



Political–Security Strategies for Conflict Resolution in Pakistan Based on Maximum Participation According to the Jurisprudence of Ahl al-Bayt

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Abstract

Grounded in the jurisprudential foundations of the Ahl al-Bayt (Shi'i legal tradition), this article formulates a political–security strategy of “maximal participation and acceptance of outcomes” to mitigate and resolve political conflicts in Pakistan. Using a descriptive–analytical method and library sources, the study first clarifies the concepts of strategy and conflict, then maps the main types of conflicts—political, cultural, and economic—within Pakistan’s context. The proposed framework rests on three pillars: political system efficiency, trust-building between state and society, and the enhancement of public satisfaction. It argues that theologically rooted principles—God-centered governance, rule of law, justice, equality, and non-violence—can transform adversarial competition into constructive participation. The paper’s contribution is an operational set of indicators for assessing maximal participation (e.g., transparency, accountability, social security, and distributive justice) and linking them to policy–security mechanisms for de-escalation. Findings suggest that when broad-based participation is coupled with institutional effectiveness and mutual trust, cycles of political instability are likely to diminish and pathways for stable governance and dispute resolution expand.

Keywords: *Maximal Participation; Dispute Resolution; Ahl al-Bayt Jurisprudence; Political System Efficiency; Trust-building; Public Satisfaction; Pakistan*

Introduction

1. Statement of the Problem

In recent decades, Pakistan has been confronted with a self-perpetuating cycle of political conflicts manifested in partisan rivalries, electoral crises, social fragmentation, and institutional interventions. The consequences of this cycle include the erosion of public trust, the decline of governance effectiveness, and the transformation of political competition into a debilitating conflict. Within such a context, citizens’ political participation either experiences sharp and temporary fluctuations or is reduced to a symbolic and ineffective level. Moreover, the acceptance of participatory outcomes is

challenged by weak social capital, perceptions of discrimination, ambiguity in procedural transparency, and media-driven polarization.

The central question of this study is how, on the basis of the principles of Shi'a jurisprudence (Fiqh Ahl al-Bayt), a policy-oriented security framework can be designed to both enhance broad-based participation and ensure acceptance of its outcomes, while simultaneously mitigating structural tensions and shifting political conflicts from antagonistic confrontation toward institutionalized competition. The underlying assumption is that principles such as theocentrism in managing public affairs, justice and equality in the distribution of opportunities and resources, fidelity to commitments and respect for collective rules, the prohibition of oppression and rebellion, and the priority of reconciliation can constitute the normative foundation for transforming conflict into cooperation—provided these principles are operationalized through measurable indicators and translated into legal, administrative, and security mechanisms.

This research elevates the problem to the level of policy design and asks how the redesign of competition and adjudication rules on the basis of justice, the reform of information dissemination and public persuasion mechanisms, the guarantee of institutional neutrality at all stages of the electoral process and beyond, as well as the incorporation of ethical and legal safeguards, can reduce the likelihood of actors entering conflict-prone pathways and increase the costs of violating participatory rules. While the scope of this problem is specifically focused on Pakistan's political environment, the model derived—grounded in the principles of Shi'a jurisprudence and articulated through measurable indicators—can also be applicable to other similar contexts.

2. Literature Review

1. Mohammad Rahimi, “The Qur’anic Model of Resolving Political Conflicts in Afghanistan.”

In this thesis, the researcher, after addressing key concepts and general principles, examines various models for resolving political conflicts. From the perspective of the Islamic world, three approaches are identified: the model of returning to the doctrine of Caliphate, the model of *Wilayat al-Faqih* (Guardianship of the Jurist), and the model of democracy. The study further discusses the Qur’anic approach to resolving political disputes in Afghanistan.

2. Mohammad Abdul Sattar Khan Niazi, “Unity among Muslims.”

In this work, the author emphasizes Islamic unity as an essential necessity of the contemporary era. He also explores the factors contributing to discord and division in Pakistan, such as ignorance, prejudice, hatred, and the dissemination of inflammatory and misleading publications.

3. Mufti Mohammad Rafi Usmani, “Disagreement as a Mercy and Sectarianism as Prohibited.”

Written by a Sunni scholar, this book argues that disagreement is a mercy, a natural and necessary phenomenon in society. The author delineates the standards and limits of acceptable differences. However, he emphasizes that what ultimately leads to the downfall of the Muslim Ummah is not disagreement per se, but division, sectarianism, and factionalism among Muslims.

Theoretical Framework

1. The Concept of Strategy

The term *strategy* (in Persian *rahbord*) originates from the Greek word *strategos*, which has been defined and interpreted in various ways. According to Dehkhoda, strategy refers to the science and art of command, the planning of warfare, and the design of military operations; more broadly, it denotes any

fundamental, long-term, and precise program accompanied by specific methods for achieving a particular goal (Dehkhoda, 2011, Vol. 1, p. 136).

In terminology, strategy has been used with multiple meanings, including: a general method or policy for attaining an objective; the art of military design and deployment; the determination of overall policy; and the art of developing and utilizing resources more effectively to reach a goal in the face of competitors (Aqabakhshi, n.d., p. 139). It has also been described as a coherent, comprehensive, and integrative plan designed to move toward an objective by the shortest possible path, making optimal use of existing resources and capacities. In this sense, strategy represents the pathway for achieving long-term and vital objectives (Vaseti, 2012, p. 43).

Some scholars have explained strategy as a set of deliberate actions consciously undertaken to achieve a specific purpose. The essence of strategy lies in focusing activities, resources, and opportunities in order to avoid fundamental threats and challenges. Others have defined strategy as the art of planning, and the science of combining and coordinating various operations, functions, and actions to reach a goal—whereby all human, political, military, spiritual, material, and technological resources and conditions are mobilized toward specific objectives (Arasteh Khod, 2002, pp. 86–87).

Accordingly, the preferred definition in this study is the latter, which conceptualizes strategy as the comprehensive art and science of planning, integrating, and directing diverse capacities toward determined ends.

In light of these definitions, every strategy in practice requires its own instruments. Those who seek superiority or dominance over others must utilize the fullest range of available tools—material, ethical, psychological, propagandistic, political, commercial, technical, and technological. Beyond relying on such instruments, strategies are always goal-oriented. These goals may serve the political interests of rulers and statesmen, or the collective aspirations of a nation (Kaborq, 1991, p. 205).

2. The Concept of Conflict

Scholars have defined conflict in various ways (Lewis Coser 1956, p. 30). describes it as a struggle over values, the pursuit of status, power, and scarce resources, in which each party aims to neutralize, harm, or eliminate its rivals. Elsewhere, conflict is generally understood as a situation in which a specific human group—whether tribal, ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, social, or political—engages in conscious opposition with one or more other groups due to real or perceived incompatibilities in their objectives (Voldani, 2020, p. 16).

In essence, conflict represents the interactive behavior of humans aimed at competing with, harming, or undermining others. In a conflict, parties attempt to strengthen their own position by weakening or displacing others, preventing them from achieving their objectives, and potentially eliminating their rivals.

Accordingly, depending on the circumstances, conflicts can be violent or non-violent, overt or covert, controllable or uncontrollable, and resolvable or irresolvable (Duerty, 1993, Vol. 1, p. 296).

The Holy Qur'an addresses conflict using the term *tanaazu'* (dispute), stating:

“Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you fail and your strength depart” (Al-Anfal, 8:46).

This verse forbids discord, disputes, and confrontations within society. Any activity or competition intended to harm others leads to the erosion of societal dignity, power, and prestige. Therefore, whether a conflict is overt or covert, it is essential to trace its roots, identify its causes, and take steps toward its resolution.

2.Types of Conflicts in Pakistani Society

Overall, conflicts in Pakistani society can be categorized into three main types, which are addressed below. This section also aims to explain the causes and origins of these conflicts.

1.2. Political Conflicts

The first type of conflict is political, which has a greater impact on societal stability and instability than other types of conflict. Under political conflicts, issues such as the inefficiency of the political system, power-seeking behavior, and authoritarianism are examined, as they play a significant role in the emergence of political tensions in Pakistan.

From the perspective of Shi'a jurisprudence (Fiqh Ahl al-Bayt), the established political system in Pakistan lacks legitimacy and effectiveness. Moreover, officials and politicians often lack political credibility, as they do not possess the competence and qualifications necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. Although both internal and external factors contribute to the inefficiency of the political system, internal factors have a greater impact. If individuals within the system fail to cooperate, external actors cannot intervene effectively. Many of Pakistan's societal problems arise from insiders whose actions have weakened the system, leading the country to face numerous challenges and crises.

Power- and authority-seeking behavior is one of the most critical societal issues. Individuals and political parties striving for dominance are willing to seize power at any cost, disregarding both human and Islamic principles. Ambition for leadership blinds and deafens individuals, causing extensive corruption in both religion and society. Islamic sources, including the Qur'an and Hadith, condemn power-seeking and authoritarianism.

The Qur'an states:

“That is the Hereafter; We assign it to those who do not desire exaltedness in the earth or corruption. And the good outcome belongs to the righteous” (Al-Qasas, 28:83).

In *Tafsir al-Mizan*, Tabatabai explains that “*do not desire exaltedness in the earth*” refers to arrogance and pride over God's servants (Tabatabai, 2014, Vol. 16, p. 81). Thus, those who pursue positions and authority for the sake of power have no share in the Hereafter.

The narrations of the Ahl al-Bayt also condemn ambition, love of status, and power-seeking. Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) narrates:

“Whoever seeks leadership will perish” (Al-Kafi, 2011, Vol. 3, p. 727).

In another narration, Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) declares:

“Cursed is the one who assumes leadership, cursed is the one who aspires to it, and cursed is the one who contemplates it in his mind” (Al-Kafi, 2011, Vol. 3, p. 728).

Therefore, one of the main causes of political instability in Pakistan is the tension and conflict among political parties in their pursuit of power. The ultimate goal of most political actors is personal or partisan gain. Once a party comes to power, it first eliminates political opponents and then destabilizes society due to a lack of competence and capability. As noted by Mansoor Afaq, the desire for authority is the primary reason for the corruption and deterioration of Pakistani society (urduweb.org/mehfil/threads/).

Consequently, power-seeking and authoritarianism have become a major source of political conflict in Pakistan, resulting in political instability, weak governance, economic decline, and national underdevelopment.

2.2. Cultural Conflicts

Cultural conflicts and disagreements also play a role in the emergence of social conflicts within society. Therefore, this section aims to explain some of the causes contributing to cultural conflicts, including religious and sectarian disputes, as well as conflicts based on ethnic and racial prejudices.

A portion of conflicts in Pakistani society arises from religious and sectarian differences. One prominent feature of Pakistani society is religious and sectarian prejudice. While moderate and reasonable prejudice is not inherently blameworthy, it often exceeds limits and manifests in extreme forms. It is a fact that differences exist among Islamic sects and schools of thought. If these differences remain within an intellectual or scholarly sphere, they do not create societal problems. Such differences are intrinsic to human nature and part of the social fabric. However, when these differences are exploited for political or non-political interests, they generate division and factionalism within the Muslim community. This can lead to Muslims opposing one another, declaring each other as non-believers (*takfir*), and engaging in violence and looting (Qadri, 2019, p. 16).

Another type of cultural conflict in Pakistan is extreme ethnocentrism and racism. Ethnic, tribal, and clan differences among humans are not inherently blameworthy; rather, the Qur'an presents them as a means for recognition and maintaining social order. As the Qur'an states:

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another” (Al-Hujurat, 49:13).

Over the years, Pakistan has struggled with extreme ethnocentrism and racism. Conflicts among various ethnic groups, such as Punjabis, Sindhis, Balochis, and Pashtuns, along with associated prejudices and hostilities, have been major challenges. These issues have progressively pushed Pakistan toward disintegration, undermining national cohesion.

Ethnic divisions and conflicts in Pakistan can be categorized into two main groups. First, disputes among ethnic and national groups motivated by economic and political interests, which disrupt local peace and stability—for example, ethnic riots between Pashtuns and migrants, including Biharis, in Karachi. Second, conflicts between specific ethnic groups and the central government, such as Balochis and Sindhis resisting perceived Punjabi dominance in the government (Mohammadi, 2006, p. 237).

2.3. Economic Conflicts

In this section on types of conflicts in Pakistani society, some causes and factors contributing to economic conflicts are discussed, particularly within the context of injustice and the economic crisis in Pakistan.

Oppression and injustice are among the factors that lead to the destruction of a society. Denial of rights and deprivation create dissatisfaction and discontent within the community, widening the gap between the people and the rulers. Consequently, a government that practices oppression and injustice loses public trust and legitimacy. The persistence of such conditions exposes society to conflicts and disputes. The stability of any society depends on the establishment of justice. The Qur'an explicitly states that the purpose of sending the Prophets (peace be upon them) was to establish justice:

“Indeed, We sent Our messengers with clear proofs and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may uphold justice” (Al-Hadid, 57:25).

One of the fundamental problems in Pakistani society is that the political system has failed to ensure justice and fairness among the people. Rent-seeking, infringement on others' rights, and misuse of public and state resources have become intrinsic to society and its administrators. Wealthy and powerful individuals can obtain anything by any means, and no law or court restrains them. Conversely, the poor

and deprived cannot even claim their basic rights, as all resources are controlled by a wealthy minority, influential politicians, and elites. When someone is wronged in society, no one defends them, and the oppressed remain marginalized. This is contrary to the very purpose of establishing Pakistan, which was founded to implement justice and Islamic laws, ensuring that no one is oppressed and that all citizens can equally access resources and facilities.

Injustice in Pakistan has reached such an extent that the general population is deprived even of basic necessities, making life extremely difficult for ordinary people. Rising crime rates, theft, moral and financial corruption, and deprivation all stem from injustice and inequality.

Military governments—where the army assumes control of state affairs—or the dominance of the military are also considered major factors contributing to Pakistan's underdevelopment and lack of progress. The Pakistan Army has, at various times, overthrown civilian governments and maintained control for extended periods. Each year, a significant portion of the national budget is allocated to the military, which exacerbates economic problems. One scholar notes that the Pakistan Army has imposed heavy economic burdens on the country and has no specific solutions to national economic problems. Historical evidence indicates that military regimes have worsened Pakistan's economic issues, as international investment flows are disrupted under military rule (Mohammadi, 2011, p. 139).

Therefore, political instability and fragility, illogical and hereditary policies, military governments, elite dominance, capitalist structures, political and economic dependency, and both domestic and international events have all contributed to the inefficiency and economic crises in Pakistan.

Section Three: Strategies for Maximum Participation in Pakistani Society from the Perspective of the Jurisprudence of Ahl al-Bayt

Maximum participation and acceptance of the outcomes of participation are among the political-security strategies proposed from the perspective of the jurisprudence of Ahl al-Bayt for resolving political conflicts in Pakistani society.

The strategies for achieving maximum participation in Pakistani society, such as political system efficiency, increasing public satisfaction, and building trust, are analyzed from the perspective of Ahl al-Bayt jurisprudence.

1. Efficiency of the Political System

The word “efficiency” (کارآمدی) in the lexical sense means usefulness, service, functionality, and suitability (Dehkhoda, 2011, Vol. 1, p. 148). In Amid's Dictionary, it is defined as experienced, competent, complete, and beneficial (Amid, 1985, Vol. 5, p. 807). In political science literature, efficiency is understood as effectiveness, impact, influence, competence, capability, and qualification (Aghabakhshi, n.d., p. 446). According to scholarly consensus, efficiency refers to achieving objectives considering available resources and existing obstacles (Group of Authors, 2012, p. 163).

Efficiency is a fundamental condition for the survival of any political system. Without achieving this condition, no system can gain acceptance, even if it possesses legitimacy and legality. It should also be noted that every government may face some degree of inefficiency in fulfilling its functions and objectives. A political system is considered efficient when it can accomplish the tasks expected by the majority of its people and provide comprehensive support for the individual, social, political, material, and spiritual life of all citizens, particularly ensuring the comfort and security of each member of society (Kazemi, 2006, p. 59).

Therefore, inefficiency of the system is one of the major factors hindering maximum participation in Pakistani society. The political system initially envisioned for Pakistan by its founders deviated from

this goal. Instead, they established a system based on Western democracy, dependent on foreign countries, where people serve primarily as instruments for achieving the political objectives and interests of politicians. However, the founders of Pakistan, including Muhammad Ali Jinnah and other religiously learned figures, intended for the country to be independent and based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, i.e., a religious and Islamic government rooted in Qur'anic principles.

From the perspective of political system efficiency, Pakistani society can be evaluated. When Pakistan gained independence through significant efforts for Islam and Muslims, a political system was supposed to be established based on republicanism and democracy. It is necessary, as part of a diagnostic analysis, to examine the extent to which the Western-style republic system helped the people of Pakistan and achieved or approached the goals envisioned by the country's leaders. Some of these goals included freedom, independence, revival of Islamic culture, implementation of Islamic laws, rule of law, establishment of an Islamic system, and the worldly and spiritual well-being of individuals.

1.1. God-Centeredness

One of the fundamental principles of the Qur'an and Sunnah is God-centeredness, which is strongly emphasized in Islamic teachings. Individuals in an Islamic society can be truly faithful and monotheistic in their personal and social life only when they place divine unity (Tawhid) and God's commands at the center of their lives, and when the social and political system of that society is established on the basis of God-centeredness. The primary objective in an Islamic society is that social and political life should be organized according to the sovereignty of God and the Islamic system. God-centeredness and the sovereignty of Tawhid form the foundation of Islam, which regards this as the key to human felicity and societal progress. Islam views social life based on the principle of monotheism (Tawhid) as a means to prosperity and advancement. A careful study of Islamic teachings shows that all Islamic laws are established on the basis of Tawhid (Javadi Amoli, 2008, Vol. 17, p. 188).

Regarding the importance of Tawhid, it is stated: "Tawhid is the principle of the Islamic system, and all other matters are derived from it" (Javadi Amoli, 2008, p. 191). The central message of all prophets (peace be upon them) was also the worship of God and the oneness of God:

"And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid Taghut'."
(Qur'an, Surah An-Nahl, 16:36)

At the beginning of his mission, the Prophet of Mercy (peace be upon him) also stated:

"O people, say 'There is no god but Allah,' and you will succeed." (Qummi, 1995, Vol. 7, p. 619)

The Constitution of Pakistan mentions that the Supreme Ruler of the country is God Almighty, and divine law has supremacy over all human legislation. It emphasizes that no law shall be enacted in the country contrary to Islamic law. Therefore, a political system in such a society can be considered efficient only if it is based on Tawhid and God-centeredness. From the Islamic perspective, without divine legitimacy, a system's efficiency has no meaning, even if it is accepted by the people, because divine legitimacy plays a fundamental role in the efficiency of a political system.

When the Constitution recognizes God as the supreme ruler, the political system must be organized around the centrality of Tawhid—that is, on the basis of God's sovereignty and divine laws. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes this principle:

"The decision is only for Allah" (Qur'an, Surah Al-An'am, 6:57)

"And those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed – those are the disbelievers." (Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:44)

Thus, the Islamic political system is based on the principle that no one except God has the authority to legislate or judge; true sovereignty belongs solely to Allah. From the Islamic perspective, any system not founded on Tawhid is considered a tyrannical or illegitimate system.

In this regard, Maulana Maududi writes that the foundation of Islamic politics is that legislative and judicial authority must be removed from humans, because only God possesses such authority, and no one else can hold it (Maududi, n.d., p. 136).

Although the Constitution of Pakistan mentions God Almighty as the Supreme Ruler, it is neither fully based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet nor are the governments formed on divine legitimacy and Islamic principles. Since its establishment, Pakistan has followed Western democratic principles, creating a political system that is often in conflict with Islamic principles. Therefore, establishing a God-centered political system in Pakistan is necessary and unavoidable for addressing the country's problems. Many scholars have concluded that this is the only solution, and even some politicians and officials have expressed that the current political system is incapable of effectively governing society and must move toward an Islamic system centered on the sovereignty of Tawhid.

1-2. Qur'an and Ahl al-Bayt-Centeredness

The Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt (the family of the Prophet) are among the fundamental pillars and components of Islam and its political system, holding a special status in Islamic teachings. The Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him) emphasized the importance of these two precious elements of Islam, stating:

"I am leaving among you the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt; they will never separate until they meet me at the Pond (of Al-Kawthar)." (Ibn Babawayh, 1984, p. 128)

This narration is considered authentic and mutawatir (widely transmitted) according to both Shia and Sunni scholars. The Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt constitute the essential foundation of Islam and the Islamic community; they are inseparable, complementary, and of equal weight.

Sheikh Tusi (may Allah sanctify his soul) reports in *Al-Amali* a narration from Umm Salamah, stating that she heard from the Prophet (peace be upon him) during his final illness, while his chamber was filled with companions:

"O people! Soon I will be swiftly taken away. I leave among you the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt. Then he took the hand of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) and raised it, saying: 'This is Ali with the Qur'an, and the Qur'an is with Ali. These are two enlightened successors who will not separate until they meet me at the Pond. I will ask them what I have entrusted to them.'" (Tusi, 1994, p. 479)

Therefore, the political system that emerges in an Islamic society must be centered around the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt. Ignoring these sources makes it impossible to achieve Islamic legitimacy and the efficiency of the political system. Accordingly, the political system in Pakistan is in dire need of being guided by the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt. From the Constitution to the standards and criteria of governance and leadership, all must be aligned with the teachings of the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt. Considering the crises that have arisen over the years, the only way to resolve these crises and disputes is to establish a religious system centered on the Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt.

2. Building Trust

Distrust and the lack of credibility of the people toward the system and government constitute one of the fundamental problems of any political regime and seriously undermine the progress of society. Initially, trust among individuals weakens, and subsequently, the collective trust of the society toward the government and political system deteriorates, leading to a breakdown in the connection and cohesion

between the people and the state. Therefore, trust-building has always been considered a valuable asset that is directly linked to social and political participation and can serve as a significant foundation for resolving political challenges and conflicts.

Neglect of the needs and problems of the people by rulers, the incompetence of governors and government officials, dishonesty in words and deeds, and the exclusion of the people from governance all contribute to public distrust in the political system. Moreover, the inability of the political system to manage and stabilize the country—such as economic problems—exacerbates distrust. Public trust in any political system is considered a core pillar, and it is the responsibility of governments to earn this trust through proper governance. A system or administration that can gain greater satisfaction and solidarity among the people can strengthen its position and legitimacy.

From the perspective of the Fiqh of the Ahl al-Bayt, the people do not play a role in the legitimacy of the government or rulers, but they have a fundamental influence on acceptance and implementation. Without the trust and consent of the people, no government—legitimate or illegitimate—can be realized. The essential difference between an Islamic government and tyrannical regimes is that the former is based on the people; it does not rely on coercion but on the genuine love and loyalty of the people toward religion and the Islamic ruler (Javadi Amoli, 2019, p. 82). People willingly accept and trust the government of righteous rulers, as virtuous and just leaders are always concerned with the welfare of the people, striving to address both spiritual and material needs, and never seeing themselves as separate from the society they govern.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) articulated this principle, stating:

“The greatest right that God has prescribed is the right of the ruler over the people and the right of the people over the ruler. This obligation, established by God for each party, serves as a means of mutual harmony and the dignity of their religion. The people will not be upright except by the righteousness of their rulers, and the rulers will not be righteous except by the integrity of the people. When the people fulfill their rights toward the ruler and the ruler fulfills his rights toward the people, justice will be established among them, the principles of religion will be upheld, and the laws will be applied. The time will prosper, the state will endure, and the ambitions of the enemies will be frustrated.” (Nahj al-Balagha, Sermon 216)

When rulers and the people respect each other's rights, one of the outcomes is societal reform, and adversaries are discouraged. By strengthening the relationship between rulers and citizens, mutual trust is established, which is essential for achieving the efficiency of the political system. Attaining such efficiency allows the state to overcome social problems, tensions, and conflicts.

The conduct of Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) also exemplifies this principle. It is narrated:

Abu Hamza asked Imam Baqir (peace be upon him) about the rights of the Imam over the people. He replied: ‘Their duty toward him is to listen and obey him.’ He further asked about the rights of the people over the Imam. The Imam responded: ‘He should distribute resources equally among them and act justly.’ When these principles are observed, the people have nothing to fear from here or there.” (Kulayni, 1984, Vol. 1, p. 405)

Accordingly, rulers must respect the rights of the people, and the people must respect the rights of the rulers. When the government administers justice and fairness toward its citizens, it creates the conditions for public trust in the political system and strengthens the relationship between the government and society. Considering these principles, certain key indicators must be emphasized to foster trust and, ultimately, achieve maximum public participation in the political system.

2.1. Equality and Avoidance of Discrimination

Equality and the absence of discrimination by rulers are fundamental factors in building public trust toward governments. Public trust strengthens the foundations of any political system and creates the conditions for societal progress. Equality and non-discrimination are central principles in the Islamic worldview, rooted in the concept of Tawhid (the oneness of God). Rulers play a crucial role in ensuring equality; thus, Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated:

“The affairs of the people should be equal before you in matters of their rights.” (Nahj al-Balagha, p. 449)

Similarly, in the Letter to Malik al-Ashtar, he warned:

“Avoid monopolizing what is common to the people.” (Uyoon al-Hikam wa al-Mawae’z, p. 95)

Social balance is achieved when rulers treat all citizens equally, ensuring uniform access to societal resources and opportunities. Equality is inseparable from justice; all individuals must receive their due rights. In countries such as Pakistan, which have hierarchical social structures, inequality is widespread. Lower social classes often live in deprivation and isolation, while wealth and resources are concentrated among the elite, and governments may prioritize the interests of the powerful. This leads to a loss of public trust and discourages participation, often resulting in conflicts and social unrest. Therefore, governments must eliminate discrimination and social disparities to earn the trust of the people. Equality and non-discrimination are thus essential for fostering trust in the political system, and without achieving social balance, the legitimacy and efficiency of governance cannot be secured.

2.2. Avoiding False Promises

Another key factor in building public trust is the honesty and truthfulness of rulers. Dishonesty, deception, and false promises create a gap between the government and the people, eroding public confidence. From an Islamic perspective, trust is crucial for the establishment and continuity of governance. Even a legitimate Islamic ruler cannot govern effectively without the acceptance and trust of the people, as governance cannot be implemented without public consent except through coercion or deception.

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) consistently emphasized honesty in his political conduct. He never resorted to lies, deceit, false promises, or even “beneficial lies.” He stated:

“Avoid promising the people and then breaking your promise, for breaking a promise provokes the wrath of God and the people.” (Nahj al-Balagha, p. 444)
“A leader must speak truthfully to his people.” (Nahj al-Balagha, p. 215)

Truthfulness and integrity of rulers are thus the most effective means of gaining public trust. One of the major ethical failings of governments is deceitfulness—making false promises to win support or votes, such as pledges to solve economic problems or improve living conditions, without any genuine intent to fulfill them. When the public observes inconsistencies between rhetoric and action, distrust emerges. Therefore, rulers must adhere to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Ahl al-Bayt, associating with righteous individuals and avoiding deceitful promises. This approach is fundamental for establishing trust between the government and the people.

2.3. Enhancing Public Satisfaction

Public satisfaction with governments is a fundamental pillar of any society and serves as a key factor in building trust and fostering cooperation and participation. In the perspective of the Ahl al-Bayt jurisprudence, public satisfaction does not imply that people have a role in the legitimacy (i.e., the Sharia-

compliance) of the government, such that dissatisfaction would negate legitimacy. Rather, satisfaction influences the implementation and practical governance. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated:

“The first thing that Muslims should do is to choose a leader who unifies their affairs and whom they follow and obey, provided that the choice is theirs; but if the choice is left to God and His Messenger, God has sufficiently guided the Muslims in this regard.” (Sulaim ibn Qais al-Hilali, vol. 2, p. 753)

Thus, the people do not affect the legitimacy of the government; Islamic legitimacy is granted solely by divine permission. People, however, have influence during the establishment and execution of governance. Ayatollah Mesbah Yazdi further explains that popular consent is not the basis of legitimacy; rather, it serves as a framework while divine authorization constitutes the essence of legitimacy, rooted in the beliefs of the people and their understanding of existence (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, vol. 2, p. 45).

Governments in Islamic societies are tasked with ensuring public satisfaction by meeting both material and spiritual needs, filling gaps in citizens’ lives, and promoting ethical and religious values. Allowing non-religious or Western cultural practices to dominate may lead people to neglect socially beneficial activities (Mesbah Yazdi, 1391, vol. 2, p. 56).

2.4. Establishing Security in Society

One of the most essential responsibilities of any government is to ensure security and protect the rights of citizens. A secure society provides the foundation for progress and prosperity. Security is among the most fundamental human needs. Allah states:

“[He] who feeds them against hunger and secures them from fear.” (Qur’an, Surah Quraysh, 4)

Security is sometimes even more essential than daily sustenance for a community (Khamenei, 1383/07/15). As the government holds resources and authority, it has a critical role in maintaining security across all aspects of society—political, economic, cultural, and social. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) emphasized the necessity of governance for security:

“People must have a ruler, whether righteous or wicked; through him, war is fought with enemies, roads are secured, and the weak are protected from the strong, so that the righteous may find ease and the people be safe from the wicked.” (Nahj al-Balagha, Khutbah 40)

While this statement refers specifically to road security, Islamic governance entails ensuring security across all societal dimensions—spiritual, political, cultural, economic, and border security. Security has multiple purposes and benefits, enabling society to flourish. For instance, Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him) prayed:

“And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits for those who believe in Allah and the Last Day.’” (Qur’an, Surah Al-Baqarah, 126)

Here, Abraham first requests “security” and then “provisions,” highlighting that economic well-being depends on the presence of security. Scholars interpret “fruits” broadly, encompassing all material blessings and even spiritual benefits (Makarem Shirazi, 1374, vol. 1, p. 452).

In Pakistan, insecurity in various dimensions—personal safety, property, and reputation—remains a significant challenge, and governments have largely failed to address it. Establishing social security is crucial for gaining public satisfaction, which in turn lays the groundwork for maximum public participation in the political and social system.

2.5. Avoidance of Oppression and Violence

Avoiding oppression and violence in society is an indicator of the moderate and wise governance of states. Intelligent rulers manage society with rational and humane perspectives, fostering virtues and enhancing the satisfaction of the population. Consequently, when rulers are virtuous and wise, the community also becomes righteous and prudent, and oppression and violence are eliminated. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said:

“Two groups of my nation, if they are righteous, my nation will be righteous, and if they are corrupt, my nation will be corrupt.” It was asked, “O Messenger of Allah, who are they?” He replied, “The scholars and the rulers.” (Ibn Shubba Harani, 1376, p. 50)

The righteousness or corruption of rulers has a profound impact on the entire community. According to jurists, under the governance of just and competent leaders, every right is upheld, and oppression and corruption are eliminated. Supporting and assisting such governance strengthens the implementation of God’s commands and promotes divine religion. Conversely, under tyrannical rule, rights are violated, falsehood prevails, injustice spreads, religious texts may be destroyed, prophets and believers are oppressed, and divine laws are undermined (Boroujerdi, 1386, vol. 22, p. 321).

As stated in Islamic tradition:

“Kingship and rule persist with disbelief but not with oppression.” (Majlisi, 1362, vol. 72, p. 331)

A tyrannical ruler prevents people from accessing their rights, and the weak face obstacles in attaining justice (Hosayni Tehrani, 1421, vol. 2, p. 210). Imam Ali (peace be upon him) further emphasizes:

“The affliction of authority is oppression and rebellion.” (Lithi Wasiti, 1376, p. 181)

“Whoever oppresses his subjects has aided his enemies.” (Nouri, 1366, vol. 12, p. 99)

Thus, oppression alienates the populace and undermines the ruler’s legitimacy. A fair, compassionate, and just approach by rulers is essential to earn public satisfaction, leading society to prosperity and happiness. Illegitimate leaders who seize power through wealth, force, or deceit administer society through oppression and violence. In Islam, such acts are considered injustices, particularly oppression against others, which God does not overlook. Imam Ali (peace be upon him) stated:

“The oppression that will be questioned is the oppression of servants against one another.” (Nahj al-Balagha, p. 255)

Therefore, oppressive rulers generate dissatisfaction and displeasure among both God and the people. To achieve divine and public satisfaction, governments must refrain from any form of injustice and violence.

True public participation, which can resolve political disputes and foster maximum engagement in societies such as Pakistan, must be based on genuine principles. Mere participation is insufficient; it should be rooted in an Islamic governance framework and guided by rational and ethical principles. Genuine participation has several key characteristics:

1. **Freedom:** True participation is impossible without liberty, as freedom is essential for independent thought and action.
2. **Voluntariness:** Participation cannot be coerced or imposed; it must be voluntary.

- 3. Involvement in Power and Decision-Making:** Citizens should share in governance to influence their destiny and improve their living conditions (Rahmani, 1394, p. 29).

Given Pakistan's socio-political, religious, and economic challenges—including political conflicts, social tensions, and unrest—governments, intellectuals, and scholars can, by adhering to the principles of the Ahl al-Bayt jurisprudence, remove obstacles and guide society toward progress, prosperity, and well-being.

Public participation in governance reflects democracy, political efficiency, and citizen trust. By involving people in political processes and respecting their opinions, distrust toward the government is reduced. As political efficiency, public trust, and citizen satisfaction are enhanced, maximum participation is achieved, which in turn mitigates political conflicts and establishes security and stability. This is the approach urgently needed in Pakistan.

Conclusion

1. **Maximum Participation** leads to a reduction in conflict only when it is accompanied by clear rules of competition, impartial arbitration mechanisms, and procedures for the acceptance of outcomes. Within this framework, political competition shifts from identity-based confrontation to institutionalized action, thereby shortening cycles of instability.
2. **Foundations of Ahl al-Bayt Jurisprudence**, emphasizing justice, fidelity to agreements, reconciliation between parties, and the prohibition of rebellion, provide the normative capacity to transform conflicts into cooperation. When these principles are translated into actionable guidelines, the cost of conflictual behavior increases, and rational collaboration is strengthened.
3. **Political Trust** is the product of information transparency, accountability of officials, and predictability of decisions. Establishing these three elements reduces the gap between the state and society and elevates the acceptance of participatory outcomes from a one-off behavior to a sustainable norm.
4. **Political System Efficiency** requires a redesign of the decision-making chain, from policy formulation to implementation and oversight. Improving efficiency indicators—such as the quality of public services, procedural justice, and conflict-of-interest management—reduces actors' incentives to resort to costly conflictual paths.
5. **Integrating Jurisprudential Principles with Public Law and Policy Tools** provides a practical framework for governance. This integration generates a set of measurable indicators that allow for periodic evaluation and adjustment of progress in participation, trust, and citizen satisfaction.
6. **Civic Education and Political Ethics Inspired by Ahl al-Bayt Jurisprudence**, combined with fair media regulation and equal access to information, cultivate a culture of acceptance of outcomes. Such an environment transforms electoral competition into a learning process for all actors and facilitates the resolution of disputes.

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