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Question 21: Is according to Islam religion separate from politics?

Reply: First of all we had better clarify the meaning of "politics" so that its relationship with religion may become clear. There are two interpretations for the word "politics":

1. Sometimes, politics is interpreted as "trickery, ruse, and the use of every possible means to reach a particular objective". In other words, the end justifies the means.
In fact, this interpretation of politics, apart from its being inconsistent with the real sense of the word, does not mean but deceit and treachery and this meaning is not compatible with religion.

2. The second interpretation of "politics" is the management of social life affairs by applying the principles of Islam in various aspects.

Politics which means management of the affairs of the Muslims according to the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* is an integral part of religion.

We shall elaborate here on the idea of the concordance of religion and politics and the need for establishing government:

The most vivid evidence which substantiates this idea is the conduct of the Holy Prophet (S) during the period of his mission which was full of ups and downs. On studying the words and practices of the Messenger of Allah (S), we become fully aware that from the outset of his mission, he was in pursuit of establishing a strong government founded on faith in God and capable of implementing the agenda and programs of Islam.

At this juncture, it is worth citing some of the instances of the Prophet's efforts to achieve this aim:

The Prophet (S) as the founder of Islamic government

1. When the Messenger of Allah (S) was ordered to publicize his divine mission, he started to organize the nucleus of resistance and guidance and mobilize Muslims. Along this line, he used to meet groups of pilgrims coming from far and near to visit the *Ka'bah*, inviting them to Islam.

Meanwhile, he held a meeting with two groups of the people from Medina at a place called "'Aqabah" and they pledged to invite him to their city and give him support.1 So, this was the first step toward establishing an Islamic government.

2. After his emigration {*hijrah*} to Medina, the Messenger of Allah (S) started to found and organize a powerful and dignified army corps—an army that fought 82 battles during the period of the Prophet's mission and managed, through glorious victories, to remove the hurdles and set up the Islamic government.

3. After the establishment of the Islamic government in Medina, the Prophet (S) made contacts with the powerful political and social centers of his time by dispatching ambassadors, sending historic letters, and forging economic, political and military links with many leaders.

The biography of the Prophet (S) contains a detailed account of his letters to Khosroe, the Emperor of Persia; Caesar, the Emperor of Byzantine; Muqauqis, the King of Egypt; Negus, the King of Abyssinia; and other rulers at that time.2

4. In a bid to elevate the objectives of Islam and maximize the cohesion of the bases of the Islamic government, the Messenger of Allah (S) appointed rulers and chiefs for many tribes and cities. Below is an example of his decisions in this respect:

The Holy Prophet (S) dispatched Rafa'ah ibn Zayd as his representative to the tribe of Khwaysh and wrote the following letter:

بِسْمِ اللهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

هذا كتاب من محمد سول الله لفاعة بن زيد ، إني بعثته إلى قوم عامة و من دخل فيهم يدعوهم إلى الله وإلى

رسوله فمن أقبل منهم ففي حزب الله وحزب رسوله ومن أدبر فله أمان

شهرين.

In the Name of Allah, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful

{This letter} is from Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, to Rafa'ah ibn Zayd. I have dispatched him to his tribe and those related to them to invite them toward God and His Messenger. Whoever accepts his invitation will be among the Party of Allah and the Party of His Messenger and whoever turns away from him will have a two-month security respite.3

These practices and decisions of the Prophet (S) confirm that from the beginning of his mission, he had been in pursuit of setting up a strong government through which to administer the universal laws of Islam in all facets of life.

Do such actions like forging pacts with active groups and tribes, organizing a strong army, dispatching ambassadors to different countries, warning kings and rulers and communicating with them, sending governors and rulers to cities and districts far and near, and the like have any other name than "politics" in the sense of managing and administering different aspects of society?

In addition to the conduct of the Prophet (S), the manner of the Four Caliphs, and in particular the way followed by the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Talib ('a) during his caliphate and rule in his treatment of the Shi'ah and the Sunni is a testimony to the concordance of religion and politics.

The scholars of both Islamic groups offer extensive proofs from the Book (Qur'an) and *Sunnah* to support the idea of the need for the establishment of government and management of the affairs of society. Here are some examples:

In his book, *Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah*, Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi says:

"الإمامة موضوعة لخلافة النبوة في حراسة والدين سياسة الدنيا عقدها لمن يقوم بها في الأمة واجب بالأجماع."

Imamah has been laid to succeed the prophethood {*nubuwwah*} and to safeguard the religion and manage the affairs of this world, and pledging loyalty to the one who undertakes it is obligatory according to the consensus of the *ummah*.4

This Muslim scholar, who is one of the renowned *'ulama'* of the Ahl as-Sunnah, presents both rational and religious proofs to support this idea.
The following is his rational proof:

"لما في طباع العقلاء من التسليم لزعيم يمنعهم من التظالم ويفصل بينهم في التنازع والتخاصم ولولا الولاة لكانوا فوضب مهملين وهمجاً مضاعين."

It is the nature of wise peple to follow a leader so that he may prevent them from oppressing one another and settle their problems at the time of dispute. And if it were not for the rulers, the people would have live in chaos like lose savages.5

His religious proof is as follows:

ولكن جاء الشرع بتفويض الأمور إلى وليّه في ، الدين قال الله عز وجل: يأيها الذين ءامنوا أطيعوا الله

وأطيعوا الرسول وأولي الأمر منكم. ففرض علينا طاعة أولي الأمر فينا هم الأئمة المتامرن علينا.

But religious law is intended to entrust the affairs to a religious authority. God, the Honorable and Glorious, says: *'O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.'*6 Thus, God has made it incumbent upon us to obey those who are vested with authority and such people are our leaders and rulers.7

Shaykh as–Saduq narrates on the authority of Fadl ibn Shadhan something attributed to Imam 'Ali ibn Musa ar-Rida ('a). This sublime narration includes the Imam's words regarding the necessity of establishing a government. Below is an excerpt from his speech:

"إنا لا نجد فرقة من الفرق ولا ملة من الملل وبقوا عاشوا إلا بقيم ورئيس لما لا بد لهم منه من أمر والدين والدنيا فلم يجز في حكمة الحكيم أن يترك الخلق لما يعلم أنه لا بد لهم منه ولا قوم لهم إلا به فيقاتلون به عدوّهم ويقسمون به فيئهم ويقيمون به وجمعتهم وجماعتهم ويمنع طالمنهم من مظلومهم."

We do not find any group or community that has been able to survive without a ruler and leader because they need a ruler for managing both religious and worldly affairs. Thus, it is far beyond the wisdom of the Wise Lord to leave the people without a leader when He knows that they do need him and that they

cannot exist without a ruler under whose supervision, they fight their enemies, divide the booties and spoils of war, perform their Friday and other congregational prayers, and who prevents the oppressors from oppressing the others.8

If we want to expound on the traditions and analyze the various speeches of Muslim jurists {*fuqaha*} from a juristic perspective we cannot do it in this short treatise, and we need a separate volume for this purpose.

A comprehensive study of Islamic jurisprudence {*fiqh*} makes it clear that many religious laws cannot be implemented without the establishment of a government.

Islam calls on us to take part in *jihad* and defense, plead for justice against tyrants, protect the oppressed, implement *hudud*9 and *ta'zirat*,10 enjoin good and forbid evil in a broad sense, form a codified financial system, and safeguard the unity of the Muslim society.

It is obvious that the mentioned objectives cannot be achieved without the establishment of a potent system and cohesive government because if we want to protect the sacred religion and defend the jurisdiction of Islam, we need an organized army, and the organization of such a strong army, in turn, requires the establishment of a powerful government that applies the Islamic precepts.

In the same vein, implementing *hudud* and *ta'zirat* with the aim of performing the obligations, preventing crimes, regaining the rights for the oppressed from the oppressors and the other aforementioned objectives will not be accessible without a systematized and potent system and organization. Without such a system or organization, executing them will lead to chaos and tumult.

Although according to Islam the proofs of the need of establishing a government are far more than what we have stated, it is clear from the mentioned proofs that religion and politics are inseparable and establishing an Islamic government on the basis of the values of the luminous Islamic law is indispensable and all of the Muslims of the world are responsible for achieving this goal.

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1. Sirah Ibn Hisham (Egypt, 2nd Edition), vol. 1, "Discussion on the First 'Aqabah," p. 431.
2. See, for example, Muhammad Hamid Allah, Al-Watha'iq as-Siyasiyyah and 'Ali Ahmadi, Makatib ar-Rasul.
3. Makatib ar-Rasul, vol. 1, p. 144.
4. Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah (Egypt), "Bab al-Awwal," p. 5.
5. Ibid.
6. Surah an-Nisa' 4:59.
7. Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi, Al-Ahkam as-Sultaniyyah (Egypt), "Bab al-Awwal," p. 5.
8. 'Ilal ash-Shara'i', vol. 9, bab 182, p. 253.
9. Hudud is the plural form of hadd which literally means a limit between two things. {Trans.}
10. Ta'zirat is the plural form of ta'zir which literally means to reproach and to blame. While technically describing hadd and ta'zir, Muhaqqiq al-Hilli said to the effect: Whenever the punishment for a crime is specified by the sacred law, it is called hadd; for example, punishments for stealing, murder, etc. Whenever the punishment for a crime is not specified by the sacred law, it is called ta'zir and its limit is entirely determined by the judge and competent jurist. See Shahid ath-Thani,

Sharh al-Lum'ah, "Kitab al-Hudud wa't-Ta'zirat"; Muhaqqiq al-Hilli, Kitab al-Hudud wa't-Ta'zirat. {Trans.}