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Humanity and Universality in Mawdudi's Political Thought: A Critical Exploration of Its Conceptual Foundations and Contemporary Relevance

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Abstract: This research provides an in-depth analysis of the intellectual foundations of humanity and universality in Maulana Abul Ala Maududi's political philosophy and critically assesses their relevance in the context of his broader theoretical framework. This research explores Maududi's concepts of social justice, human dignity, and universal ethical principles, which transcend national, ethnic, and cultural divisions and highlight the universal nature of the Islamic political system. Examining Maulana Maududi's political thought in the light of his key writings, this paper examines the practical application of his ideas in solving modern political problems. In particular, his intellectual contributions to human rights, Islamic governance principles, and religion's role in politics are highlighted. In addition, this study examines Maududi's concept of Theo-democracy in the present era, where ethical governance and universal values are at the centre of international political discourse. This research highlights the comprehensiveness of Maududi's political philosophy, with special emphasis on a balanced model of governance, universal human harmony, and the connection of the political system with religious principles. The main objective of this paper is to reconcile Maududi's thought with modern political theories and to prove that his concept of government not only reflects Islamic traditions but also offers solutions to the challenges of the present day.

Keywords: Maududi; political thought; humanity; theo-democracy; universality; Islamic governance; social justice

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1. Introduction

The Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh), the divinely appointed political ruler and spiritual leader, laid the intellectual foundation for Islamic political philosophy. His establishment of Medina, a city-state in the Arabian Peninsula, was a turning point in Islamic history, as it established a clear framework for a political system based on divine guidance. The three main political groups in the state of Medina—the Muhajirin, the Ansar, and the Jewish tribes of Medina—were organised by a treaty that oversaw the affairs of the state. The Constitution of Medina (Meshaq al-Madinah) articulates the Prophet's practical approach to state formation. This document outlines the basic administration principles and gives practical forms to Islamic political philosophy (Between 2003).

Maulana Abul Ala Maududi, one of the leading Islamic thinkers of the twentieth century, expanded on these basic ideas to present a comprehensive political theory. His work has had a profound influence on Islamic and international political discourse. Maududi's political thought is based on the concepts of humanity and universality inherent in Islamic teachings. He argues that a universal understanding of human dignity, in the light of the Quran and Sunnah, is closely related to establishing a just and ethical society (Anjum and Khalid 2020). For him, the concepts of universality and humanity are not merely theoretical, but are central to his broader political philosophy, which aims to establish an Islamic state based on equality, justice, and collective welfare.

Consequently, Maududi's writings directly relate to important debates on human rights, governance principles, and religion's political role. His ideas present a clear synthesis of Islamic political philosophy derived from the Quran and Sunnah, contributing significantly to current

debates on Islamic governance. Mawdudi's intellectual work is highly relevant and important today, where demands for equality, justice, and universal human rights are increasing.

2. Universality and Humanity in Mawdudi's Thought

Mawdudi's views on polity and the place of politics in Islam emerged in response to challenges posed by the nation state. Indian born Irfan Ahmad contends that Mawdudi's discourse on the state derived from his survival in his environment rather than a religious mandate within Islam. The modern state's increasing reach and invasive function are crucial to this environment (Ahmed 2009). This contrast between the contemporary state and Mawdudi's vision of an Islamic state underscores the issue's urgency. Furthermore, the contemporary state takes on the role of God because God's sovereignty is transferred to the state in a way that makes survival and defence of the state the ultimate goal, even at the expense of human life, if necessary. A crucial point to remember is that this need is created. A governmental apparatus carries out the order to create a community fit for the state. The state also does several other actions to build and maintain its hegemony, such as systematising, caving in, accommodating, identifying, destroying, producing, and assimilating objects, resources, and human lives (Ahmed 2015).

This quote demonstrates the intrusive nature of the contemporary state and its understanding of its interrupting role. He writes:

The way the nineteenth-century political theorists conceptualised the state is entirely out of date now. People no longer commonly mock the state's economic, educational, industrial, or social plans by referring to them as "grandmotherly legislation". The circumstances have shifted. These days, the state's domain is nearly as pervasive as religion. Now it also decides what you are to wear or not to wear; whom you are to marry and at what age; what you are to teach your kids and what mode of life you choose. What language and script are you to adopt? So, the state has not left even the most peripheral life issues independent of its ultimate right to intervene (Mawdudi 2009).

The nature of "state" and "government" is the primary concern of political philosophy, and political philosophy research is "an investigation into the nature, causes, and effects of good and bad government" (Miller 2003). This emphasis on political philosophy's role in discerning good and bad governance underscores the subject's significance. Most political philosophers agree that human nature is susceptible to influence from societally powerful institutions rather than being static or unchanging. The quality of human lives is significantly impacted by both excellent and terrible governance, and political philosophy can be used to discern between the two. As a political philosopher, Mawdudi is deeply concerned with the welfare of people, which is why the idea of an Islamic state appears in his ideas.

Essentially, Mawdudi's goal is to distinguish good governance from bad one. Subsequently, he argues that an Islamic state is the ideal form of governance. The third and last points are secularism, nationalism, and democracy. He regards these as the cornerstones of the secular democratic state and believes they are the primary cause of all humanity's modern-day tragedies (Mawdudi 1979). Mawdudi criticises secularism for its separation of religion from the state, which he believes leads to moral decay and societal disintegration. He criticises nationalism for its potential to divide humanity and promote conflict. He criticises democracy for its potential to lead to the rule of the majority, which may not always be just. Thus, he finds the other forms of government, except for the Islamic state, abhorrent.

Mawdudi believed that an Islamic state was a comprehensive system that sought to apply Islamic values in all spheres of life, not only a formal governmental institution. It was to serve as an efficient instrument for achieving the goals established by Islam. Mawdudi believes that the following passage in the Qur'an provides the divine justification for pursuing political power in order to fulfil God's will:

"Indeed, we sent our messengers clear proofs and revealed the scripture and the criterion to them so that humanity could observe the proper measures. Moreover, we revealed iron, a mighty power with multiple uses for humanity" (Al-Qur'an, 57:25).

According to Mawdudi, iron, which is referenced in this passage, represents political authority. He claims that the verse also makes clear that the Prophet's (SAW) task is to establish the circumstances necessary for the general public to be guaranteed social justice under the norm established by God in the Qur'an (Mawdudi 2019).

Mawdudi elucidates the purpose of an Islamic state in light of the two verses: *"Those who, if We give them power in the land, establish prayer and pay the poor-due and enjoin kindness and forbid inequity" (Al-Qur'an 22:41).* In another verse, Allah said, *"You are the best community that hath been raised for mankind, you command what is right and forbid what is wrong and place your faith in Allah" (Al-Qur'an 03:110).* Mawdudi argues that it becomes evident from these verses that the function of the state apparatus is ordained by divine revelation is not merely to prevent people from exploiting each other, to safeguard their liberty and to protect its subjects from foreign aggression, but also to commence and uphold a well-balanced system of social justice, which God has outlined in His Book. For him, political power is necessary to carry out this fundamental principle of promoting good and eliminating all forms of evil (Mawdudi 2019).

Mawdudi's perspective on the government structure is unique and thought-provoking. He argues that the Islamic state, while democratic in its conditions for Muslim-to-Muslim consultation and consent, does not align with the Western model of democracy. Instead, he offers a distinct model that he considers a type of democracy, challenging the conventional understanding of the term (Anjum and Khalid 2020).

Mawdudi's rejection of secular democracy is a significant aspect of his political philosophy. According to him, Islamic political theory is inherently opposed to secular democracy since it is predicated on the notion of divine power. This form of democracy, which places the people at the centre of sovereignty and bases laws on the force and tenor of public opinion, directly contrasts Mawdudi's belief in a system of governance guided by divine revelation (Mawdudi 2019).

He does not, however, reject the idea in its entirety. Democracy, in his opinion, was a neutral concept that could be converted into Islam without giving up any land to the West (Nasr, 1996). Mawdudi, therefore, introduced the conceptual construct of "Theo-Democracy" as an alternative to democracy, indigenising the Western concept of democracy to make it appropriate to Islamic tradition. To bring the Western definition of democracy into line with Islamic customs, he reconstructs it. Nasr notes that *Jama'at* did, however, adopt the western conception of democracy, which idealises the rule of law and freedom of speech, as he became

deeply involved in Pakistani electoral politics. Rather than being an ideological commitment, it was motivated by political necessity because “democracy” became a “guarantor” of the *Jama’at*’s survival (Nasr 1996).

Mawdudi contends that Islam, on the other hand, proposes an alternative democracy that is predicated on the idea of popular vicegerency. The Qur’anic verse “*God has promised such of you to believe and do good deeds that He will surely make them succeed in the earth as His vicegerents*” (Al-Qur’an 24:55) is cited by him to bolster his claims. The entire community has been offered this vicegerency if they believe in Him and carry out good activities. Furthermore, no one may usurp this position; every believer participates in this caliphate and is a caliph of God in their own right. This vicegerency is not limited to any privileged class or race. He refers to this form of governance as a “Theo-Democracy”, or a divine democracy (Mawdudi 2019).

Unlike other ideologies like fascism, communism, and so forth, Mawdudi’s vision of social transformation does not advocate violence. According to him, achieving his vision of a total societal revolution will need a shift in people’s hearts and thoughts. This change can be achieved gradually, starting with individual reform. For Mawdudi, revolution means a thorough and fundamental overhaul of the existing system, beginning with transforming the individual’s perspective, drive, and disposition. He advocates for an evolutionary method of social change, which requires patience and understanding, rejecting all illegal, unconstitutional, and seditious actions, and mistrusting political radicalism (Moten 2006).

Since a civilised society could not exist without respect for law and order, he advised the revolutionaries to avoid the temptation to use tactics and strategies of “secret movements and bloody revolutions”. He says:

To the extent that I have never broken any of the laws I have fought so hard to overturn, I have always acted openly within the bounds of the law and the current constitution. Using legal and constitutional methods, I have attempted to alter them and never chose to break the law (Moten 2006; Jameela 1978).

Mawdudi offered theoretical and practical arguments to support his preference for a peaceful approach. He argues that his approach of changing the world in a way that is against nature is justified by the fundamental rule of nature that all stable and significant changes in the collective existence of people occur gradually (Moten 2006; Jameela 1978). According to Moten (2006) and Jameela (1978), “the more abrupt a change, the more short-lived it generally turns out to be”; therefore, change had to occur gradually if it was to stay.

It is crucial to remember that he had no problem with nationality. He intended to remove nationalism from God’s position. He believed replacing national interests with immutable, moral criteria of right and wrong, which he defined as [insert definition], was harmful (Jan 2003).

Mawdudi’s aim to highlight the humanity and universality present in Islamic political discourse is the source of his criticism of nationalism and other dominant political philosophies. He sees the catastrophic results of dissent within contemporary state structures, such as genocide, the ongoing difficulties of majoritarianism, and the predicament of minority communities. Mawdudi contends that these problems will likely persist if unresolved (Anjum and Khalid 2020).

Mawdudi also highlights the apparent inadequacies of current political philosophies in promoting stability, assurance, and harmony in society. Against this backdrop, the Islamic state presents itself as a strong contender. There are historical examples of Islamic administration promoting just and equitable communities in which people of different religious backgrounds lived harmoniously (Khalid 2023). Mawdudi challenges society to re-evaluate and investigate its political assumptions.

Similarly, Mawdudi’s examination of human rights in Islamic political thought illustrates the universality of these concepts. He envisions a future where everyone is entitled to equal rights and benefits, regardless of religious affiliation. For Mawdudi, Islamic law protects and guarantees humans’ natural rights, dignity, and worth. To support this position, he argues from several Quranic verses highlighting the universal nature of these rights.

Abul-Ala Mawdudi’s critique of the Western concept of human rights is thought-provoking. He argues that the West’s arrogance in the affairs of the Islamic world, including its unilateral approach to human rights, is a significant problem. Mawdudi contends that the West often claims credit for all that is good and considers its existence a blessing for the world (Mawdudi 2016).

Consequently, one ought to act rationally while evaluating a human issue. According to Abu A’la Mawdudi, justice is for the Muslim community and all individuals, not only those from a particular nation, tribe, or race (Mawdudi 2013).

The primary fundamental right is the right to live and to cherish human life. According to Al-Qur’an, 5:32, “*Whoever kills a human being without (any reason like man slaughter, or corruption on earth, it is as though he had killed all mankind)*”.

In this context, Mawdudi emphasises that decisions involving life-or-death issues, such as punishment for producing corruption or vengeance for murder, may only be made by a competent court of law. Only a government with official recognition may declare war on another country. Crucially, no one has the right to sow mayhem or to kill someone else as payback. Therefore, each person must make sure that they never commit the crime of taking another person’s life. According to Mawdudi, everyone should be empowered and held accountable (Mawdudi 2013).

Similarly, God stated the right to life safety just after the Holy Quranic phrase that was cited concerning the right to life: “*And whoever saves a life, it is as though he had saved the lives of all mankind*” (Al-Qur’an 5:32). There is many methods to keep a man alive. A man does not need to be of a certain race, ethnicity, or colour to be ill or hurt. If you know that he needs your help, you are in charge of arranging for him to get treatment for any wounds or illnesses. If he is starving to death, you must provide him with the food he needs to survive. You must help him if his life is in jeopardy, if he is drowning (Mawdudi 2013).

Islamic human equality also makes this ideal a reality by affirming that all men are created equal, regardless of race, country, or colour. The Almighty God states in the Holy Quran: “*O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female*” (Al-Qur’an 49:13). All people are brothers to each other. Each of them is descended from a single mother and father. For you to recognise one another, we established nations and tribes among you (Al-Qur’an 49:13). This suggests that the division of humanity into nations, races, groups, and tribes is done only for differentiation, enabling individuals of one race or tribe to engage, get to know, and collaborate with those of other races or tribes. As stated by Mawdudi (2013), “*In fact, the noblest among you before God are the most heedful of you*” (Al-Qur’an 49:13). This division of the human race is not meant for any nation to treat another with contempt or shame, to regard them as a lower race and usurp their rights, or to claim their rights. In other words, a man is not better than

another because of his race, colour, nationality, or language; instead, he is better if he is God-conscious, innocent, and morally upright. Every person feels safe and protected since Islam forbids prejudice.

Furthermore, even this superiority based on piety and pure conduct does not justify that such people should play lord or assume airs of superiority over other people. Being arrogant is a disgusting vice in and of itself that no godly or religious guy would ever consider committing. Moreover, the rights of the righteous are not superior to those of others, as this goes against the fundamental idea of human equality, which is established as a general premise at the beginning of this verse. According to Mawdudi (2013), virtue and kindness are always preferable to vice and evil from a moral standpoint.

3. Relevance

Different circles have evolved the claim that the Islamic governance paradigm is not feasible in the age of nation-states. Nonetheless, there is substantial evidence to the contrary. The fact that democracy started in a restricted form in a small Greek city-state, prospered for a few hundred years, and then vanished for the next two thousand years before resurfacing and becoming seen as an example of effective administration should not be forgotten. In this nation-state formation, the “nation-thing” was conceptualised as a homogeneous indivisible entity, which refutes the claim that the nation-state is here to stay. The nation’s logic has been criticised recently for its theoretical limitations (the difficulty of erasing diversity), practical shortcomings (the plurality of identities), and ethical challenges (the potential for authoritarianism and genocide) (Sayyid 2010). Internal violence, unrest, and the lack of justice for its citizens are the nation-state’s current problems. Due to the failure of nation-state creation, which is a feature of the majority of Muslim countries, Islam has resurfaced as a viable alternative, both as a religion and as a potent political force that may provide Muslims and humanity with a chance for real political justice.

Because it accepts humanity from all ideological origins, Mawdudi’s polity concept applies to all people. He also agrees with the nation-state’s current structure and tries to operate inside it to enact changes that guarantee justice for everybody (Anjum and Khalid 2020). This strategy opposes that of scholars who support tearing down the nation-state framework to create Islamic governance from the ground up.

Due to the checks and balances in Mawdudi’s political system, it is less likely to become majoritarian. This makes Mawdudi’s system applicable to all situations where majoritarianism is being used to marginalise minorities. In “majoritarianism”, most people have the right to some degree of social primacy and the ability to make decisions that impact the community. They will act in a way consistent with reasonable behaviour, protecting their interests even at the expense of others. The essential component lacking is “trust”, which is frequently lost as shown in the world’s most “stable democracies”, which practice representative democracy in a way that has resulted in one community having total control over another (Anjum and Khalid 2020).

In the contemporary age, the status of minorities, citizenship, and human rights in the Islamic concept of state is gaining more and more currency. The main allegations raised by Western scholarship are that Islamic rule means intolerance, deprivation of freedom of belief, and forcing Islamic religious law on non-Muslims and religion (Khalid 2023).

Mawdudi began by claiming that the Islamic system is more magnanimous towards its minorities than any other system. Minorities are treated with respect that is lacking elsewhere, especially in Western secular democracies (White 2018).

He substantiates his claim by drawing a stark contrast between the rights of non-Muslims in an Islamic state and the rights of minorities in what he calls a national state. Mawdudi’s comparison sheds light on the prejudicial and intolerant treatment of racial and cultural minorities in national states, while an Islamic state always treats its minorities fairly and without any concealed discrimination (Mawdudi 1960).

Similarly, Mawdudi addresses individuals who expressed opposition to the implementation of Islamic rule in Pakistan, arguing that non-Muslim minorities must be taken into account. He says:

Mawdudi holds a significant opinion about a community’s law. He clarifies that the “law of land”, not the private law of a society, is the law he is interested in. Every municipality is free to enact its laws on private affairs. Islam is the sole religion that most generously grants this privilege to all of the Islamic State’s minorities (Mawdudi 1960).

According to Mawdudi, Islam articulated that a state has several identities and taught the contemporary world the distinction between personal law and the country’s law. A man’s matters ought to be resolved under his laws.

Mawdudi is adamant that the majority can decide the state’s laws. As he demonstrates that minorities have the right to seek protection for their legitimate rights and interests, and states are obligated to comply, this claim bears the weight of his reasoning. Minorities should not be allowed to force us to abandon our beliefs and enact laws contradicting them, Mawdudi emphasises (Mawdudi 1960).

4. Conclusions

Mawdudi’s support for an Islamic socio-political structure that ensures social justice, human rights, and the well-being of all individuals reflects his deep understanding of humanity and universality. His vision of a society is based on governance bound by ethical principles, where all human beings transcend local interests and live in interconnectedness and solidarity. While this view is deeply rooted in Islamic beliefs, it aligns with current international debates on inclusive governance, universal human rights, and ethical leadership. Mawdudi’s ideas have both merits and demerits. On the one hand, his emphasis on moral responsibility, the rule of law, and justice guides addressing issues such as inequality, extremism, and the decline of government ethics. On the other hand, questions are raised about the practical application of his ideas in pluralistic and secular societies, especially when striking a balance between religious values and democratic principles. His focus on justice, compassion, and the collective good is an important reminder that religion should be used as a force for unity rather than division, especially in the current era when crises of identity and division are deepening. However, given the complexities of contemporary nation-states, cultural diversity, and global connectedness, Mawdudi’s ideas must be reinterpreted to meet the modern age’s demands. Mawdudi’s political philosophy challenges intellectuals and policymakers to consider the ethical dimensions of governance. He envisions a society where humanity and universality are the fundamental principles of politics. Rather than providing prescriptive answers, his intellectual approach

fosters critical dialogue, centered on how the universal goals of politics, religion, and justice can be interconnected. This debate must continue to bridge the gap between traditional Islamic thought and modern global realities and pave the way for a compassionate and inclusive future.

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