



## Islamic Principles of Leadership: Qur'anic Foundations and the Prophetic Model

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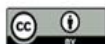
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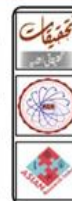
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### Abstract & Indexing



**Abstract**

*This study explores the Islamic principles of leadership as derived from the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). It argues that Islamic leadership is fundamentally grounded in divine guidance, where authority is viewed not as privilege but as a sacred trust (amānah) that entails accountability before God and responsibility toward people. The research highlights key governing principles including faith (īmān), justice ('adl), trustworthiness, mutual consultation (shūrā), compassion, patience, courage, humility, and competence. The study shows how these principles were embodied in the governance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), particularly in Madinah, where he established a model of a welfare-oriented state based on justice, inclusivity, and moral responsibility. It further examines how the Qur'an and Prophetic practice together form an integrated framework for leadership that balances spiritual values with practical governance needs. The findings suggest that these principles remain highly relevant in contemporary contexts, offering guidance for addressing modern challenges of governance, justice, and social cohesion in diverse societies.*

**Keywords:** Leadership, Qur'an and Sunnah, ethics, justice, 'adl.

**1. Introduction**

As a matter of fact, the most complete and enduring system for human welfare was divinely revealed through the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).<sup>1</sup> This system, perfected in both form and application, is reflected in the Prophet's life and mission. Through unwavering dedication, wisdom, and a strong sense of responsibility, he transformed human society from moral decline to a state of dignity and order. His model of governance, particularly in Madinah, stands as a unique historical example of how a fragmented society can be reorganized into a cohesive and welfare-oriented state.<sup>2</sup>

The successful implementation of any system requires the prior formation of a committed and well-informed community. It becomes even more important when we consider the successors of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as he was divinely guided and protected from error, whereas his successors did not enjoy such divine protection. It is therefore important to examine how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) educated, trained, and sufficiently prepared them to inherit a polity that had developed over centuries and to govern it successfully. In line with this principle, the Prophet spent the Makkah period cultivating a group of believers who possessed firm conviction in the Islamic message. However, the absence of a supportive socio-political environment in Makkah limited the practical enforcement of Islamic law. This changed with the migration to Madinah, where the Prophet established the foundations of a

functioning state.<sup>3</sup> The construction of the mosque symbolized the establishment of an administrative and spiritual center, while immediate attention was given to addressing economic challenges.

One of the most significant measures undertaken was the institution of brotherhood (*mu'ākhāt*) between the emigrants (*Muhājirūn*) and the helpers (*Anṣār*). This initiative reduced socio-economic disparities and fostered solidarity, mutual support, and sacrifice. Instead of relying on prevailing usurious financial practices, the Prophet encouraged interest-free assistance and introduced the concept of benevolent loans (*qard al-ḥasan*), thereby laying the foundation for an equitable economic system. It was necessary to ensure the security of Madinah by establishing agreed principles between Muslims and non-Muslims, preventing internal conflict among its inhabitants, and deterring external attacks. To achieve this, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), a few months after the Hijrah, drafted a document referred to within the text as a “book,” prepared after consultation with the relevant groups.

The document effectively established Madinah as a city-state and outlined a basic constitutional framework for its governance. It provided a unified system of order, defined authority, and addressed external security concerns. The Prophet (peace be upon him) is presented in the document as the central authority. The term “*dīn*” is also used once, encompassing both religious and political meanings, which is significant for understanding the integration of religion and governance in early Islamic thought. The agreement functioned as a social charter granting freedom of belief to all parties, protecting life and property, and establishing mechanisms of accountability and punishment. It contributed to internal stability and security in Madinah, which stood in contrast to the prevailing conditions of disorder and injustice in the wider region. This agreement laid the foundation of the Islamic state and marked a shift in the Prophet’s role from primarily establishing a base for the message of Islam to also leading a governing authority. His earlier efforts were directed toward building a center for the propagation of Islam; afterward, he assumed the role of head of state.

His main objective remained the establishment of a moral society, for which governance was considered necessary. He is reported to have prayed for divine support for Islam through power and authority. With the establishment of governance, his mission focused on religious propagation, moral reform, and spiritual purification. The Qur’an defines the purpose of an Islamic state as follows: “those who, were We to bestow authority on them in the land, will establish Prayers, render Zakah, enjoin good, and forbid evil. The end of all matters rests with Allah.”<sup>4</sup> This verse outlines the guiding principles of the Prophet’s governance (peace be upon him). The objectives of his rule were the attainment of divine pleasure and public welfare. As a head of state, the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) governance provides numerous examples of wisdom and leadership that reflect his exceptional stature. He governed with principles of justice, equality, and social fairness for all people. It is therefore the primary responsibility of Islamic rulers to uphold justice, eliminate oppression, and establish peace and security, based on the principles of equality and accountability that form the foundation of the Islamic state.

Main question which this article aims to address include : How did the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) establish and implement a comprehensive system of governance that ensured social cohesion, justice, and public welfare in

Madinah? What foundational principles of leadership can be derived from the Qur'an and the practical example (Sunnah) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)? And How can the Islamic principles of leadership, as practiced by the Prophet and his successors, provide guidance for contemporary leadership challenges in diverse and complex societies? The article begins with an Introduction that presents brief introduction of the background of this article by highlighting the divine basis of Islamic governance and outlining the main questions of the study. It is followed by second section, which explains the primary sources of leadership in Islam—the Qur'an and Sunnah—and highlights key qualities of a leader, supported by textual evidence and Prophetic practice. The third section, Application of Islamic Principles of Leadership, focuses on practical implementation during the Prophet's lifetime and the Rightly Guided Caliphate, showing the continuity of this model in real governance. The article concludes by emphasizing the enduring relevance of these principles and their applicability to contemporary leadership challenges across different contexts.

## **2. Governing Principles of Leadership in Islam**

Principles of leadership in Islam are rooted in the Islamic faith. All the characteristics of an ideal Muslim leader are based on the concept of accountability to those who follow and more than that to the Omnipotent and Omnipresent God Who, according to the Islamic faith will call to account in the hereafter, every person for his deeds in this worldly life. A just decision will be taken about every human being and particularly those who were in authority. This faith distinguishes the concept and job of leadership from all modern theories of leadership.

Quran, believed by Muslims to be the word of God in letter and spirit, is the primary source of knowledge and guidance for Muslims. It was revealed by God to the last Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). He practiced the commands of Quran and explained its principles and general rules in detail. The revelation of Quran took place in piecemeal during 23 years of Muhammad's life after he was granted the prophethood by God. Thus, it is unique book, that is not like any other book starting from the basics of the subject-matter and going gradually towards conclusions. It is a sort of live guidance that was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) whenever he needed. That is why someone who is not aware of this fact is a bit perplexed when he/she approaches Quran directly. It can only be understood in the light of the Sunnah.<sup>5</sup> Hence Quran and Sunnah i.e. practice of the Prophet Muhammad jointly make the source of guidance for the believers in all spheres of life, leadership being one of the most important of them. Quran has given certain principles about leadership in a broader way which have then been practiced by the Prophet of Islam in such a way that the followers understood their spirit and scope.

Quran says,

“He who obeys the Messenger thereby obeys Allah; as for he who turns away, We have not sent you as a keeper over them!”<sup>6</sup>

It also says,

“Surely there was a good example for you in the Messenger of Allah,<sup>34</sup> for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much.”<sup>7</sup>

It also says,

“and you are certainly on the most exalted standard of moral excellence,”<sup>8</sup> Abdullah ibn Amr reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said,

**“None of you have faith until his desires comply with what I have brought.”<sup>9</sup>**

Thus, a Muslim must follow the Prophet of Islam in all matters of life and leadership is one of the most important. That is why Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was the greatest and ideal leader, having all prerequisites of a successful leader. The main cause of his success was his infallibility that was granted to him by God as His messenger and the live guidance in the form of divine revelation that took both the shape of Quranic verses and knowledge put in his heart. Whatever decisions and steps he took in the matter of religion were based on Divine revelation even if he used his own words for that.

Quran says;

“nor does he speak out of his desire. This is nothing but a revelation that is conveyed to him, something that a very powerful one has imparted to him.”<sup>10</sup>

There were several different modes in which the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was given guidance by God.

Quran describes those modes:

“It is not given to any human being that Allah should speak to him except through revelation, or from behind a veil, or that a messenger (an angel) be sent to him who reveals to him by Allah's leave whatever He wishes. He is All-High, Most Wise.”<sup>11</sup>

The principles of leadership in Islam have been derived from Quran and practiced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in a way that his Companions saw and learned it clearly so that it is possible for them to follow the Prophet in letter and spirit. These principles might be categorized as follow:

### **1. Faith (Iman)**

In Islamic perspective, the right faith is essential for all human deeds to be acceptable to God. Faith means to believe in One God, His angels, His books, His messengers, the Last day, the good and bad human destiny and the resurrection after death. Any good deed without the right faith, might be appreciated in this world but it will not be rewarded by God in the hereafter. That is why in Quran faith is one of the most emphasized characteristics. Quran even calls upon those who have declared themselves believers to be faithful with all sincerity and reality.

Believers! Believe in Allah and His Messenger and in the Book He has revealed to His Messenger, and in the Book He revealed before. And whoever disbelieves in Allah, in His angels, in His Books, in His Messengers and in the Last Day, has indeed strayed far away.<sup>12</sup>

This is the right Islamic faith that follows other characteristics like *Islam* (total submission to the will of God in all matters of life), *Taqwa* (God-consciousness) and *Ihsan* (excellence). All those terms have been repeatedly used in Quran and in the Sunnah of the Prophet.

Regarding *Islam* God says in Quran:

“The true religion with Allah is Islam.”<sup>13</sup>

It also states:

“And whoever seeks a way other than this way a submission (Islam), will find that it will not be accepted from him and in the Life to come he will be among the losers.”<sup>14</sup>

Those who believe in Islam are called Muslims. Quran calls even Abraham as Muslim (man who had surrendered), which means that the divine religion has always been one i.e. Islam.

Quran says:

“Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian; he was a Muslim, wholly devoted to God. And he certainly was not amongst those who associate others with Allah in His divinity.”<sup>15</sup>

*Taqwa* (God-consciousness) has been mentioned in Quran for around 300 times. It means that in whatever a man does, he must believe that God, the Omnipresent is watching him, or, to be more concise, it means God-mindedness or God-consciousness.<sup>16</sup>

Quran says:

“O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah with right observance and die not save as those who have surrendered (unto Him).”<sup>17</sup>

It also says:

“O ye who believe! Observe your duty to Allah. And let every soul look to that which it sendeth on before for the morrow. And observe your duty to Allah. Lo! Allah is Informed of what ye do”<sup>18</sup>

In the both the above verses, observance of duty comes in the meaning of “*Taqwa*”.

*Ihsan* (excellence) has also been emphasized by the Quran and by the Prophet more than once. God says:

“...; and do good, for Allah loves those who do good.”<sup>19</sup>

“doing good” is the translation of doing *Ihsan*. It is worth noting that the Qur’an, on numerous occasions, mentions faith and good actions together, treating them as intrinsically interconnected. This suggests that, in the Qur’anic perspective, faith is expected to be of such strength that it necessarily gives rise to good actions, and such actions should naturally arise from genuine faith.<sup>20</sup>

The Prophet of Islam has called for excellence in all affairs of life even if is killing (legitimate) or slaughtering. He is reported to have said,

“Verily Allah has prescribed (excellence/perfection) in all things. So, if you kill, kill well; and if you slaughter, slaughter well. Let each one of you sharpen his blade and let him spare suffering to the animal he slaughters.”<sup>21</sup>

Thus, it becomes clear that having the right Islamic faith leads to Islam, *Taqwa* and *Ihsan*, and those are the primary characteristics of leadership expounded by Quran and taught practically by the Prophet of Islam. He demonstrated those principles, while he led the Muslim community during war and peace. Having these principles in practice means the leader does not only fulfill his duty but he takes it as a mission to please God Who is Omni-Seeing and Omni-knowing. According to the saying of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) *Ihsan* is: “...when you worship God as if you see Him and (if you cannot do that then at least) as if He sees you”.<sup>22</sup>

Life of the Prophet of Islam is a glaring example of leadership with solid and strong faith in God and His infinite power and authority over all the universe and all creatures. Thus, he kept preaching Islam in Makkah for almost 13 years in face of all sorts of hardships caused by his strong and influential opponents. They tried hard to dissuade him and the oppressed Muslim community from the path of Islam through carrot and stick however it was the faith that kept Prophet Muhammad and his community strong. From physical torture to social and economic boycott, every weapon was used against them, but nothing could detract them from the straight path. The strong faith of the leadership did not allow them despair. In the worst of the situation the Prophet of Islam kept the morale of his companion high by reminding them that the right path was always full of trials and hardships and that the companions of the past messengers of God went through worse and that they never gave up.

After migration to Madinah, the very second year when the newly founded political management was weak with no resources, they had to face a thousand plus strong and well-equipped army of the people of Makkah with an ill-equipped army of three hundred and thirteen only. The strong faith resulted in an unexpected victory in that very first battle of Islam known as the battle of Badr.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. Justice:**

The second most important principle that has been expounded by Quran and practiced by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is justice. In Islamic terminology justice is '*Adl* meaning giving something its right place. Its opposite is *Zulm* (cruelty) putting something in a wrong place. It is fairness, righteousness and equal treatment of all when it comes to rights and duties.

The word '*Adl* has been mentioned in Quran for 29 times. We will quote only two examples.

“Believers! Be upright bearers of witness for Allah, and do not let the enmity of any people move you to deviate from justice. Act justly, that is

nearer to God-fearing. And fear Allah. Surely Allah is well aware of what you do.”<sup>24</sup>

It also states:

“Allah commands you to deliver trusts to those worthy of them; and when you judge between people, to judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition Allah gives you. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”<sup>25</sup>

One of the ninety-nine names of God is *‘Adl*.

According to Ubadah bin Samit’s narration the Companions took oath of allegiance to the Prophet and mentioned several things in that oath; one of them being *‘Adl*.<sup>26</sup> In the narration of Abu Hurairah seven categories of people will be given place in the shade of the Divine throne on the day of resurrection when there will be no other shade. One of those seven categories will be the just ruler.<sup>27</sup>

The Prophet practiced this principle in all the matters of his leadership. He also applied it on his person. Abdullah bin Abbas narrates from his brother Fazal bin Abbas that the Prophet said, “O people! If I have ever beaten someone, so he should come forward and take retaliation from me and if I have ever taken someone’s property, so here is my property, he should come forward and take his due from my property and if I have abused anyone anywhere he should come forward and take his retaliation.”<sup>28</sup>

This invitation was from a leader who had divine authority over his followers and to have his love preferred over all types of relation was a pre-requisite of the faith.<sup>29</sup> He showed that if he is not above the law, no one else can have such an exemption. This also demonstrates one of the basic principles for justice that it should be visible.

An important dimension of justice in leadership is *to appoint right man for the right job* and not to give out positions of authority on any other bases like friendship etc. Stressing on ‘to appoint right man for the right job’, Ghazali states:

“One might suppose that... justice consists in bringing benefit to people; yet this is not so. For if a king were to open his treasuries filled with weapons, books, and various forms of wealth, and then distribute wealth to the rich, give weapons to scholars, hand over fortresses to them, and assign books to soldiers and men of war, and mosques and schools to them, he would indeed have conferred some benefit, but he would still have acted unjustly and deviated from justice, since he has placed everything in an improper position. Likewise, if treating a sick person with medicines, bloodletting, and cupping causes him pain, and if punishing criminals through execution, amputation, or beating causes them harm, such actions are nonetheless justice, because each thing has been placed in its proper place.”<sup>30</sup>

Abu Dhar Ghifari narrates that I asked the Prophet to appoint me to a public position. He said, “O Abu Dhar, you are weak and these (positions) are trust and

on the Day of Resurrection they will be regret and remorse except for those who rightfully fulfilled it and performed it as it should have been done.”<sup>31</sup>

### **3. Honesty & Trustworthiness**

The principle of justice in leadership entails the concept of trust as well. When some one is appointed as leader, it means the affairs/assets of his followers are entrusted to him. Justice requires him to be honest and take due care of this trust whether it is in the form of decisions about the well-being of the followers or it relates to the assets of the community of the followers.

God says about the believers in Quran.

“who are true to their trusts and their covenants”<sup>32</sup>

On the other hand, God prohibits betrayal of trust.

“O ye who believe! Betray not Allah and His messenger, nor knowingly betray your trusts.”<sup>33</sup>

Explaining the term: *'amanat* & *'ahd*, Mawlana Mawdudi states that “The believers fulfill the terms of the trusts which are placed in their charge. In this connection it should be noted that the Arabic word *amanat* is very comprehensive and includes all those trusts which are placed in their charge by Allah or society or individuals. Likewise *aahd* includes all those compacts, pledges, and promises which are made between Allah and man, and man and man.”<sup>34</sup>

The Prophet considered betrayal in trust as one of the signs of hypocrite. Abdullah bin Umar narrates that the Prophet said,

"Whoever has the following four (characteristics) will be a pure hypocrite and whoever has one of the following four characteristics will have one characteristic of hypocrisy unless and until he gives it up.

1. Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays.
2. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.
3. Whenever he makes a covenant, he proves treacherous.
4. Whenever he quarrels, he behaves in a very imprudent, evil and insulting manner.”<sup>35</sup>

It is worth mentioning here that hypocrites are the worst categories from Islamic viewpoint who have been condemned by God and His Messenger in the strongest possible terms.

God says in Quran:

“The hypocrites, be they men or women, are all alike. They enjoin what is evil, and forbid what is good, and withhold their hands from doing good. They forgot Allah, so Allah also forgot them. Surely the hypocrites are wicked. Allah has promised Hell-Fire to the hypocrites, both men and women, and to the unbelievers. They shall abide in it: a sufficient recompense for them. Allah has cursed them, and theirs is a lasting torment.”<sup>36</sup>

The Qur'an mentioned more than a dozen of characteristics of Hippocrates. Among their most significant characteristics are: a disease of the heart; lustful greed; arrogance and haughtiness; mockery of the signs of God and ridicule of the believers; hindering people from spending (in the way of God); their own foolishness while accusing the believers of being foolish; and allegiance to the disbelievers.<sup>37</sup>

About the ultimate destiny of hypocrites,<sup>38</sup> God says.

“Lo! the hypocrites (will be) in the lowest deep of the Fire, and thou wilt find no helper for them; Save those who repent and amend and hold fast to Allah and make their religion pure for Allah (only). Those are with the believers. And Allah will bestow on the believers an immense reward”<sup>39</sup>

Honesty in leadership requires trustworthiness as well as fulfilling one's promises and pledges. The Prophet says:

**“There is no faith for one who cannot be trusted. There is no religion for one who cannot keep a pledge.”<sup>40</sup>**

#### **4. Righteousness:**

No doubt that a leader having the above-discussed qualities will be a righteous one. The concept of righteousness is also emphasized in Quran and it has been attached with the utmost sincerity for obtaining the pleasure of God.

“Righteousness does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or towards the west; true righteousness consists in believing in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book and the Prophets, and in giving away one's property in love of Him to one's kinsmen, the orphans, the poor and the wayfarer, and to those who ask for help, and in freeing the necks of slaves, and in establishing Prayer and dispensing the Zakah. True righteousness is attained by those who are faithful to their promise once they have made it and by those who remain steadfast in adversity and affliction and at the time of battle (between Truth and falsehood). Such are the truthful ones; such are the God-fearing.”<sup>41</sup>

The above-stated verse means that righteousness is not only the exhibited forms of worship, but it comes from the inside of one's heart as a result of the pure faith in God and the life of the hereafter. This is a quality of leadership that renders it selfless and focused on its cause of the pleasure of Allah through serving its community.

Quran clearly says that if the believers are given leadership, their foremost priority will be to establish a system where worship will be the standard.

“(Allah will certainly help) those who, were We to bestow authority on them in the land, will establish Prayers, render Zakah, enjoy good, and forbid evil. The end of all matters rests with Allah.”<sup>42</sup>

The same has been emphasized in another place in Quran:

“ Allah hath promised such of you as believe and do good work that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as

He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They serve Me. They ascribe no thing as partner unto Me. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants.”<sup>43</sup>

The condition of stated by God for having authority is that they will serve Him and will associate none with Him.

### **5. Competency:**

Quran clearly expounds the rule of physical fitness and mental competency for leadership in the story of David and Goliath.

“And their Prophet said to them: “Indeed Allah has sent forth Saul (Talut) as your king.” They said: “By what right shall he rule over us when we are more worthy than he to dominion, for he is not very wealthy?” He said: “Allah has chosen him over you and has endowed him abundantly with both intellectual and physical capacities. Allah indeed has the power to bestow dominion upon whomsoever He wills. Allah is All-Resourceful, All- Knowing”<sup>44</sup>

Commenting on “Allah has...endowed him abundantly with both intellectual and physical capacities,” Imam Razi elaborates the necessity of these two features for a ruler as that the objection to his kingship was based on his lack of royal lineage and wealth, but God refuted this by emphasizing his possession of knowledge and capability. Imam Razi argues that these two qualities are superior criteria for leadership because they are true and inherent human perfections, unlike wealth and status, which are external and temporary. Moreover, knowledge and strength are essential for managing affairs and defending the community, making a knowledgeable and capable person more deserving of authority than one who is merely noble and wealthy.<sup>45</sup> A leader who is physically weak and having no knowledge and skill-set necessary for the task is bound to fail.

### **6. Mutual Consultation:**

Quran and the practice of Prophet Muhammad has demonstrated that mutual consultation is key to successful leadership model. Quran at a point describes the believers in the following words:

“Who obey their Lord and establish Prayer; who conduct their affairs by consultation, and spend out of what We have bestowed upon them”<sup>46</sup>

By mutual consultation the followers have a sense of ownership, which in turn instill confidence into them. On the contrary something that is imposed upon people from above without taking them into confidence does not bode well. It should be noted here that mutual consultation is a general rule to be followed by the leader however if the situation so demands, the leader should be able to impose himself, something that depends upon his relationship with the followers.

Explaining some main rules related to *shura*, Mawlana Mawdudi, argues that In Qur'anic verse (42:38) and the hadiths that explain it, three principles are made obligatory: First, no collective matter of the Muslims should be carried out without consultation (*shūrā*). This principle cuts at the root of monarchy, because the most important matter in governance is the appointment of the head of state. If consultation is required in other matters, how can the direct imposition of a ruler be justified? Likewise, it renders dictatorship impermissible, since dictatorship implies authoritarianism, which is the opposite of consultation. For the same reason, the head of state cannot be granted the authority to suspend the constitution, whether temporarily or permanently, because during such suspension he would inevitably act in an authoritarian manner, and authoritarianism is prohibited. Second, all those whose collective affairs are involved should participate in the consultation, either directly or through their trusted representatives. Third, the consultation must be conducted freely, impartially, and sincerely. Seeking opinions or votes under pressure or inducement is tantamount to not seeking consultation at all.<sup>47</sup>

### **7. Leniency & Compassion**

Leniency and compassion are a basic principle of leadership from Islamic perspective. It has been lucidly stated in Quran:

“It was thanks to Allah's mercy that you were gentle to them. Had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would surely have scattered away from you. So pardon them, and pray for their forgiveness, and take counsel from them in matters of importance. And when you are resolved on a course of action place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him).”<sup>48</sup>

The above verse of Quran has summarized the fundamental principles of Islamic leadership. It recommends for the leader to be compassionate and caring for his followers as being arrogant will cause frustration among the followers and they will disperse. It also alludes towards the important process of mutual consultation. It implies that after mutual consultation once the leader has reached to a conclusion, then he should go ahead with action. Thus, it indirectly says that the leadership should have a good degree of determination to take decisive steps for achievement of the leadership goals.

### **8. Patience and Persistence**

According to Quran the believers must be put to trial to test their faith and it is only those who have patience (*sabr*), will succeed.

Quran says:

“Believers! Seek help in patience and in Prayer; Allah is with those that are patient..”<sup>49</sup>

“We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient”<sup>50</sup>

The above-mentioned and many other verses of Quran prove that it is part of divine scheme for the believers to have patience and persistence in their lives. The rule is that the higher the position is, the bigger the trial will be, and the higher degree of patience will be required.<sup>51</sup> God says:

“Believers, be steadfast, and vie in steadfastness, stand firm in your faith, and hold Allah in fear that you may attain true success.”<sup>52</sup>

A close examination of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and his companions reveals that they were put to all kinds of severe trials. They were tormented, socially boycotted, economically blockaded. Their opponents used all kinds of media to run the worst propaganda campaign against them. In face of all this the leadership of the Prophet demonstrated such patience and persistence that kept his followers stuck to the hope of a bright future and did not allow them to fall into despair. It goes without saying that Muhammad (peace be upon him) was not an ordinary leader but a messenger of God having direct contact with Him and receiving revelation from Him however he did not run the affairs of leadership only through miracles. He lived the life of a common man and faced the situation in most of the cases like any prudent leader to observe, foresee, plan, strategize and act.<sup>53</sup>

The Prophet said: “How wonderful the affair of the believer is! Indeed, all his affairs are good for him. This is only for the believer. If something good happens to him, he is grateful to Allah, which is good for him. And if something bad happens to him, he has patience, which is good for him.”<sup>54</sup>

The above discussion shows that patience and persistence is the ultimate fruit of Islamic faith. The basic notion is that this worldly life is a trial and every one will have the results of his good/bad deeds in the life of hereafter and that everything in this worldly life is temporary so no need to go after it on the cost of the reward of the hereafter.

## **9. Courage & Determination**

Courage and determination are the fundamental principle of good leadership. According to Islamic faith all good and bad things happen to us by the will of God. Ibn 'Abbas narrated: I was behind the Prophet (peace be upon him) one day when he said: 'O boy! I will teach you a statement: Be mindful of Allah and He will protect you. Be mindful of Allah and you will find Him before you. When you ask, ask Allah, and when you seek aid, seek Allah's aid. Know that if the entire creation were to gather together to do something to benefit you- you would never get any benefit except that Allah had written for you. And if they were to gather to do something to harm you- you would never be harmed except that Allah had written for you. The pens are lifted, and the pages are dried.'

For a leader having such a faith in heart, courage and determination is natural. The Prophet of Islam always demonstrated courage and determination even in the worst of situation. Mubarakpuri narrates the story of the battle of Uhud, when the opponents were far more in numbers and resources.

“The Messenger of Allâh (Peace be upon him) forbade the Muslims to start the fight without having an order from him. He, then, wore two armours — a front armour and a back one. He urged his Companions to fight and spurred them to show stamina and steadfastness at fight. He started to implant the spirit of boldness and bravery in them. To wage and inflame his Companions and in order to standfast in the fight, he took a sharp sword, held it in his hand and called out unto his Companions and said: “Who is ready to take this sword and give it its proper due?” Many a man set out to take it. Some of them were ‘Ali bin Abi Talib, Az-Zubair bin Al-‘Awwam and ‘Umar bin Al-Khattab. But it was granted to none. Abu Dujana Sammak bin Kharsha inquired: “O Messenger of Allâh, what is its price?” The Prophet (Peace be upon him) said: “It is to strike the enemy’s faces with it till it was bent.” So Abu Dujana said: “O Messenger of Allâh I will take it for that price.” and he was given the sword. Abu Dujana was a man of courage who used to swagger at war. He had a red band which he wore round his head. Whenever he was head-banded everybody knew that he was determined to fight to death. Therefore, as soon as Abu Dujana took the Prophet’s sword, he banded his head and started strutting amongst the fighters. Watching him doing that, the Messenger of Allâh (Peace be upon him) said: “This is a sort of walking that Allâh detests except in such a situation.”<sup>55</sup>

### **10. Humility & Modesty**

Humility is a key characteristic of the believers. It is opposite to arrogance that has been condemned by God and His Messengers.

God says:

“The true servants of the Merciful One are those<sup>78</sup> who walk on the earth gently<sup>79</sup> and when the foolish ones address them, they simply say: "Peace to you".”<sup>56</sup>

Humility was a fundamental feature of the character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

He also says:

“And give, (O Prophet), glad tidings to those that humble<sup>65</sup> themselves (before Allah), whose hearts shiver whenever Allah is mentioned, who patiently bear whatever affliction comes to them, who establish Prayer, and who spend (for good purposes) out of what We have provided them.”<sup>57</sup>

Iyad bin Himar reported that Prophet (peace be upon him) addressed them and said: "Allah has revealed to me that you should be humble towards one another so that none of you boasts to another.”<sup>58</sup>

Humbleness and humility are opposite of arrogance that came from Iblees (Satan) when he refused to bow to Adam when commanded by God by saying that he was better than Adam as He was created from fire while Adam was created from soil.

This has been mentioned in Quran more than once.

“The Lord said: “O Iblis, what prevented you from prostrating yourself before him whom I created of My Two Hands.<sup>64</sup> Are you waxing proud, or fancy yourself to be too exalted?” He replied: “I am nobler than he. You created me from fire and created him from clay”.”<sup>59</sup>

### **3. Application of Islamic Principles of Leadership:**

The distinction of the Islamic principles of leadership is that they are not based on the theorizing of some intellectual. They are based on Divine word i.e. Quran and were put into practice by the Prophet of Islam who lived among his people for 40 long years before his appointment by God as His Messenger and for 23 years after the prophethood. He was a well-known person from the beginning as he belonged to the most honourable clan from the clans of Quraish, the most respected and important tribe of Arabian Peninsula. After he was appointed a prophet of God, he preached Islam, practiced it and implemented its rules with a political and military power when he established a state in Madinah. He was loved and respected by his follower to the extent that they would strive to imitate him in all aspects of life. After his demise, his close friends and persons trained by him personally controlled the system and they practiced the same leadership principles for the next 40 years. Those 40 years are called the Rightly Guided Caliphate in the history of Islam as they followed the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in letter and spirit. For the next over 1000 years Muslim leaders around the world followed the leadership principles of Islam in various degrees, however, with the passage of time the deviation began to occur from the true spirit of Islam. Even though, history cannot present any other example of a leader who have been loved respected and followed to such a degree and for such a long period. This is a fact that makes the Islamic principles of leadership distinguished from all other similar theories. There is no theoretical principle or rule that has not been put to practice either by the Prophet himself or by his Caliphs afterwards. The practical application of Islamic principles of leadership is not confined to a specific historical period but extends to all contexts where ethical and responsible governance is required. In contemporary societies, these principles can guide leaders in developing systems that prioritize justice, accountability, and public welfare. For instance, the principle of *shūrā* can be institutionalized through consultative bodies and participatory decision-making processes, ensuring that governance reflects the collective will and interests of the people. Similarly, the emphasis on trustworthiness and accountability can strengthen transparency in public institutions, reducing corruption and enhancing public confidence in leadership.

Moreover, the moral dimensions of Islamic leadership, such as compassion, humility, and patience, are particularly relevant in addressing modern challenges such as social inequality, political polarization, and ethical decline. Leaders who embody these values are better equipped to foster unity, resolve conflicts, and inspire trust among diverse populations. The integration of spiritual consciousness with administrative responsibility also ensures that leadership remains grounded in higher ethical objectives, preventing the misuse of power. Thus, the practical application of these principles offers a balanced and holistic framework for leadership that can contribute meaningfully to the stability and progress of contemporary societies.

#### **4. Concluding remarks**

The study of Islamic principles of leadership reveals a comprehensive and deeply rooted framework that integrates moral integrity, spiritual consciousness, and practical governance. Unlike many modern theories of leadership that are often shaped by changing social, political, or economic trends, Islamic leadership is grounded in divine guidance as articulated in the Qur'an and exemplified through the life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This unique foundation ensures that leadership is not merely a position of authority but a profound trust (*amānah*) that entails accountability before both society and God. A central feature of Islamic leadership is its strong emphasis on faith (*īmān*), which serves as the driving force behind all actions. Faith instills a sense of responsibility and awareness that every decision will ultimately be judged in the hereafter. This belief transforms leadership into a moral mission rather than a pursuit of power or personal gain. Closely linked with faith are the concepts of *taqwā* (God-consciousness) and *ihsān* (excellence), which require leaders to act with sincerity, vigilance, and a commitment to the highest ethical standards in all circumstances. Justice (*ʿadl*) emerges as another fundamental pillar of leadership in Islam. The Qur'an repeatedly commands fairness and impartiality, even in situations involving personal bias or enmity. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) demonstrated this principle not only in his governance but also in his personal conduct, showing that no one, including the leader himself, is above the law. Justice in Islamic leadership extends beyond legal rulings to include the proper allocation of responsibilities, ensuring that positions are entrusted to those who are most competent and capable. The principles of trustworthiness and honesty further reinforce the ethical framework of leadership. A leader is entrusted with the welfare, rights, and resources of the community, and any breach of this trust is considered a serious moral failing. The strong condemnation of betrayal and hypocrisy in Islamic teachings highlights the importance of integrity in maintaining public confidence and social stability.

Another significant aspect of Islamic leadership is mutual consultation (*shūrā*). This principle ensures participatory governance and prevents authoritarianism by involving members of the community in decision-making processes. Consultation not only enhances the quality of decisions but also fosters a sense of collective

responsibility and unity among the people. At the same time, Islamic leadership recognizes the need for decisiveness, allowing leaders to take firm action when necessary after due consultation. The qualities of compassion, patience, courage, humility, and determination further enrich the leadership model presented in Islam. These attributes enable leaders to navigate challenges, maintain social harmony, and inspire their followers. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) provides a practical demonstration of these qualities, showing how they can be effectively applied in both times of peace and conflict. To sum, the Islamic principles of leadership offer a holistic and timeless model that balances authority with accountability, power with humility, and governance with moral purpose. This model not only proved successful in the early Islamic period but also continues to hold relevance for contemporary societies seeking ethical and effective leadership. By adhering to these principles, leaders can foster justice, stability, and welfare, ultimately contributing to the betterment of humanity as a whole.



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## Reference

- <sup>1</sup> The assertion is grounded in the premise that Islamic principles, when properly applied, are best suited to advance human welfare and civilization. This claim warrants historical examination. For this purpose, one may consult Abu al-Hasan Ali Nadwi, *Insānī duniyā par Musalmānōn kē 'urūj o zawāl kā athar*, 11th edn., (Karachi: Majlis Nashriyat-e Islam, 1979). The author traces the condition of pre-Islamic Arab society, the advent of Islam and its transformative impact, and the occasional subsequent deviations from authentic Islamic principles, accompanied by a corresponding decline. See also: Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, *Tārīkh-e Tahzīb-e Islāmī* (Delhi: Bharat Offset Press, 2012).
- <sup>2</sup> For an in-depth analysis of how the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as an exemplary leader, established the state of Madina—through mental conditioning, particularly during the Makkan period; its founding in Madina; overcoming internal challenges; consolidating it into a stable polity; and enabling it to engage with the contemporary international actors: Mawlana Mazhar Yasin Siddiqui, *Ahd-e Nabawī meñ Tanzīm-e Riyāsat wa Ḥukūmat* (Delhi: Qazi Publishers and Distributers, n.d.).
- <sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the portion of the Qur'an revealed after the migration to Madina primarily contains practical legal injunctions, whereas the Qur'an revealed in Makka largely focuses on the formation of belief, the strengthening of faith, and the instruction and cultivation of doctrine—foundations that were essential for the subsequent establishment of a practical system and the implementation of legal commands.
- <sup>4</sup> Qur'an 22: 41.
- <sup>5</sup> Conduct of the Prophet in the form of his deed, speech or tacit approval/disapproval of someone's action.

- 6 Syed Abul A'ala Mawdudi, Trans.. Zafar Ishaq Ansari, 4:80. All references to this translation of the Qur'an by Mawdudi and Ansari will be referred to as Quran.
- 7 Quran 33:21
- 8 Quran 68:5
- 9 al-Sunnah li-Ibn Abī 'Āṣim 15
- 10 Quran 53: 3-5
- 11 Quran 42:51
- 12 Quran 4 :136
- 13 Quran 3 :19
- 14 Quran 3 :85
- 15 Quran 3 :67
- 16 The term *taqwā* has more than one connotations in the Qur'an. "*Taqwā* literally means "wariness, restraint." As a technical term, it is often translated "piety, righteousness," but perhaps a better translation would be "God-mindedness" or "God-consciousness." Such examples of *taqwā* as keeping from evil actions (40:9) and curbing one's greed (59:9; 64:16) might suggest that *taqwā* is a negative virtue. In a sense this is true, and it is because this is true that the Qur'an often mentions *taqwā* together with a complementary positive virtue; it speaks, for example, of "those who have *taqwā* and do good deeds" (7:35; also 4:128, 129; 5:93; 16:128). But even though *taqwā* has a negative character, its importance in the formation of character cannot be overemphasized. Since it is the foundation of good character, the Qur'an frequently gives it a more comprehensive significance, making it the sole requisite of salvation (q.v.; 2:212; 3:15, 198; 4:77; 6:32; 12:109; 13:35; 39:20, 73)." See: Mustansir Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Terms and Concepts* (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inco., 1987), p. 157.
- 17 Quran 3 :102
- 18 Quran 59:18
- 19 Qurana 2:195
- 20 See: Mustansir Mir, *Dictionary of Qur'anic Terms and Concepts*, p. 84.
- 21 Mulsim, dorar.net (last visited: 4-7-2021)
- 22 al-Bukhari, *al-Sahih*, Vol. 6, Book. 6, Hadith 300.
- 23 For the details of Prophet Muhammad`s life see: Mubarakpuri, Safiurrahman, *Al Raheeq al Makhtoon* (The Sealed Nectar)  
<https://islam4universe.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/ar-raheeq-al-makhtum.pdf>  
(Last visited 5-7-2021)
- 24 Quran 4:8
- 25 Quran 3 :58
- 26 Al Nasai: Hadith No 2344
- 27 Al Bukhari: Hadith No 660 and Muslim: Hadith No 1031
- 28 <https://islamweb.net/ar/library/index.php?> (last visited 05-7-2021)
- 29 Anas bin Malik narrates that the Prophet of God said, "None among you can have perfect faith unless he/she loves me more than his/her parents, children and all the people". Translated from Arabic. <http://www.dorar.net/hadith/shah/7339> (last visited 5-7-2021)
- 30 Abū Hāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣid al-Asnā fī Sharḥ Ma'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā*, ed. Bassām 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2003), p. 100
- 31 Muslim, <http://www.dorar.net/hadith/shah/70476> (last visited 5-7-2021)
- 32 Quran 23 :8
- 33 Quran 8 :27
- 34 See : Mawlana Abu al-'A'la al-Mawdudi, *Towards Understanding Qur'an*, tran., Zafar Ishaq Ansari at : <https://islamicstudies.info/tafheem-orig.php?sura=23&verse=1&to=22> (last accessed : April 13, 2026).

- 35 Bukhari, Book 2 Hadith 27 <https://sunnah.com/bukhari:34> (last visited 5-7-2021)
- 36 Quran 9 :67-68
- 37 See for a comprehensive list of these characteristics: Maḥmūd b. Aḥmad al-Dawṣarī: *Ṣifāt al-Munāfiqīn fī al-Qurʾān wa al-Sunnah* (The Characteristics of the Hypocrites in the Qurʾan and the Sunnah) at:  
<https://www.alukah.net/sharia/0/155504/%D8%B5%D9%81%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%86%D8%A7%D9%81%D9%82%D9%8A%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%82%D8%B1%D8%A2%D9%86-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%86%D8%A9-%D8%AE%D8%B7%D8%A8%D8%A9/> (last accessed at April 13, 2026).
- 38 See for a semantical concept of *nifaq* in the Qurʾan see: Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico Religious Concepts In The Quran* (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2002), p. 178-183.
- 39 Quran 4: 145-146
- 40 Ahmad, Musnad, Hadith No 11975  
<https://www.abuaminaelias.com/dailyhadithonline/2014/05/13/no-iman-cannot-promise/> (last visited 5-7-2021)
- 41 Quran 2 :177.
- 42 Quran 22:41. In his Commentary on this verse, Mawlana Mawdudi argues that « “If We give them authority””: In this one sentence, the real aim of the Islamic State and the characteristics of those who conduct its affairs have been stated concisely but comprehensively. Those who help Allah and deserve His succor behave righteously, establish Salat, make arrangements for the collection of Zakat and use their power and authority to propagate good and eradicate evil.” See : Mawdudi, Trn., Zafar Ishaq Ansari, *Towards Understanding Qurʾan*:  
<https://islamicstudies.info/tafheem-orig.php?sura=22&verse=39&to=48> (last accessed 12 April, 2026).
- 43 Quran 24:55.
- 44 Quran 2:247.
- 45 See: Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad b. ʿUmar b. al-Ḥasan b. al-Ḥusayn al-Taymī al-Rāzī (Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī), **Mafātiḥ al-Ghayb (al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)** (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 2000), 6 : 505.
- 46 Quran 42 :38
- 47 Mawlana Abu al-ʿAʿla al-Mawdudi, *Islami Riyasat : Falsafa, Nizam kar awr Usul Hukumrani* ed., Khurshid Ahmad, (Lahore : Islamic Publications, 2016), P. 266-267.
- 48 Quran 3:159.
- 49 Quran 2:153.
- 50 Quran 2:155.
- 51 See on Trial in Qurʾan: Mustansir Mir, *Dictionary of Qurʾanic Terms and Concepts*, p. 204-205.
- 52 Quran 3:200.
- 53 To understand the situation in more detail please read the chapter: Factors Inspiring Patience & Perseverance in the biography of Prophet Muhammad by Mubarakpuri, *Al Raheeq al Makhtoom*(The Sealed Nectar)  
<https://islam4universe.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/ar-raheeq-al-makhtum.pdf> (Last visited 6-7-2021)
- 54 Muslim, <https://hadeethenc.com/en/browse/hadith/3298> (last visited 6-7-2021)
- 55 Mubarakpuri, *Al Raheeq al Makhtoom*(The Sealed Nectar)  
<https://islam4universe.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/ar-raheeq-al-makhtum.pdf> (Last visited 6-7-2021).
- 56 Quran 25:63.

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- <sup>57</sup> Quran 22 :34-35. The Arabic word *mukhbitin* has no equivalent in English. It includes those who; (1) Give up pride, arrogance and adopt humility before Allah. (2) Surrender themselves to His service and slavery. (3) Accept His decrees sincerely. Mawdudi, trn., Ansari, *Towards Understanding Qur'an*, at: <https://islamicstudies.info/tafheem-orig.php?sura=22&verse=34&to=38> (Last accessed at 11 April, 2026).
- <sup>58</sup> Ibn e Majah, Sunan, <https://ahadith.co.uk/hadithbynarrator.php?n=Iyad+bin+Himar&bid=15&let=I> (last visited 6-7-2021).
- <sup>59</sup> Quran 38 :75-76.