

AL-SHAJARAH

ISTAC Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization

Published by IIUM Press
Special Issue 2024

AL-SHAJARAH

EDITORIAL BOARD

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

OSMAN BAKAR, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

EDITOR

AHMAD MURAD MERICAN, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

AHMAD EL-MUHAMMADY, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

NURUL AIN NORMAN, ISTAC-IIUM

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

WAN ALI WAN MAMAT, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

GUEST EDITOR (SPECIAL ISSUE 2024)

KHALIQ AHMAD, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

MEMBERS

SYED KHAIRUDIN ALJUNIED, NUS, Singapore

BADROL HISHAM @ FARISH AHMAD NOOR, NTU, Singapore

PETER CHANG, UM, Malaysia

MOHAMED ASLAM MOHAMED HANEEF, IIUM, Malaysia

ABDELAZIZ BERGHOUT, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

WALEED FIKRI FARES, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

TENGGU MOHD AZZMAN SHARIFFADEEN, ISTAC-IIUM, Malaysia

INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD

AFIFI AL-AKITI (UK)

JOHN L. ESPOSITO (USA)

JOMO K. SUNDARAM (Malaysia)

YASUSHI KOSUGI (Japan)

AMIN SAIKAL (Australia)

TU WEIMING (China)

IMTIYAZ YUSUF (Vietnam)

MUHAMMED HARON (Botswana)

IBRAHIM KALIN (Turkey)

SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR (USA)

MUHAMMAD SUHEYL UMAR (Pakistan)

SALLEH YAAPAR (Malaysia)

Al-Shajarah is a refereed international journal that publishes original scholarly articles in the area of Islamic thought, Islamic civilization, Islamic science, and Malay world issues. The journal is especially interested in studies that elaborate scientific and epistemological problems encountered by Muslims in the present age, scholarly works that provide fresh and insightful Islamic responses to the intellectual and cultural challenges of the modern world. *Al-Shajarah* will also consider articles written on various religions, schools of thought, ideologies and subjects that can contribute towards the formulation of an Islamic philosophy of science. Critical studies of translation of major works of major writers of the past and present. Original works on the subjects of Islamic architecture and art are welcomed. Book reviews and notes are also accepted.

The journal is published twice a year, June-July and November-December. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be sent to the Editor-in-Chief, *Al-Shajarah*, F4 Building, Research and Publication Unit, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), No. 24, Persiaran Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Taman Duta, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. All enquiries on publications may also be e-mailed to alshajarah@iium.edu.my. For subscriptions, please address all queries to the postal or email address above.

Contributions: Submissions must be at least 5,500 words long. All submissions must be in English or Malay and be original work which has not been published elsewhere in any form (abridged or otherwise). In matters of style, *Al-Shajarah* uses the *University of Chicago Manual of Style* and follows the transliteration system shown on the inside back cover of the journal. The Editor-in-Chief reserves the right to return accepted manuscripts to the author for stylistic changes. Manuscripts must be submitted to the Editor-in-Chief in Microsoft Word. The font must be Times New Roman and its size 12. IIUM retains copyright to all published materials, but contributors may republish their articles elsewhere with due acknowledgement to *Al-Shajarah*.



THE CONCEPT OF AL-ISTIKHLAF AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN RECLAIMING THE ATTRIBUTES OF MAN AS KHALIFAH ON EARTH

Hidayah Wan Ismail¹ and Abdelaziz Berghout²

Abstract

This paper examines the significance of the notion of al-Istikhlaf and its basic place in the Islamic worldview. One fundamental principle in the Islamic philosophy of life is the role and purpose of man as khalifah on earth. In the Islamic worldview, al-istikhlaf or vicegerency refers to the honorable responsibility and purpose that mankind willingly undertook. Being the khalifah on earth entails assuming responsibility for governing and overseeing the life of man within civilizations, and his development on earth in accordance with God's guidance and commands. This paper seeks to elucidate the imperative nature of regaining the notion of al-istikhlaf and employing it as a conceptual framework for the restoration and reconstruction of our vicegerent roles and responsibilities on earth. The paper uses textual analysis to examine various viewpoints and theories related to constructing the al-Istikhlaf narrative and re-introducing it prominently. The paper concluded that Al Istikhlaf, an essential concept in Islam, has the potential to be expanded into an all-encompassing framework for analysing the challenges and problems encountered by man. It seeks to revisit the all-encompassing nature and attributes of man as khalifah and not a mere human animal. This paper proposes the ongoing research on the al-Istikhlaf framework and the promoting it among scholars and researchers. The framework of Istikhlaf helps understand and articulate issues and problems facing contemporary man in a more integrated and ethically driven way.

¹ A Ph.D. student, International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, ISTAC-IIUM.

² Professor at AHAS-IRKHS, IIUM, Dean of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation, International Islamic University Malaysia.

Keywords: *Al-istikhlaf – Khalifah – Framework - Integrated Human being*

I. Introduction

Al-istikhlaf fi al-Ard, also known as vicegerency on earth, is the fundamental purpose of humanity, inherent in its nature and existence³. The purpose of human existence is solely to fulfil the role of *khalifah*, which encompasses the worship of God, serving others, creating a harmonious life, constructing a well-rounded and responsible civilisation, promoting peace and justice globally, fostering cultural exchange and collaboration, and preparing for eternal life in the hereafter⁴.

Al-istikhlaf is a fundamental concept within the Islamic paradigm. This concept has been mentioned, among others, in Surah al-Baqarah verse 30 where Allah says: “*And remember when your Lord said to the angels, {I am going to place a (khalifah) successive ‘human’ authority on earth}. They asked Allah, {Will you place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify your praises and proclaim your Holiness?} Allah responded, {I know what you do not know}*” (Q2:30).

As the event which catalysed human existence, the positioning of man on earth as *khalifah* for the function of *al-istikhlaf* is therefore the most significant historical *fact*. This moment launched all human endeavours in establishing the civilising process on earth. Thus, it can be argued that all human civilisations and cultures are in fact just different expressions and manifestations of the *al-istikhlaf* on earth based on a plethora of human philosophies, worldviews, and frames of reference. This is in line with the finding of Dawud (2016) in her master’s thesis entitled *Mafhum Al-Istikhlaf fi Al-Qur’anul Karim* that

³ Lazhar, C. *Vicegerency in Islamic Thought and Scripture*, (2024) Routledge - Washington. New York.

⁴ Abu Fadl, M. *Agency, Rationality and Morality, A Quranic View of Man*, 2024 IIIT. Washington. London. See also Berghout, Abdel Aziz. “Towards an Islamic Framework for Worldview Studies : Preliminary Theorization” *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 24, no 2 (2007) 22-43

the concept of *al-istikhlaf* is the Qur'ān's expression of human civilisation.⁵

This paper analyses the notion of *Istikhlaf*, highlighting the role, mission, objectives, and functions of man as *khalifah* on Earth. It underscores the essential function of the *khalifah* in executing the responsibilities of his *Istikhlaf* (vicegerency on earth), which encompasses, among other obligations, the worship of God, the building of a harmonious civilisation, and the propagation of God's universal message to humanity, from the inaugural Prophet to the final Prophet, who brought the final universal message of Islam. This paper reduces the discussions on *khilafah* and succession from a political and governance perspective, as it is not the focus. It underscores the fundamental function and purpose of man as *khalifah* on Earth, as ordained by Allah's command. The paper underlines that comprehending *Istikhlaf* as the mission of humanity on earth influences our perception of human beings and their fundamental attributes and dimensions, including spiritual, mental, intellectual, ethical, moral, physical, and social aspects.

Therefore, the primary question is: To what extent does the notion of *Istikhlaf* influence our comprehension of the *khalifah*, including his nature, dimensions, attributes, and functions on earth? The primary aim of the paper is to elucidate the fundamental attributes and dimensions of man when viewed through the lens of *Istikhlaf* on earth, rather than merely considering him as a human animal or material man. This paper's significance lies in succinctly revisiting both classical and contemporary discussions regarding the concept of *Istikhlaf* on earth, positioning it as a central concept of the Islamic worldview, and exploring its potential to reshape our understanding of man as *khalifah*, encompassing various dimensions and attributes.

This paper explores the notion of *al-Istikhlaf* and its fundamental importance in the Islamic perspective. Therefore, it provides insight into the selected classical and modern discussion on the notion and its significance in any analysis about humanity and society. The primary aim of the paper is to illustrate the significance of the notion of *al-Istikhlaf* as a fundamental principle of the Islamic

⁵ Dawud, Zinab Ahmed. (2006) - *Mafhum Al Istikhlaf Al-Qur'anul Karim*. Master's Thesis. IIUM Malaysia.

worldview, and to explore its potential as an Islamic framework for studying Islamic society and the challenges encountered by humans as vicegerents on earth.

Comprehending the place of *al-istikhlaf* in the framework and function of the Islamic worldview is crucial for the guidance of man, as *khalifah*, and human life. Not understanding the significance and role of man as *khalifah* on earth results in reducing humans to something lesser, a breaking down of parts, and the splitting between the spirit and the material. The consequences of such a split are evident in how the world operates today, whereby the secular takes precedence over the sacred. The *al-Istikhlaf* approach/framework creates a harmonious and balanced integration of various dimensions, including the worldly and non-worldly, the tangible and intangible, the personal and societal, scientific understanding and spiritual awareness, the observable and invisible, as well as the profane and the sacred. The *al-Istikhlaf* framework incorporates all the needs and aspirations of human beings as vicegerents who have four interrelated categories of relationships and connections: with God, with oneself, with other human beings, and with the cosmos and environment.

To attain the highest levels of *al-Istikhlaf* on earth, it is imperative to construct and satisfy these relationships in a harmonious and all-encompassing manner. The paper uses textual analysis and library research to explore the prevailing perspectives and patterns in the study of the concept of *al-Istikhlaf*, as well as the diverse contributions made by certain Muslim scholars.

The paper is structured into several sections: I- Introduction, II-Man as *Khalifah* on Earth: Glimpses on the Classical Discourse, III - The Concept of *Al-Istikhlaf* in the Contemporary Discourse: A Brief Exposé, IV - The Concept of *Al-Istikhlaf* as a Possible Framework for Understanding Man and Human Existence; and V - Conclusion.

II - Man as Khalifah on Earth: Glimpses on the Classical Discourse

Throughout the evolution of scholarship on *al-istikhlaf*, many views have emerged regarding who can be considered the *khalifah* or vicegerent. There are those who are of the view that it was only

Prophet Adam⁶, while others feel that it is Prophet Adam and all other prophets⁷. There are also those who think that it was just Prophet Adam and Prophet Daud because these two were explicitly declared so in the Qur'an.⁸ However, most of the literary scholarship seems to be based on the common understanding that the task of vicegerency is incumbent upon all of humanity.

The scholars who take the view that vicegerency is incumbent upon all of humanity can be further categorised into two groups; namely, those who feel that we are vicegerents in the sense that we are successors of the *jinn* who populated the earth before mankind⁹ or humans succeeding one another from generation to generation¹⁰, and those who are of the view that vicegerency applies to all human species. Among the notable scholars, Raghīb al Isfahani (d502/1108) was one such proponent of this latter view. In his Qur'anic exegesis, Al Isfahani had stated, "*It is the right of all people to be the vicegerent of God.*"¹¹ Clearer evidence of his stand to this effect can be seen in his book *Al Dharia ila Makarim al Sharia (The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of the Sharia)* where he states;

"Human beings as such are like each other [...] and their honor lies in that they are integrally meant for the purpose which they are created for. [...]The function

⁶ Al Qurtubi, Muhammad Shams Al Din. *Al Jami' li ahkam al-Qur'an* (The Compiler of the Rulings of the Qur'an) ed Ahmad Al Barduni and Ibrahim Al Atafish. (1964) Cairo: Dar al Kutub al Misriyya. vol. 1, 263 and Abu Hayyan Al Bahr al Muhit fil *Tafsir*, vol 1, 227

⁷ Al Tabari. Muhammad Ibn Jarir. *Jami al Bayan an Ta'wil Ayi al Quran [The Comprehensive Exposition on the Interpretation of the Verses of the Quran]* ed Ahmad Muhammad Shakir. vol 1 451;-452 (Beirut: Muassasat al Risala 2000) Al Mawardi, *al Nukat wal Uyun*, vol 195, and Mahmud ibn Amr al Zamakshari, *al Kashaf an haqa'iq Ghawamid al Tanzil* (The Discoverer of Revealed Truths) Beirut: Dar al Kitab al Arabi. (1987) vol 1, p. 124.

⁸ Al Baghawi, *Sharh al Sunnah* (Explanation of the Sunnah) ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ut (1983) Damascus: al Maktab al Islam, vol 1, 227

⁹ This narration by Ibn Abbas is said to have been based on Israilliyyat narrations and does not have a concrete basis in the Quran. However it is mentioned in Al Tabari's tafsir. *Jami al Bayan.. op.cit*

¹⁰ This was the view of Hasan Al Basri as cited by Al Tabari in *Jami al Bayan*. op cit

¹¹ Al Isfahani. *Tafsir Raghīb al Isfahani* (The Exegesis of Raghīb al Isfahani) ed. Adil ibn Ali al Shadi (2003). Riyadh: Dar al Watan. vol 2, 772.

that is related to the human being consists of three things (1) Building and populating the earth (imarat al ardh), [...] (2) worshipping God [...] and (3) deputising Him [...] this is reflected in the emulation of God to the highest degree of human ability.”¹²

Another scholar who subscribed to this view was Al Shatibi (d790/1388). For Al Shatibi, the human being is regarded as having fulfilled the mission assigned to him when he acts as a vicegerent of God and preserves the Divine Intent.¹³ Similarly, several other notable scholars also advocate this view. To Ibn Al Qayyim, for example, “*God Almighty entrusts the servant as a guardian in the preservation of all that he has been entrusted with.*”¹⁴ Similarly, to Ibn Khaldun, vicegerency is a life purpose for the human being which is in line with his *fitrah*¹⁵. However, while the concept of *Istikhlaf* served as the basis of Ibn Khaldun’s theory of civilisation, Lazhar (2023) argues that he did not regard it as an existential purpose, but rather as an existential fact (*fait accompli*).¹⁶ This can be gleaned from Ibn Khaldun’s statement “*the hands of Man are spread out over the realms of the world as a result of the istikhlaf that was given to him by god, all humans hands are spread, and this is hence a common fact.*”¹⁷

Throughout the millennium, the discourse on the concept of *istikhlaf* was also coloured by Sufi thought. Ibn Arabi, for instance, through his doctrine of *wahdatul wujud*, posited that the universe is a physical manifestation of God which was created for the sake of the vicegerent, in order that God can see Himself. According to Ibn Arabi, the only human beings who qualify as vicegerent are the gnostic Sufis

¹² Raghīb al-Isfahānī, Abu al-Qasīm al-Husayn ibn Muḥammad. *Kitāb Al-Dhārī’ah Ila Makarīm Al-Sharī’ah*. (The Book of Means towards the Noble Qualities of the Shari’ah) transl. Abu al-Yazīd Abu Zayd ‘Ajāmī. (2007) Cairo: Dar Al salam. pp 82-83.

¹³ Al Shatibi, Ibrahim ibn Musa. *Al Muwafaqat fi Usul al-Shariah*. (Reconciliation of the Fundamentals of Islamic Law). Vol 3, p. 25.

¹⁴ Ibn Al Qayyim. *Madarij al Salikin*. (Ranks of The Divine Seekers) vol 2, p. 125-126.

¹⁵ Khaldun, Ibn. *Op cit.*, p. 477.

¹⁶ Lazhar, C. *Op. cit.*, p. 65.

¹⁷ Khaldun, Ibn. *Op cit.*, p. 477.

who can see the manifestations of the Divine attributes in all the living beings.¹⁸ A more holistic articulation on the object of vicegerency can be found in Raghīb Al Isfahani's writing (d.502/1108) where he stated:

“It is the emulation of God Almighty, to the extent of the capacity of human beings in running affairs and implementing the virtues of the Sharia, which consist of wisdom, justice among people, insight, charity, and grace [...], while what is meant by running human affairs is twofold: one concerns the self, body and personal things, and the other relates to others like family and fellow countrymen. [...] Knowledge is a profession on one hand, worship on another and the pursuit of vicegerency of God Almighty on a nobler one because by entrusting the human being. God Almighty opens his heart to knowledge. This is an exclusive attribute of God Almighty and the store of the noblest treasures. He has ordered him to spend on everybody, the more he spends as required, whenever it is required and, in the manner, required, the higher his position near the Deputised becomes.”¹⁹

In his explanation of the concept of vicegerency, Raghīb Al-Isfahani tried to clarify the relationship between worship and vicegerency. To Al Isfahani, the vicegerent is the one who builds and populates the earth, performs worship, and embodies Islamic moral virtues. To Al Isfahani, worship is a fundamental obligation and is a matter of justice whilst performing virtues is supererogatory. If a person neglects the fundamental obligation, then his supererogatory acts are not accepted. This is in line with verse 77 of Surah 22 of the Qur'ān which says: “*Oh you who have faith, Bow down and prostrate yourself, and worship your Lord, and do good so you may be felicitous.*” On this point, Yusuf Al Qaradawi criticised Al Isfahani's

¹⁸ Masataka Takeshita. (1983) “The Theory of the Perfect Man in Ibn Arabi's *Fusus al Hikam*” *Orient* 19 Volume 19, p. 87-102.

¹⁹ Yassin, M. (2006). *The Path to Virtue: The Ethical Philosophy of Al-Raghīb Al-Isfahani*. Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC.

view, stating that these virtues are not a supererogation but rather also an obligation commanded by God. Referring also to the same verse (Q22:77), He says “*All of this is associated with acts of goodness in the same Qur’anic verse, and God has made success an outcome of all of this.*”²⁰

Even though the concept of *Istikhlaf* is a momentous and significant starting point in the history of mankind, the academic literature on the concept hardly reflects its importance and function as a cardinal pillar in the Islamic worldview and life.²¹ Much of the existing scholarship can be traced back to the classical scholars from the era of the Companions who deliberated extensively on who exactly qualifies to be considered a *khalifah*. Quoting the opinion of Ibn Abbas (d.668/687), Al-Tabari (d.310/922) was of the view that Adam was successor to the *jinn*, who inhabited the earth before him.²²

While Al-Tabari also quoted Ibn Mas’ud in this regard, subsequent scholars were of the view that this was likely the view of Al-Tabari himself, as we cannot glean this opinion from the initial narrations of neither Ibn Abbas nor Ibn Mas’ud. Al -Baghawi (d516/1122) later clarified this ambiguity by asserting that Al-Tabari’s view in this matter has only been reiterated by scholars who tend to report what al-Tabari said. He stated, “*It is said so, because others succeed him, but the correct meaning is that He is the Vicegerent of God on earth where he establishes His laws and implements His teachings.*”²³

While there have been some minor disagreements about what being a vicegerent means, (namely whether Man as the successor of God or Man as the successor of those succeeding him as human beings), generally, the idea of *Istikhlaf* is understood as ‘Man is God’s deputy on earth.’ A significant point of contention in the literature on

²⁰ Yusuf Al Qaradawi. (2017) *Ethics of Islam*. Doha: Research Centre for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, P. 260-62

²¹ Lazhar, C. *Op cit.*, p46.

²² Muhammad Ibni Jarir al Tabari, *Jami Al Bayan an Ta’wil Ayi al Qur’an* (The Comprehensive Exposition of the Interpretation of the Verses of the Qur’an) ed. Ahmad Muhammad Shakir (2000). Beirut: Muassasat al Risala. pp 449-52.

²³ Al Husayn Al Baghawi, *Ma’alim Al Tanzil Fi Al Tafsir Al Qur’an* (Qur’anic Exegesis) ed. Abd Al Razzaq al Mahdi (1999) Beirut: Dar Ihya al turath Al Arabi. vol.1, 102.

the subject can be found in the discussions pertaining to the views of Ibn Taymiyya, who was believed to be against the idea of the human being as God's vicegerent. The contention arose because of his statement in his interpretation of the verse on vicegerency in al Baqarah , saying "...It was never intended that he is a vicegerent of God and that he is for God as the pupil of the eye..."²⁴. Some contemporary scholars have taken this view to mean that Ibn Taymiyya rejects the idea of Man's vicegerency on behalf of God altogether.²⁵ However, Lazhar (2023) argues that Ibn Taymiyya's view had been taken out of context. Instead, argues Lazhar, what Ibn Taymiyya was opposed to be the idea of pantheism and the doctrine of Incarnation which holds that God exists in every human being; not that man is the vicegerent of God in the sense that he represents God in establishing order on Earth²⁶. In his discussion of this point of contention, Lazhar held the view that Ibn Taymiyya was merely deconstructing the concept at the epistemological level without taking issue with it at a creedal or doctrinal level, which seems to be what these contemporary scholars have taken it to mean. Ibn Taymiyya, says Lazhar, was only opposed to the idea of the microcosm being considered a tangible representation of God on Earth.²⁷

Along the same vein of discontentment, there were also contemporary scholars who argued that the idea of vicegerency was never discussed among the *salafis* and was therefore a modern-day innovation. Abdallah Ibn Ibrahim Al Nasir stated, "...I did not find anybody who stated that the khilafah refers to vicegerency on behalf of God except among the latter day exegetes, such as Al Alusi (1854), al Tahir b Ashur (1973) and among the subsequent generations"²⁸ A

²⁴ Taqi al Din ibn Taymiyya. *Minhaj Al Sunna al- Nabawiyya fi Naqd Kalam al Shi a al Qadariyya [The Way of the Prophet's Sunnah: A Critique of the Theological Discourse of Al Qadariyya Shiites]*, ed. Muhammad Rashad Salim (Riyadh: Imam Muhammad ibn Saud Islamic University, 1986), vol.1, 509-510

²⁵ S. Idris, Jaafar. "Is Man the Vicegerent of God?" *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1 (1990) pp. 99-110.

²⁶ Lazhar, C. *Op cit.*, p48.

²⁷ Lazhar. C *Op. cit.*, p. 55.

²⁸ Al-Nasir, Abdallah ibn Ibrahim. (2005) "The Principle of Vicegerency in The Islamic Economy: A Study in The Light of the Qur'an." *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 7. No 1. 145

contemporary scholar who echoed this view is Sheikh Abd Rahman Habannaka al-Maydani (2004) who argues that the idea of a *khilafah* was unknown to the Companions, and is a fallacy promoted by contemporary thinkers such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida.²⁹

Other scholars who agreed with Al-Maydani include Yusuf al Zayut³⁰ and Jaafar Sheikh Idris.³¹ However, in the larger scheme of things, this contrarian view represents a small fraction of the literature on the subject. For the most part, scholars in the Islamic heritage are in broad agreement that the ‘Vicegerent’ refers to the human being who is performing his duties on behalf of God.³²

III - Concept of Al-Istikhlaf in the Contemporary Discourse: A Brief Exposé

The discourse on the concept of *istikhlaf* in contemporary literature arose largely from the modern Islamic reformist movement in the context of the re-articulation of the Islamic worldview and implementation of Islamic knowledge in the contemporary context. This concern with the Islamic worldview, in turn, arose as a response to the rise of Western secularism and its fragmenting effects on Islamic sciences.³³ According to Lazhar, the main reason this whole discourse on the concept of *istikhlaf* arose was to serve as supporting arguments to resolve the issue of the incompatibility of Islamic sciences with the Western secular epistemology which has dominated the global way of thinking.³⁴ As a result, despite being a core component of the Islamic worldview, the concept of *Istikhlaf* was deliberated upon often superficially and hastily and almost always in

²⁹ Abdul Rahman Habanka al Maydani. (1991) *La Yasih an Yuqal al Insan Khalifa an Allah fil Ardhi fa Hiyya Maqula Batila* (Transl: The impropriety and the Invalidity of the Belief that Man is the Vicegerent of God on Earth.) Mecca: Maktabat Ihya al Thurah Al Islam. pp 36.

³⁰ Al Zayut, Yusuf. (2001) “The Extent of the Validity of the Statement that Man is the Vicegerent of God on Earth” *Majalat Jami’ Al Dimashq* XVII, no 2. pp 27.

³¹ Jaafar Sheikh Idris “Is Man the Vicegerent of God?” *Journal of Islamic Studies* 1. no.1 (1990) 103

³² Lazhar, C. *Op. cit.*, p. 51.

³³ Lazhar, C. *Op. cit.*, p. 38.

³⁴ Al-Faruqi, Ismail. (1989) *Islamization of Knowledge*. Virginia USA: International Institute of Islamic Thought.

the context of comparison with other worldviews. Therefore, it has not received the thoroughness of study and prominence that it deserves in Islamic academic discourse.

In his work entitled '*The Position of the Human Being in the Universe According to Islam*' Dogan (2013) explored the position of the human being as compared to all other creation according to the Islamic perspective. Dogan discussed empirical, emotional, and rational sides of the human being and articulated how humans are designed to accord meaning to things and other beings in the universe and contribute to the maturation process of the universe with their talents, blessings, and faculties that they have been given.³⁵ This shows that the human being has a role to play in the cosmic order of the universe. Perhaps Mona Abou Fadl captures the essence of the role of the *khalifah* most succinctly when she describes him as "God's elected and crown of creation, who has been entrusted with a mission, qualified for its discharge, tested on the way and rewarded for the effort."³⁶

Many other aspects of vicegerency have also been explored. In *Vicegerency and Nature*³⁷ Murad (2016) looked at the Human being's task as the steward of nature and surmised that the fact that humanity is both a vicegerent and a steward of nature implies that there is a specific trifold relationship between God, humanity, and nature. In *Human Vicegerency and the Golden Rule: The Islamic Case against Seclusion*, (2019)³⁸ Ayman Reda wrote about how Islam is a practical morality that enjoins us to treat others as equals and prohibits exploitation of them in economic exchange.

While many notable contemporary scholars have touched on the subject, they generally have done so in broad strokes.³⁹ Such mentions on the concept of *istikhlaf* can be found in the works of scholars such as Muhammad Abduh (d.1905), Rashid Rida (d.1935), Sayyid Qutb

³⁵ Dogan, R (2013) "The Position of the Human Being in The Universe According to Islam." *Sociology and Anthropology*.1(3), 141-148

³⁶ Abou Fadl, M (2024) *Agency, Rationality and Morality: The Quranic View of Man*. International Institute of Islamic thought. London, Washington.

³⁷ Murad, M. M (2016) "Vicegerency and Nature". *Critical Muslim* 19,65-75

³⁸ Reda, A, (2019) "Human Vicegerency and the Golden Rule: The Islamic Case Against Exclusion." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 78(4) 895-922.

³⁹ Lazhar, C. *Op. cit.*, p. 88.

(d.1966), Muhamad al Tahir Ibn ‘Ashur (d.1973) and Abu al A’la al-Mawdudi (d.1979), to name a few. The concept has also received attention from both Sunni reformists (Iqbal (d.1938), Said al-Nursi (d.1960)) Aisha Bint Al-Shati (d.1998) and Shi’ite scholars such as Ali Shariati (d.1977), and Murtada Mutahhari (1979).

Furthermore, the concept of *al-istikhlaf* received a lot of traction during the era of the Islamisation of Knowledge project which was proposed by Ismail Al-Faruqi (d. 1986), Abu Hamid Abu Sulayman (d. 2021), Mona Abu al Fadl (d. 2008) and Taha Jabir al-Ulwani (d. 2016). However, all these scholars merely highlighted the importance of the concept of *al-istikhlaf* without providing in depth examination of it as a Qur’anic framework that can be used to analyse and articulate key concepts in Islamic worldview nor any other action and activities of man as vicegerent on earth.

Among the important contemporary scholars on *al-istikhlaf* is Faruq Ahmad al-Dasuqi who wrote an extensive treatise on vicegerency entitled *al Khilafa’ Al Islamiyya*. In Al Dasuqi’s view, vicegerency embodies the human being’s servitude to God as well as his sovereignty on other creations at once. He states:

“In the realm of servitude, the human being interacts with both his Lord and with people. That is an interaction in which a person is subject to God and is humble before Him, while being equal with people. The Human being’s behaviour in relation to sovereignty, however, concerns his relationship with objects and living beings on Earth other than humans, and the nature of this behaviour is marked by control, domination, and sovereignty. The latter reflects the human beings’ efforts to assert his Vicegerency and establish his sovereignty over the Earth. The acts of servitude, on the other hand, consist of steering this vicegerency in a way that makes the human being appear a servant of God alone and who devotes this servitude exclusively to Him”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Ahmad Dasuqi, Faruq. (2016) *Istikhlaḥ al-Insān fi’l-Arḍ*. Alexandria: Dār al-Da’wah, p. 85-110.

Thus, a human being's sovereignty over other creations is a function of vicegerency. However, for it to fully fulfil the requirements of vicegerency on behalf of God, this function must be framed in the context of servitude to God, otherwise it would be a polytheistic vicegerency or a 'vicegerency of other than God'.⁴¹ In his redefinition of the Islamic Worldview, Abdelaziz Berghout⁴² states that the Islamic Worldview is a vicegerent-al worldview which is "...derived from the Holy Qur'an and conforms to all teachings of Islam. It provides the necessary guidance for the Muslim to strive in his endeavour as a vicegerent of Allah. This vicegerent-al worldview requires the Muslim to excel in 1) spiritual, moral and ethical aspects, 2) material, civilisational and cultural aspects, 3) *da'awah*, *ta'aruf* and civilisational aspects 4) and 'ilm that is comprehensive knowledge and sciences." According to Berghout, the main purpose of the Islamic worldview can be summarised in one word, i.e. *istikhlaf* or vicegerency.⁴³ While this paints a rough sketch of a Qur'anic framework, it does not examine the relationship between the concept of vicegerency and the other key concepts in Islam, such as the attainment of *al-saadah*, for example.

A similar attempt has been made by Mona al Fadl who derived what she calls an Islamic 'frame of reference' based on four pillars consisting of *Tawheed*, *al-istikhlaf*, the *Ummah* and the *Shari'ah*. According to Abu Al Fadl, *tawheed* is the first pillar upon which all the other pillars are established. *Al-istikhlaf* forms the second pillar as it represents the purpose of creation and the standard of the Trust (*Amanah*). The third pillar is the *Ummah*, who form the receptacle of the *al-istikhlaf*, and the fourth pillar is the *Shari'ah*, which provides the method and means to achieve the mission of *al-istikhlaf*.⁴⁴

Whilst Abou al Fadl's frame of reference appears comprehensive, in essence, it remains unclear. To begin with, the

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Abdel Aziz, Berghout. (2006) "Concept of Worldview Between Assumption and Truth (Observation on Selected Western and Muslim Views)" *Jurnal Usuluddin*, Num. 23-24, p. 117-138.

⁴³ Berghout. *Op. cit.*, p 138.

⁴⁴ Mona Abul-Fadl (1996) *Nahwa Minhajiyya li-l Taamul ma'a Masadir al Tanzir al Islami* (Toward a Methodology for Dealing with the Sources of Islamic Theorizing). Herndon, VA.: The International Institute of Islamic Thought, p. 39-40.

concept of *al-istikhlaf* is not ontologically linked to the other concepts in the Islamic worldview. There is also the lack of explanation for the criteria of the selection of those four pillars which form the said frame of reference. Another leading scholar on the subject, Abd Majid Al Najjar studied the concept of *al-istikhlaf* in “*The Vicegerency of Man, Between Revelation and Reason, A Critique of the Dialectic of the Text, Reason and Reality.*”⁴⁵ In this work Najjar discusses vicegerency as Man’s existential purpose with Revelation serving as the guidance; and reason/ human intellect serving as the means for Man to achieve this purpose. Najjar argues that it is crucial to specify the aim of humanity, as this anchors the understanding of the concept of existence and defines the source of the system containing the said human function. In essence, Najjar attempts to establish the methodology that can help reason to understand revelation and put it to practice. The gist of Najjar’s book is that the concept of vicegerency is a theological doctrinal frame which encompasses reason, revelation, and *ijtihad* to address reality. However, he too does not discuss the concept of *al-istikhlaf* as a comprehensive theory which integrates the key concepts of the Islamic worldview which he touches upon only briefly.

The first in depth examination of the concept of vicegerency as an existential concept linked with the function of man as vicegerent is found in the most recent literature on the subject, ‘*Vicegerency in Islamic Thought and Scripture*’ by Chauki Lazhar⁴⁶. In Lazhar’s work, (his PhD that was later published as a book), he explored the ontological roots of the concept and tried to link it to other Islamic concepts to form an all-encompassing theory of vicegerency. In what is perhaps the most comprehensive exposition on the concept of *al-istikhlaf* to date, Lazhar, in this book, established the contours of a Qur’anic theory of vicegerency as a human existential function. The human’s existential function, says Lazhar, sits comfortably in the cosmic order where worship, religion, revelation, and divine guidance are not human prerogatives but common to all elements constituting the universe. The human being’s unique task is to preserve the cosmic balance of the universe.

⁴⁵ Al-Najjar, A.H. Op cit.,

⁴⁶ Lazhar, C. Op. cit., p. 88.

According to Lazhar, while it is God who maintains the natural balance and measures of the universe, He has mandated the human being to act on his behalf to attain an equilibrium between his aspiration and his faculties, between himself and others in human society. By executing his functions as a *khalifah* of Allah, a human being can join and participate in the cosmic order. Lazhar claims that this is the broader purpose behind the specific function of the human being, who, through this exercise, will find “*an interim alternative for the satisfaction of his ontological infinite aspirations, which is only possible in the hereafter.*”⁴⁷ However, like An-Najjar before him, Lazhar comes close but stops short of linking the role of vicegerent to certain other key concepts in the Islamic worldview such as the attainment of *al-sa'adah*. This article argues that the *al-istikhlaf* framework is a comprehensive framework that can be used to examine such key concepts of the Islamic worldview under one harmonious frame. While there are many other scholars who discussed various aspects of *al-istikhlaf* in detail, the aforementioned point represents discussions that are relevant to the purpose of this article.

IV - The Concept of *Al-Istikhlaḥ* as a Possible Framework for Understanding Man and Human Existence

To evaluate the problems and obstacles faced by humanity, any Islamic framework must recognise and apply the epistemological idea that all our activities, efforts, and endeavours as human beings fall under the domain of our role as *khalifah*/vicegerents on earth. One's engagement in various activities and deeds, whether they pertain to the internal, external, spiritual, or material aspects of life, is carried out by virtue of being a *khalifah*.

Straying from this principle will certainly result in a reduction in our appreciation of the essence of our existence as *khalifahs*. There is a significant disparity between addressing the concerns and challenges of humanity from the perspective of an ordinary human being and that of a *khalifah*. The distinction reflects contrasting worldviews and perspectives on human existence and life. The act of differentiating has profound philosophical and epistemological

⁴⁷ Lazhar, C. *Op. cit.*, p. 265.

consequences when it comes to comprehending human beings and the nature of existence. The distinction lies in the contrast between the *al-istikhlaf* framework and the human being framework.

Illustration 1 depicts a perception of man as *khalifah* and not a mere human being.

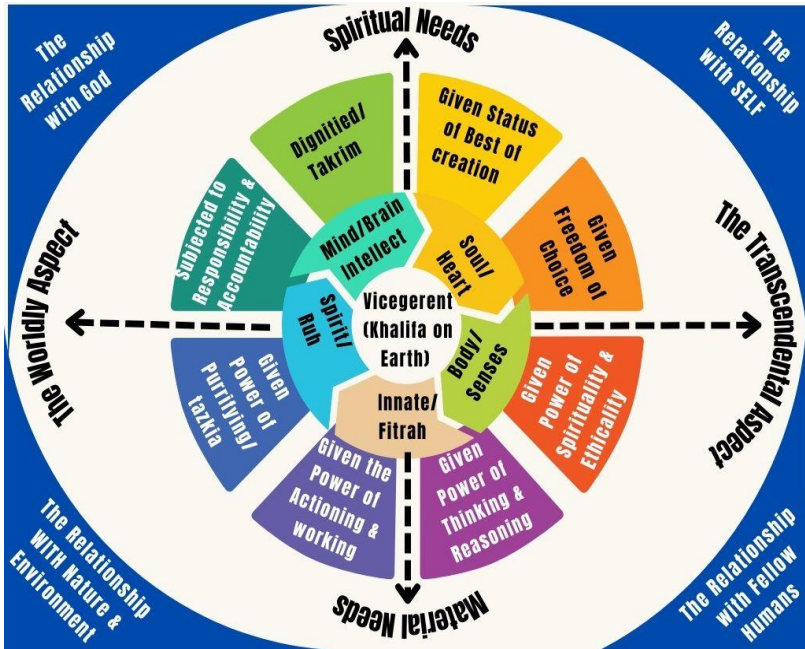


Illustration 1: Khalifah in the Quranic Worldview: The Istikhlaf Framework

Islam presents man as a unified *khalifah* who aspires to fulfil the task of *al-Istikhlaf* on earth. Based on the given illustration, the *khalifah* is composed of five primary dimensions: mind-intellect, soul-heart, body-senses, human nature (*fitrah*), and spirit (*Ruh*). The *khalifah* depicted in the third circle possesses numerous qualities and abilities, such as being the peak of creation, possessing dignity, having freedom of choice, being endowed with spiritual and ethical power, possessing the ability to reason and act, having the power of purification (*tazkiyah*), and being entrusted with trust (*Amanah*),

responsibility, and accountability. The illustration also depicts the *khalifah's* stewardship of two interconnected realms: the transcendental and the worldly. In addition, the *khalifah*, by virtue of his inherent character and vicegerency, has two domains of requirements: the spiritual and the material. The Quranic worldview emphasises the importance of the *khalifah's* four interrelated relationships. Without these links, our knowledge of the human being is destined to fail, leading to the collapse of both the individual and the collective. The four interrelated relationships are:

- *The relationship with God*, which establishes the feature of servanthood & God-conscious human being and sense of purpose and responsibility in life;

- *the relationship with oneself*, which fosters self-awareness and consciousness about one's own well-being and the reality of the human being, who is called upon to carry important responsibilities and duties as a vicegerent on earth;

- *the relationship with society and other fellow humans*, which shapes societal consciousness and collective well-being, resulting in balanced sustainable development and human association; and

- *the relationship with nature*, which reflects the extent to which man is connected to the environment and the bigger universe surrounding us.

Therefore, it is evident that the human being, acting as the *khalifah*, serves as both the focal point and initiator of civilisation, as well as its primary catalyst and overseer. As such, it is crucial to adequately equip and provide a suitable role for the human being within this process. If humans are reduced to their constituent parts, activities and policies developed would only focus on the limited role of a man, resulting in a civilisation model which is fragmented and reductionist, focusing on certain aspects of life and undermining others. To address this imbalance, the initial step is to fully restore the entirety of the human being as *khalifah*, encompassing all the attributes and dimensions outlined in the illustration.

In this framework, man is recognised as a *khalifah* and not just an ordinary human being. God has raised his position and status in the hierarchy of creation by appointing him as the vicegerent on earth. He is positioned in the world as a dignified being, possessing abundant

spiritual, intellectual, mental, psychological, ethical, cultural, social, economic, political, and physical capabilities and potential. The *khalifah* is expected to undertake various roles and responsibilities, including serving and worshipping God, constructing a well-rounded civilisation, safeguarding the environment, establishing a harmonious and desirable lifestyle, engaging in cultural and civilisational exchange, advocating for global justice, peace, stability, and security, and optimising worldly existence to achieve success and ultimate happiness (*al saadah*) in the hereafter.

From this viewpoint, attaining a state of great satisfaction and a fulfilling existence in this world depends on understanding oneself as a vicegerent, rather than simply as a human being, citizen, creature, or person. Therefore, the measure of achievement of mankind should centre on the significance and strife for equilibrium between the spiritual and material realms, the external and internal aspects, and the earthly and afterlife goals, principles, and circumstances. The state of balance between the spiritual and material dimensions, the outward and interior spheres, and the worldly and eternal objectives are all factors that must be considered.

The concept of *al-Istikhlaf* has clearly contributed to our re-imagining of the human being as a *khalifah*, encompassing all the above abilities and skills. The inception of Islamic existence can be traced back to the appointment of the first human being as the vicegerent on earth, entrusted with the responsibilities and functions of a *khalifah*. The *Al-Istikhlaf* framework facilitates the conceptualisation of the interconnectedness between individuals, society, and civilisation. It establishes a harmonious basis for comprehending the role of humans as *khalifah* and their ultimate purpose in both the present life and the hereafter. While it is a basic idea in Islam, the concept of *al-istikhlaf* can be expanded upon to create a comprehensive framework for analysing the issues and problems that individuals, societies, and civilisations encounter.

This paper proposes the deepening and promotion of the *al-Istikhlaf* framework as a valuable instrument for scholars and researchers to analyse and address the concerns and challenges faced by individuals and society in a comprehensive and morally guided manner.

V - Conclusion

This paper has presented a concise analysis of the significance of the notion of *al-Istikhlaf* (vicegerency) from the Islamic perspective and its role in comprehending the position and responsibilities of humans as *khalifah* on the planet. The essay illustrated the central position of this notion in understanding the Islamic view of God, humanity, existence, and the cosmos. *Al Istikhlaf* should be seen as a fundamental concept that serves as a connection between various other parts of existence. The *al-Istikhlaf* framework allows us to establish four distinct relationships: a relationship with God, a relationship with oneself, a relationship with other individuals, as well as a relationship with the surrounding universe.

The *Istikhlafic* perspective on human beings encompasses a comprehensive understanding of various aspects, such as the mind, soul, heart, body, *fitrah* (innate human nature), and *Ruh* (spirit). Within the *istikhlafic* framework, life is measured beyond the limitations of the *Dunya* (mundane life) and extends into the *Akhirah* (eternal and permanent hereafter). This paper provides a more detailed explanation of how human existence, viewed as a vicegerent of a higher authority, manages and satisfies both the spiritual and material requirements of individuals, society, and humanity as a whole. The epistemological implication of this is that the origins of human development and civilisation extend beyond material and worldly knowledge. They encompass unseen revealed knowledge that offers a comprehensive understanding of the human experience in both the transcendental and spiritual realms. This knowledge assists individuals in establishing proper relationships with God, the unseen world, and the surrounding universe. The notion of *Istikhlaf* is closely associated with various other concepts related to the role of man as a *khalifah* in the domains of God, man, life, and the universe. Therefore, any discourse on religion, humanity, civilisation, society, culture, knowledge, economy, spirituality, state, government, management, leadership, environment etc. should acknowledge the concept of man as the *khalifah* on earth, rather than merely a human being or creature.

Recognising the importance of the concept of *al-Istikhlaf* and mankind's role as *khalifah* on earth would expand our understanding and allow for the exploration of new knowledge, ideas, and

relationships that connect the material and spiritual aspects of our daily existence. This paper suggests conducting a thorough analysis of the notion of *al-Istikhlaf* and its role in constructing an Islamic framework or paradigm for comprehending man, society, and civilisation. A framework of this nature will facilitate the cultivation of Islamic integrated knowledge, education, and the orientation of individuals as vicegerents. Consequently, the introduction of novel *Istikhlafic* knowledge, ideas, and solutions can effectively tackle the difficulties and challenges encountered in several domains such as the economics, politics, environment, science, technology, family, society, economy, family, culture, and other relevant aspects of life.

AL-SHAJARAH

Special Issue 2024

Contents

EDITORIAL NOTES	1
<i>Khaliq Ahmad</i>	
ARTICLES	
PROSPECTS OF REVIVING ISLAMIC CIVILISATION THROUGH PUBLIC SPACES: MUSLIM CIVILITY AND AT THE 2022 FIFA WORLD CUP	11
<i>Emin Poljarevic</i>	
MODERN REFORMS IN THE ISLAMIC THOUGHT WITH REFERENCE TO SCIENCE: A STUDY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT	37
<i>Zain Razzaq and Rab Nawaz</i>	
ISLAMIC AND CHRISTIAN WORK ETHICS: AN ANALYSIS	59
<i>Sumera Irfan, Mohammad Bin Ibrahim and Thameem Ushama</i>	
THE CONCEPT OF AL-ISTIKHLAF AND ITS IMPORTANCE IN RECLAIMING THE ATTRIBUTES OF MAN AS KHALIFAH ON EARTH	83
<i>Hidayah Wan Ismail and Abdelaziz Berghout</i>	
REIMAGINING ISLAMIC DISCOURSE: TOWARDS A GLOBAL ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP	103
<i>Maqbool Hassan Gilani, Saima Ali and Ghulam Mohyiddeen</i>	
THE ARTISTIC COMPOSITION OF ARABIC CALLIGRAPHY IN THE <i>KISWAH</i> OF THE HOLY KAABA: A DESCRIPTIVE AND ANALYTICAL STUDY	121
<i>Duaa Alashari and Abdelaziz Berghout</i>	
RECONCILIATION AND ISLAMISATION - A ROADMAP FOR AN ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL REVIVAL	141
<i>Safiyah Sabreen Syeed and Ahmad El-Muhammady</i>	
TECHNO-JAHILIYYAH: EXAMINING TRANSHUMANISM THROUGH THE ISLAMIC LENS	167
<i>Asif Adnan</i>	
IRANIAN CINEMA AND ISLAMIC REVIVALISM (1970-1990): THE ENTWINED TAPESTRY	205
<i>Saima Ali and Abdelaziz Berghout</i>	
IBN SINA'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO MODERNITY: INTEGRATING MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY, NEUROPHILOSOPHY, AND EDUCATIONAL REFORM IN ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND CIVILISATION	225
<i>Nurul Ain Norman and Mohammad Eisa Ruhullah</i>	
EARLY IDEAS ON REFORM AND RENEWAL THROUGH JOURNALISM IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO: HAMKA'S ACCOUNTS IN <i>AYAHKU</i> (1950)	249
<i>Ahmad Murad Merican</i>	
INTER-CIVILISATIONAL ISSUES AND THE FACTORS AFFECTING INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS: A STUDY OF MUHAMMAD HAMIDULLAH'S CONTRIBUTIONS	263
<i>Syed Iftikhar Ali Gilani, Ahmad Khaliq and Abdul Waheed</i>	
MASTERY-HUMILITY MODEL: FROM CONVERGENCE TO INTEGRATION	295
<i>Ruslan Hassan</i>	
THE DISCOURSE OF RENEWAL: ASSESSING FAZLUR RAHMAN'S HERMENEUTICS AND ITS CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE	319
<i>Arief S. Arman</i>	
ICRITC-24 REVIEW	337
<i>Khaliq Ahmad</i>	

WoS-Indexed under Arts & Humanities Citation Index, Current Contents/Arts and Humanities and Scopus

ISSN 1394-6870



9 771394 687009