others, there is ample provision, and no urgent need exists.

Ibn Taymiyyah said: "If a prisoner fears that the disbelievers will prevent him from marrying or will separate him from his wife, he is not permitted to utter a word of disbelief." (Al-Ikhtiyaraat al-Fiqhiyyah, 1/569)

If a prisoner, fearing only worldly harm like being separated from his wife, is still not permitted to utter a word of disbelief, then how can one justify participating in an act tied to legislation of shirk based merely on fear of perceived harm? In voting, there is no coercion, nor any compulsion that could remove the inherent harm of shirk, so any supposed benefit cannot justify compromising one's tawheed.

So, what remains? Religious benefits. But what can you realistically expect from these parties when all of them not only tolerate but firmly uphold the freedom to blaspheme our Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and Islam? What benefits can you expect from them? They openly ignore Islam as an approved religion, while endorsing Christianity and Judaism but not Islam. What rights do you truly hope to gain? It is well-known in their legal system that members of parliament (even presidents or congressional members)—in other words, politicians—often make promises to secure votes, but practically speaking, they are not bound by law to fulfill these promises. How can you trust such individuals?

Remember, Allah said in Surah al-Baqarah (2:120):

وَلَنْ تَرْضَىٰ عَنْكَ الْيَهُودُ وَلَا النَّصَارَىٰ حَتَّىٰ تَتَّبِعَ مِلَّتَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ ۗ وَلَئِنِ اتَّبَعْتَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ
بَعْدَ الَّذِي جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ ۗ مَا لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ

And never will the Jews and the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, "Indeed, the guidance of Allāh is the [only] guidance." If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allāh no protector or helper.

We are dealing with disbelievers who, in the Hereafter, will disassociate themselves from us. So how can you associate yourself with them in this life? Allah says in Ayah 167:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَّبِعُ اللَّهُ مَنَّا كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا ۚ كَذَلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۗ وَمَا
هُم بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

Those who followed will say, "If only we had another turn [at worldly life] so we could disassociate ourselves from them as they have disassociated themselves from us." Thus will Allāh show them their deeds as regrets upon them. And they are never to emerge from the Fire.

Imam ibn Jareer at-Tabari explained: "Because the people wished to return to the world to disassociate themselves from those they had obeyed in disobedience to Allah, just as their leaders, whom they had followed in disbelief in Allah during their worldly life, had disassociated themselves from them. This desire arose as they witnessed the great punishment that had befallen them from Allah."

How can one justify voting, not only despite the element of major shirk tied to legislation but also while claiming it will remove a perceived harm by supporting a particular candidate or party? These same candidates openly endorse the so-called “right to defend themselves” in conflicts where they have unjustly and forcefully occupied Muslim lands. Meanwhile, innocent Muslims suffer, facing death, torture, and starvation due to blockades that cut off essential supplies. They advocate for such injustices, yet you seek to secure your own interests here while ignoring the suffering inflicted on others abroad. Where is the integrity in this choice?

Look at the history: certain Muslim voters have placed their hopes in these specific parties, receiving many promises supposedly in favor of or beneficial to Muslims, only for these parties to later become the most hostile towards Muslims. This is nothing new. In earlier times, for example, when France colonized Algeria, Tunisia, and other North African countries, certain revolutionary representatives went to France seeking greater rights and less oppression. They observed that one party was in power while another was in opposition and assumed that it would be better to negotiate with the opposition party. The opposition party took advantage of this, using it to strengthen their position against the ruling government, offering promises of more rights and less oppression. Yet once they gained power, the situation worsened even beyond that of the previous government.

Thus, pursuing such hopes yields nothing; it is like chasing a mirage in the desert.

The Fourth Misunderstanding: Democracy is Divided into Two

One of the misunderstandings is the claim that democracy is divided into two parts: ideology and the means to fulfill this ideology. The means include elections, voting, and so on. Advocates of this view say, “We distance ourselves from the ideology as it is disbelief; we don’t believe in it. But the means are just tools that can be beneficial for Islam.” This line of thought has been a root cause of misguidance in the Islamic world. It began with the *Mutakallimeen*—those influenced by Greek philosophy. How did this influence start? In the same way: they said, “This is philosophy, which contains an ideology. The means can lead to this ideology. The ideology is disbelief and filled with shirk, so we distance ourselves from it, but the means are merely tools and methods for discussion that confirm our beliefs. We can use them for the benefit of Islam, to defend Islam and the Sunnah.”

This line of thinking has led to misguidance, such as denying Allah’s Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes or misinterpreting them, misunderstanding *al-Qadar* (divine decree) in both its good and bad aspects, and altering the concept of *eemaan* (faith). Most of the major deviations in these areas originated from this approach. The same pattern can be seen in Sufism. Sufism has an ideology, *Wahdat al-Wujood* (the unity of existence), which claims there is no Creator or created being—both are one and the same. People say, “It’s disbelief, and we distance ourselves from it, but the spiritual practices they use can help to abstain from worldly life and focus more on the Hereafter.” They then start to misinterpret or misapply acts of worship in Islam, turning them into something that may seem Islamic but is practiced in a way that was neither revealed nor practiced by the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). This is how *bid’ah* (innovation) began. Similarly, with Greek logic, they claim, “Greek logic is merely a form of knowledge that helps one think correctly on many matters,

so it's acceptable to use it in Islamic sciences.” They began to say logic has two types: “Logic filled with philosophy, which we reject, and logic cleansed of philosophy, which we use.” But when you examine these topics, there is no real distinction.

This line of thought opens the door and paves the way to misguidance. That's why one can clearly see, especially in our home countries, that those involved in parliamentary memberships and voting, promoting it, debating, and trying to convince others, have ended up with forms of speech that contain the same errors found in *‘Ilm al-Kalaam* (theological rhetoric) and Greek logic. What are these errors? They use terminologies that are not found in the Qur'an, Sunnah, or the language of the *Sahaabah* or the *‘ulama’* and *fuqahaa’*. Is it permissible to use new terminologies if they convey the same meaning? Yes, there's nothing wrong with that. However, these terminologies do not convey the same meaning; they are ambiguous, containing both correct and false aspects. If someone uses them and you say, “You are mistaken,” you might be rejecting the correct part. If you say, “You are correct,” you might be endorsing the false part. These ambiguous terminologies have caused widespread misunderstandings, misguidance, and futile debates, making the issue even more complex and incomprehensible.

Similar issues arise when people begin using the same terminologies commonly employed by proponents of democracy. These terminologies have specific roots and unique interpretations. If you reject them, you may unintentionally reject concepts that are part of Islam, but if you accept them, you may unintentionally accept ideas that contradict Islam—such as “freedom” and “equality.”

As for what they call “means,” i.e., elections and voting, as long as these are bound by legislation, their reality is shirk. May Allah protect us. This is why one cannot simply adopt them as tools.

The Fifth Misunderstanding: Yusuf (peace be upon him) was himself a Minister

This is one of the common misunderstandings used as a justification, and it is a grave mistake. Why? People assume that the contemporary role of a minister is the same as the position Yusuf (peace be upon him) held. Why do they believe this? Because both positions are called "minister." However, the two roles are not the same at all. The role that Yusuf (peace be upon him) assumed was purely administrative and specifically related to agriculture. Secondly, he was granted complete authority. Thirdly, he himself declared, as Allah mentioned in Surah Yusuf (12:40):

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ

“Legislation is not but for Allāh. He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion”

Allah also says about him:

مَا كَانَ لِيَأْخُذَ أَخَاهُ فِي دِينِ الْمَلِكِ

“He could not take his brother by the *deen* of the king”

In other words, as the Salaf interpreted, “the law of the king.” This means that Yusuf did not implement the king’s law. The role of a contemporary minister, however, is bound to implementing man-made laws. Therefore, it is a grave mistake to make this comparison, as it implies that Yusuf (peace be upon him) committed a major sin. All scholars agree that prophets are free from major sins, as Allah has protected them.

Interestingly, Mujaahid—although he was the only one to say this, and others contested it—stated that the king who granted Yusuf complete authority converted to Islam. If that were the case, one could no longer claim that Yusuf served as a minister under a disbelieving king. Therefore, whether this can be used as evidence requires further examination, as those who claim it supports their argument are basing it on an assumption.

Allah has called such matters shirk in His Book, and He has warned against shirk, not only for the followers of the prophets but even for the prophets themselves:

وَلَوْ أَشْرَكُوا لَحَبِطَ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

“But if they had associated others with Allāh, then worthless for them would be whatever they were doing.” (Al-An’aam 6:88)

Allah protected them from falling into these errors. However, if they had done so, despite being prophets, this would not have exempted them from Allah’s punishment. May Allah protect us from shirk. Imam ibn Jareer at-Tabari stated in his tafseer: "If these prophets we have named had associated others with their Lord, exalted is He, and worshiped others besides Him, 'then surely what they were doing would have become worthless'—meaning, the reward for their deeds would be nullified and lost—because Allah does not accept any deed alongside shirk."

The Sixth Misunderstanding: An-Najaashi remained a king for his people in Habashah, and they were Christians

This assertion, aside from claiming that he did not implement Shari’ah as legislation, is incorrect for several reasons. When the Sahaabah made hijrah (migration) to Habashah—the first hijrah—from where did they emigrate? It was not from Madinah but from Makkah, and the implementation of legislative Shari’ah in the political realm had not yet been established, as it was only legislated after the Sahaabah made hijrah to Madinah. This means that when it began, none of it had reached an-Najaashi (may Allah have mercy upon him).

In Islam, it is known that one is not obligated to act upon something for which the message has not yet reached them, and one is not held accountable in such cases. This is a sign of Allah’s mercy upon us. As long as one is willing to learn, and the knowledge has not reached them, any error committed due to this ignorance will not be held against them in the Hereafter. To confirm this, consider that some of the Sahaabah, as reported in *Saheeh al-Bukhari*, continued practices from Makkah in Habashah which were later abrogated in Madinah. For example, ‘Abdullah ibn Mas’ood learned during his time in Makkah, before the hijrah to Habashah, that it was permissible to respond to a greeting of salam while

performing salah. Upon his return from Habashah to Madinah, he continued this practice until the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) corrected him, explaining that it had been abrogated.

Abdullah ibn Mas'ood (may Allah be pleased with him) said: "We used to greet the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) while he was in prayer, and he would respond to us. But when we returned from the land of an-Najaashi, we greeted him, and he did not respond. So we said, 'O Messenger of Allah, we used to greet you during prayer, and you would respond to us.' He replied, 'Indeed, there is enough preoccupation in prayer.'" Narrated in both Saheeh al-Bukhaari and Muslim. In other words, one must be fully engaged in salah before Allah. This example concerns salah, a daily obligation, so how could they have known about Shari'ah in political aspects if it had not reached to them?

Another argument is often raised, particularly in our home countries and sometimes in Western countries by modernists: "Look at an-Najaashi. He was powerless and could not implement Shari'ah, yet he remained king. He was not commanded to step down because he could achieve significant benefit and reduce much harm, making him more suitable than others." They make such arguments, but one must remember that the implementation of Shari'ah in political matters had not even reached an-Najaashi.

Additionally, not all scholars agree on the historical claim that an-Najaashi was powerless. Ibn Taymiyyah was one who mentioned that an-Najaashi lacked authority, and he argued that Allah forgives those who are ignorant if they have not received the message (of Islam). He cited this as evidence that one is not accountable for something if the message has not reached them.

Historically, however, ibnul-Qayyim in *Zaad al-Ma'aad* contradicted this claim of ibn Taymiyyah, citing historical sources indicating that an-Najaashi actually held significant power. Ibnul-Qayyim argued two points: first, that an-Najaashi rejected the people's religion, asserting that 'Eesa (peace be upon him) was not the son of Allah but rather the slave of Allah, despite facing dissent from the bishops. Second, an-Najaashi used to pay *jizyah* to the Caesar of Rome. However, after converting to Islam, he refrained from paying *jizyah* when Caesar sent emissaries to collect it. Caesar's advisors suggested that he take action against An-Najaashi for his change of faith, but Caesar did not place much importance on the *jizyah* and ultimately chose to disregard it. Ibnul-Qayyim used this as evidence that an-Najaashi was not powerless and had fulfilled whatever aspects of Shari'ah he had learned.

The Seventh Misunderstanding: Hilf al-Fudool

One of the alleged pieces of evidence used to justify parliamentary participation and voting is the hadith reported in *Musnad imam Ahmad* (3/193), where the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: "I witnessed the Alliance of the Perfumed (i.e., the League of the Virtuous) with my uncles when I was a young boy, and I would not wish to break it even in exchange for the finest red camels."

This is quite far-fetched. First and foremost, as imam ibn Hajar mentioned, the hadith is *mursal*, meaning it is disconnected; in other words, the chain of narration is weak. Even if we consider it authentic, the pact they made was one of justice, which Islam approves of—there is nothing wrong with this. This is not comparable to political parties today, where even the so-called Islamic groups often do not make deals for justice with secularist parties; rather, their compromises often contradict Islamic principles. Concerning Yusuf (peace be upon him) and an-Najaashi, there may be room for misunderstanding related to disbelief, shirk, or matters that oppose Shari’ah, but this is not the case with this hadith, which has no indication of such issues at all. Unfortunately, this hadith is often cited in this context.

Unless someone were to make the absurd claim that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) somehow approved of shirk practices in Makkah, it would be catastrophic to use this hadith as evidence in this way. The Prophet’s entire mission in Makkah was devoted to combating shirk. The fact that he did not destroy the idols does not mean he approved of them; rather, at the time, Muslims were powerless.

There is a hadith, over which there is some dispute regarding its authenticity, found in *Sunan Abi Dawud*. Ahmad Shaakir said it is *saheeh*, while imam Abu Dawud graded it *munkar*. It states that the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) asked ‘Ali to mount his shoulder, at a time when no one was around the Ka’bah, to push over an idol, which then broke. However, the strongest opinion is that this hadith is not *saheeh*. There is, however, another *saheeh* hadith in which two of the Sahaabah broke an idol, and the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) did not criticize them.

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) made it very clear that what they were doing was major shirk and misguidance, and that their forefathers were disbelievers destined for Hell. He did not say this to provoke them, but rather out of a desire to save them. Despite his sincere warnings, how did they react? They felt that their forefathers and ancestral religion were being disrespected. This confirms how far-fetched it is to use such reasoning in defense of parliamentary participation.

Conclusion: Key Points to Consider

Firstly, when one hears the so-called evidences presented to justify certain actions, it’s clear that they stem from misunderstandings, which fall under what Allah says in Surah Aali ‘Imraan (3:7):

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي
 قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَبَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ ۗ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ ۗ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي
 الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ ءَأَمَّنَّا بِهِ ۚ كُلٌّ مِّنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا ۗ وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

It is He Who has sent down to you the Book. In it are verses that are entirely clear, they are the foundations of the Book; and others not entirely clear. So as for those in whose hearts there is a deviation (from the truth) they follow (only) that which is not entirely clear thereof, seeking Al-Fitnah, and seeking its Ta’wil (interpretation), but none knows its [true] Ta’wil except Allah. And

those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: "We believe in it; all of it is from our Lord."
And none receive admonition except men of understanding

The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said, as reported in Saheeh al-Bukhaari and Muslim, "When you see those who follow what is not so clear of the Qur'an, then they are those whom Allah described, so beware of them."

This Ayah applies completely to some people and partially to others. Those it fully applies to are the modernists, whose objectives we have already discussed. However, when it comes to the trustworthy 'ulama', their intentions align with the principles of *usool al-fiqh* based on Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah. This is the foundation of their approach in many topics. The mistake lies in misapplying these principles. Therefore, while one can consider such statements as grave errors, it is unjust to claim that the Ayah applies to them entirely or to equate them with innovators.

The second point concerns elections and voting bound by legislation rooted in major shirk. Does this mean we should go around declaring *takfeer* on everyone who votes? The answer is clearly no. This is confirmed by a hadith narrated in *al-Bukhaari* (3481) and *Muslim* (2756) from Abu Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), in which the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said:

"A man who never did any good deeds told his family that when he died, they should burn him, then scatter half of him on land and half of him in the sea, for by Allah, if Allah were to seize him, He would surely punish him as He had never punished anyone in the world. When the man died, they did what he had instructed them to do, then Allah commanded the land to gather what was in it, and He commanded the sea to gather what was in it, then he said (to the man): 'Why did you do this?' He said: 'For fear of You, O Lord, and You know best.' So Allah forgave him." According to a version narrated by al-Bukhaari, he said: "When I die, then burn me and grind up (my bones), then scatter me in the wind."

Scholars from Ahlus-Sunnah wal-Jamaa'ah have taken this hadith at its apparent meaning, as seen in the interpretations of imam ibn Qutaybah, imam ibn 'Abdul-Barr—who cited early scholars as having understood it similarly—ibn Taymiyyah, ibnul-Qayyim, ibn al-'Izz al-Hanafi, and others. In contrast, the innovators (mubtadi'ah) from the Ash'ariyyah and Maaturidiyyah distorted the hadith. Unfortunately, some from Ahlus-Sunnah were misled by their interpretations. Both ibn Taymiyyah and ibn Hazm called out these misinterpretations as falsifications (*tahreef*), explaining that the hadith contradicted the foundational beliefs of these sects, leading them to resort to distortion. The Ash'ariyyah and Maaturidiyyah's views on Allah's Beautiful Names and Lofty Attributes were not derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah but rather from misplaced intellect, which they prioritized as the sole correct method of interpretation. Consequently, they held that anyone ignorant of what they deemed as "confirmed by intellect" or who erred in understanding it could be deemed a disbeliever.

One of the most well-known attributes of Allah, demonstrable by intellect, is His Power. This hadith, however, involves a man who doubted whether Allah could resurrect him in the Hereafter after his ashes were scattered. He thus doubted two core matters: Allah's Power and the concept of the

Hereafter. While he believed in resurrection and Allah's power in general, he doubted whether Allah could resurrect him in his specific condition. This was undoubtedly a form of disbelief, but it was not equivalent to denying Allah's Power altogether or rejecting the Afterlife entirely. The man had not received clear knowledge that Allah could resurrect him even in such a condition, and so Allah forgave him.

Scholars state that if a person commits an act of disbelief but is genuinely unaware that it is disbelief—while still believing in Allah, His Messenger, and Islam, with no disrespect toward these—then he may not be held accountable, as he has not been adequately taught. Disbelief cannot be declared at will; just as halal and haram are judgments from Allah, so is declaring someone a disbeliever. This judgment depends on clear evidence from the Qur'an and Sunnah. If someone does not know or misunderstands what revelation states, they are not to be hastily declared a disbeliever.

A similar case occurred with the Companion Qudaamah ibn Madh'oon. He was accused of consuming wine, with witnesses, including his wife and Abu Hurayrah. Qudaamah attempted to justify his action by misinterpreting an Ayah from the Qur'an, claiming that believers would not be held accountable for what they consume. 'Umar corrected his interpretation, emphasizing that true piety involves avoiding what Allah has forbidden. Due to his misunderstanding, they did not declare him a disbeliever. While believing something is halal when it is haram is disbelief, Qudaamah genuinely misunderstood, thinking the Qur'an permitted it.

For the scholars who believe that ignorance regarding shirk cannot be excused, they still do not declare takfeer on those participating in elections and voting. Why? Because, as stated earlier, the individuals were unaware of the full implications of their actions. Not only were they ignorant of what Allah and Shari'ah state on the matter, but they also misunderstood the reality of the situation. For instance, if someone drinks a glass of liquid that they believe to be water but it is actually an alcoholic drink, they are not sinful because they thought it was water.

Maintaining a balanced approach is essential. One should not downplay the matter, as if it is minor, saying things like, "Dear brother, what you are doing is fine, as the scholars allow it." Instead, we should make *da'wah* to our brothers and sisters, explaining that it is a grave mistake while upholding the bonds of brotherhood and sisterhood. So long as one's foundations are rooted in Sunni beliefs, we should gently show them the danger involved. Likewise, we should not exaggerate the matter by declaring takfeer on everyone who errs. Both extremes are egregious errors. May Allah guide us all and forgive our sins.

All praise is due to Allah, and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah.

Relevant:

- [The Comprehensive Principles of the Issue on Excuse of Ignorance in Shirk](#)
- [Is Ignorance an Excuse for Major Shirk?](#)