

The History of Islam: The Conflict of Sacredness and Humanity

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This article is the first in a series accompanying a video series that examines Islamic history from an analytical, critical perspective, neither hagiographic nor hostile. The aim is not to discuss faith or religious values, but to read historical facts as human events that occurred within a specific social and political context, using tools familiar to the science of state formation.

The series proceeds from a simple methodological premise: The historical Islamic experience was an experience of founding a society, authority, and system of governance within the conditions of its time and place. It was subject, like other historical experiences, to balances of power, alliances, economics, and the struggle for legitimacy.

In this foundational article, we focus on the transition from the call in Mecca to the formation of Medinan society, what can be described as the nucleus of an emerging political entity, the "Medinan polity", as a historical human case study, not as a complete constitutional model in the modern sense.

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Ch. 1, Sovereignty and Negotiation: An Analytical Reading of the Formation of the "Medinan Polity"

Introduction: Rereading the Beginnings

Between the traditional discourse that sanctifies Medina as a utopian model descended from heaven, and the hostile discourse that reduces the experience to its historical context alone, the historical facts cry out for a methodological rereading—one that strips analysis of sanctification without denying it to the sacred text itself.

Medina after the Hijrah (migration) was not merely a "mosque and graves," but a political "start-up" par excellence, facing the challenges of existence amidst a jungle of tribal loyalties and ethnic solidarities. Here, religion was not merely a ritual but transformed into a "technology of sovereignty" for managing conflict and navigating diversity.

The central question this episode poses:

Did Islam begin as a theory of the state? Or as a religious- social call that later transformed its community into a political entity?

<https://youtu.be/ZnVbjVVny1g>

Mecca: A Doctrinal Call Without a Governing Apparatus

The call in Mecca continued for more than a decade without producing a state, an administrative apparatus, or governing institutions. No system of authority emerged, no enforcement mechanism, no management of public affairs in the name of the believing community. The community was small, persecuted, possessing no land, no army, and no enforceable law.

This distinction is methodologically crucial: The emergence of a creed does not mean the emergence of a state. The state, in historical definition, begins when public affairs are managed on a specific territory through organized authority.

Sources mention that Quraysh (the dominant tribe in Mecca) offered various forms of social and political co-optation- status, alliance, leadership - and these were rejected. In the faithful reading, this is principled steadfastness. In a political reading, it can be understood as a refusal to integrate into an existing system in favor of building an independent community that would later produce its own system.

The Hijrah: From Persecuted Community to Nucleus of Authority

The Hijrah (migration) to Yathrib (which would become Medina) was the major turning point. It was not merely a geographical relocation, but a functional transformation: from

a community with no space of its own to a community possessing: land, local allies, a network of relationships, and the capacity for self- organization.

Yathrib suffered from prolonged conflicts between the Aws and Khazraj tribes (the dominant Arab tribes in the city), alongside the presence of economically powerful Jewish tribes, and a clear arbitral vacuum. The environment was ripe for accepting a unifying mediator. Here, the call enters the political- social sphere, and the process of building a decision- making center begins.

In political sociology, this moment marks the beginning of the "politicization of the community."

Al- Mu'akhat (Brotherhood): An Economic and Social Safety Net

The "brotherhood" (al- mu'akhat) established between the Emigrants (Muhajirun, those who left Mecca) and the Helpers (Ansar, the native inhabitants of Medina) is usually presented as a spiritual- ethical bond. However, it also served a crucial economic function. The Emigrants had left their wealth and trade in Mecca, and the risk of social collapse for the new community was real.

The brotherhood system created a mechanism for resource redistribution, employment opportunities, and social integration. The famous example of Abd al- Rahman ibn Awf (a prominent companion of the Prophet), when offered half a Helper's wealth, he asked for the marketplace instead of charity, reveals a swift transition to productive integration.

Medina was not a welfare society, but an open market. This is important for understanding that the nascent community sought early economic independence—a classic condition in the emergence of political entities.

The Constitution of Medina: A Multi- Party Political Contract

The "Constitution of Medina" (Sahifat al- Madinah) is often read as a religious document, but from an analytical perspective, it appears closer to a political- security contract between different groups. Its texts regulate: collective defense, legal responsibility, dispute resolution, mutual obligations, and recognition of independent tribal units.

The document was not a theocratic constitution, but rather a "security pact." When the Prophet recognizes the Jews as "one community (ummah) with the believers" (not *of* the believers), he is not merely practicing "religious tolerance" in the modern sense, but exercising "political realism" (Realpolitik). He establishes a legitimacy based on "fact on the ground" and shared geography, not solely on unity of creed.

This was not "religious tolerance" in the modern sense, but "political realism." The Prophet realized that building a "state" required securing the internal front through military alliances with forces possessing wealth and weapons (the Jewish tribes). Here, political identity (the "ummah of Medina") preceded and encompassed religious identity. Sovereignty here is built through "covenant" not "exclusion." This is closer to a confederal social contract than to a religious- doctrinal constitution. Here we see the first framework of governance: contractual, security- based, political. This pattern is historically known in alliances between cities and tribes during the foundational stages of states.



The Early Battles: Struggle for Entity Consolidation

The early battles - Badr, Uhud, and al- Khandaq (the Trench) - can be read religiously in terms of mobilization, but they can also be read as survival struggles for a nascent entity. Every state in its formative stage undergoes a phase of consolidation by force.

The Battle of Badr, for example, is not understood only as a doctrinal clash, but also within the context of the struggle over trade routes and resources. Quraysh's caravans were an economic lifeline. Striking them meant economic and political pressure.

The outcomes of Badr, in terms of spoils and symbolism, contributed to consolidating the legitimacy of the new center in Medina and enhancing its deterrent power.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah: Strategic Realism

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah is the moment when the "state leader" clearly appeared behind the cloak of the "Prophet." Accepting Quraysh's seemingly unfair terms was not weakness, but a "pause before the strategic explosion." The leader sacrificed slogans (such as omitting "Basmallah" [the phrase "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful"] and accepting the removal of the title "Messenger of God") for geopolitical gains. Here we see true deconstruction: politics is the art of the possible, even in moments of revelation.

The Treaty of Hdaybiyyah represents a highly significant moment of strategic negotiation. Accepting terms whose surface was unbalanced, such as the wording of the agreement text, in exchange for a truce and practical recognition, reflects calculations of power, not emotional impulse.

In political negotiation theory, this is considered a model of "tactical concession for strategic gain." The truce allowed for internal reorganization and expansion of alliances, which later manifested in the widening of influence.

Hunayn and "Those Whose Hearts are to be Reconciled" (Al-Mu'allafatu Qulubuhum): Engineering Loyalties

In the Battle of Hunayn (a battle fought after the conquest of Mecca against the Hawazin tribe), the distribution of spoils to the leaders of Quraysh ("those whose hearts are to be reconciled", a category mentioned in the Quran for distributing charity/zakat) was not merely a da'wah (proselytizing) act, but "social engineering" to purchase solid tribal loyalties. Here, the state builds its own "elite" and uses financial surplus to ensure the survival of the nascent system amidst a sea of potential opponents.

He granted Abu Sufyan ibn Harb (a leading figure of Quraysh who had recently embraced Islam) 100 camels and 40 uqiyas (ounces) of silver, 100 camels to Hakim ibn Hizam, the same to Safwan ibn Umayyah, and others among the leaders of Quraysh.

This measure can be read ethically in several ways... but politically it is clear: Managing loyalties. Containing elites. Reducing the likelihood of rebellion. Building stability. All nascent states do this in different forms.

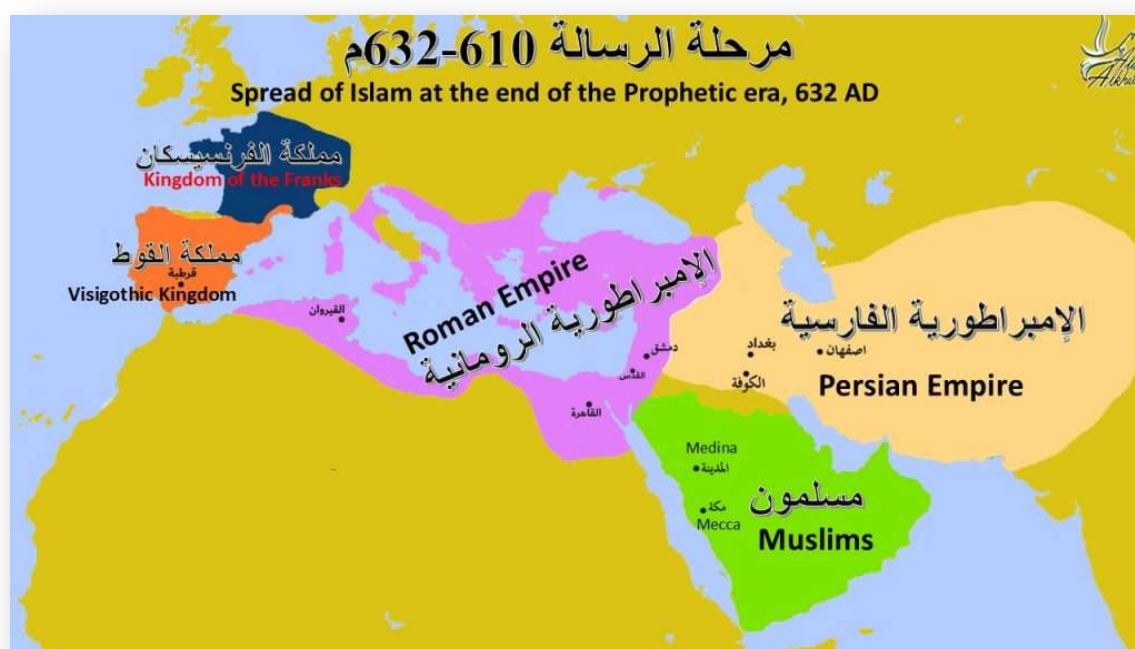
The Entry of Tribes: Collective Calculations

In the later stages, entire tribes entered Islam. Many tribes were waiting to see the outcome of the conflict between the Muslims led by the Prophet and Quraysh, their unspoken sentiment being: "Watch them; if he prevails over them, he is a true prophet."

Hence, the ninth year after the Hijrah, the year following the conquest of Mecca, was named the "Year of Delegations" ('Am al- Wufud). It is narrated that the Prophet received about 70 delegations from Arab tribes across the length and breadth of the Arabian Peninsula, such as the delegations of Thaqif, Tamim, Abd al- Qays, Hanifah, and others.

Here, an important transformation occurs:

Islam was no longer just the belief of individuals, but a framework for collective identity. When a tribe entered, it brought its entire network, loyalties, and internal balances. And here, the political community expands rapidly.



The Faith- Based Reading and the Historical Reading

One might say: All these facts - the treaties, alliances, negotiations, management of power- are, in the believer's view, part of revelation itself, intended to teach the model of the state. This is a legitimate faith- based interpretation within its doctrinal framework.

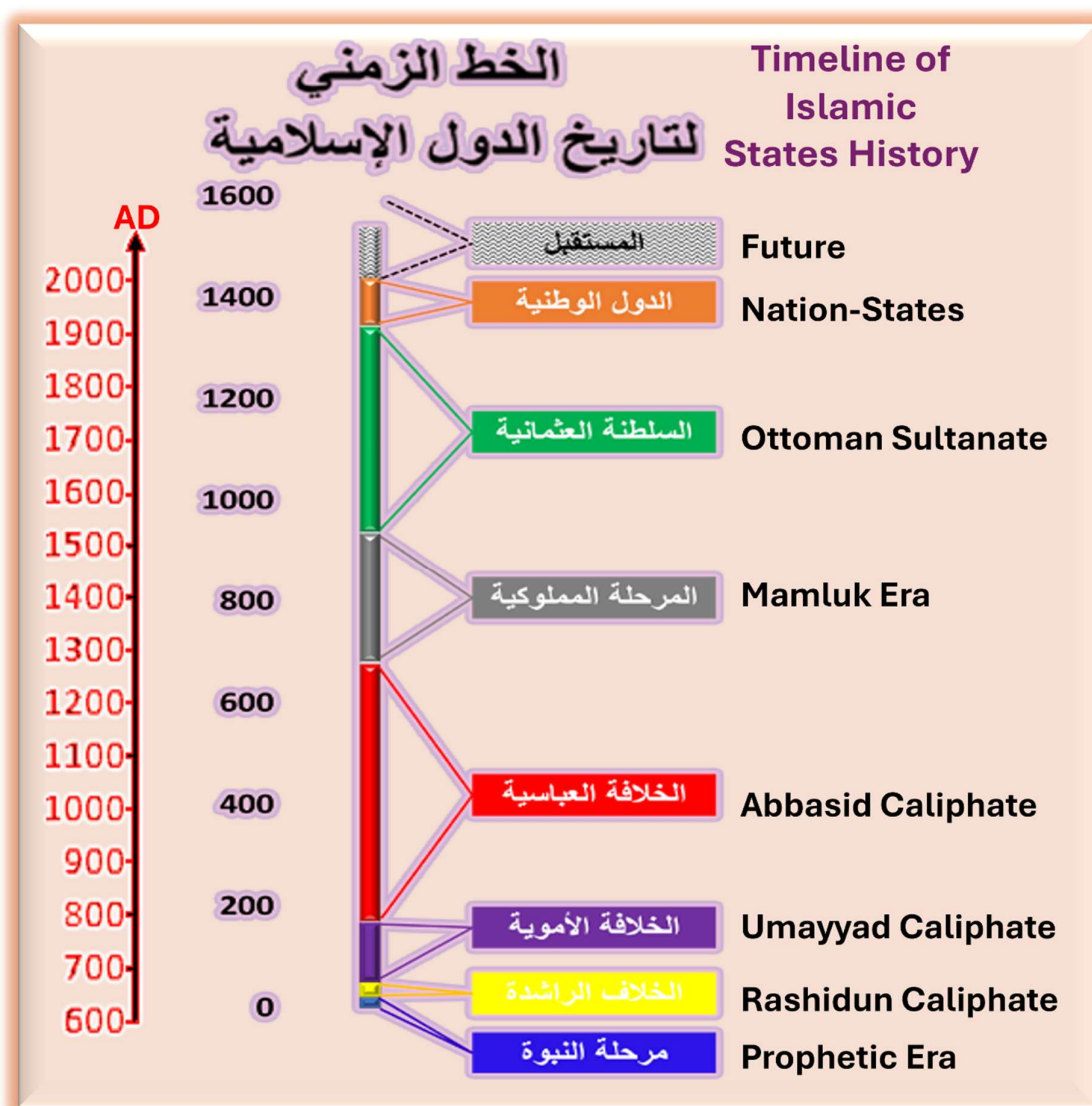
But historical reading operates differently: It does not ask: Was the decision revelation or not? Rather, it asks: How did the leader act? What tools did he use? Were they supra- historical tools... or human tools known in the building of political entities?

When we look at the facts, we find that: taking the balance of power into account, building alliances, concluding covenants, delaying confrontation, absorbing opponents,

managing loyalties, redistributing resources—all these are tools known in the formation of ancient states, in the Arabian Peninsula, and in neighboring empires.

The reading here does not negate faith, but it refuses to transform the historical experience into a ready-made constitutional model for all time.

It simply says: The experience was great, but it was also historically human. Even if the believer considers the decision to be revelation, that revelation descended within a specific social and political context, interacted with the tools of reality, and did not build a state through supernatural mechanisms, but through understandable human mechanisms.



Conclusion: A State of Necessity, Not a State of Religion

Imagine the Prophet in Medina, he did not only speak about prayer, but spent his days concluding "military alliances" and managing "economic caravans." When he wrote the

"Constitution of Medina," he did not use the language of preaching, but the language of the "social contract." He made the Jews and polytheists part of the "political community" in exchange for collective defense. Why? Because a nascent state does not live on slogans, but on shared security and mutual interests.

Islam in Medina donned the cloak of the "state" in its raw concept: land, people, and absolute sovereignty. The entry of the Arabs into Islam as tribes was not a sudden collective spiritual transformation, but a submission to a new political centrality that had proven its effectiveness in the field.

The Medinan polity was not a "religious state," but a "state of necessity" formed within an eminently human historical context. In the next episode, we will see how this structure exploded upon the departure of the founder at the "Saqifah of Bani Sa'idah" (the meeting place where the succession of Abu Bakr was decided), where the real struggle began over who holds the right to decide.

The Medina experience was a foundational experience of immense impact, but it was also a historical human experience, shaped within the conditions of reality, and with tools understandable within the science of the state.

Ch. 2, Post-Founder Era

The Struggle for Legitimacy and the Test of Survival

The Saqifa, the Ridda, and the Conquest

If the state of Medina was formed around the persona of the **Founder**, the most critical question was not how it emerged, but rather: What happens when the Founder is gone? Was there a complete governance mechanism? A constitution for the transition of power? A pre-defined system of succession? Or did politics, in its rawest form, immediately resurface?

Traditional discourse promotes the idea of the "**Rashidun Caliphate**" (The Rightly Guided Caliphate) as a solid block of spiritual consensus. However, a political reading of history reveals a major moment of rupture. The question raised was not "Who is the most pious?" but rather: "Who holds the right to decide?" and "How is a state managed without a written text for the transition of power?"

In this stage, we face three moments that redefined politics in early Islam: **The Saqifa, the Ridda, and the Conquests**. Here, the imagined ideal model collapsed, and the model of the "**State of Dominance and De Facto Reality**" was born.

The Saqifa: A Political Meeting Before the Burial

Before the Prophet was buried, the **Ansar** (The "Helpers"—the local inhabitants of Medina who supported the Prophet) gathered in **Saqifat Bani Sa'idah** (A roofed gathering place belonging to the tribe of Bani Sa'idah). This was not a meeting for preaching or a council of jurisprudence; it was an urgent political meeting titled: **Who Rules?**

The Ansar put forward their candidate, **Sa'd ibn Ubadah**, the leader of the Khazraj tribe and the master of the Ansar. The **Muhajirun** (The "Emigrants"—those who migrated from Mecca to Medina) arrived quickly, represented by Abu Bakr al-Siddiq and Omar ibn al-Khattab. A heated debate ensued, and proposals were exchanged.

It was suggested: "An amir (leader) from us and an amir from you," proposing a power-sharing formula. However, the argument that ultimately prevailed was not a Quranic text nor a Prophetic **Hadith** (Record of the traditions or sayings of the Prophet), but rather a socio-political argument. As Omar ibn al-Khattab stated: "The Arabs will only submit to

Quraysh" (The Prophet's tribe and the most powerful tribe in Mecca). Quraysh's tribal status in the peninsula was incomparable to that of the **Aws** and **Khazraj** (The two main tribes of the Ansar). The logic of **Asabiyyah** (Social solidarity with an emphasis on tribalism or clanism) and the centrality of Quraysh settled the debate.

In a decisive moment, Omar initiated the **Bay'ah** (An oath of allegiance) to Abu Bakr, others followed, and Abu Bakr became the first **Khalifa** (Caliph—the successor and leader of the Muslim community).

Analytically, we are looking at elite negotiation, a race for decision-making, swift resolution, a balance of power, and the absence of a prior constitutional text. No binding text was used to define the mechanism of power transition. No decisive verse or definitive Hadith was invoked. It was a political negotiation in every sense. The transition of power occurred through an emergency decision in a limited meeting, not through a previously codified system. Thus, the first sovereign decision after the Founder was made in an emergency meeting, not in a written text.

<https://youtu.be/uTIDkloou6E>

The Ridda Wars: A Crisis of Loyalty or a Crisis of Faith?

As soon as the Saqifa was settled, the Arabian Peninsula erupted. Many tribes refused to pay **Zakat** (The mandatory alms-giving in Islam, treated here as a state tax), rejected central authority, declared independence, and followed local leaders. Some actually apostatized in a creedal sense, such as the followers of **Musaylimah ibn Habib** (often called Musaylimah the Liar) among the Bani Hanifa, the followers of **Tulayha al-Asadi**, and the followers of **Al-Aswad al-Ansi** in Yemen.

Tribes like Tamim, Hanifa, Sulaym, and Hawazin were not saying "No to God," but rather "No to Quraysh as a permanent center for decision-making and wealth." To them, Zakat was being read as a political tribute to a new center.

Asabiyyah (Tribal loyalty) was the primary driver of the tribal rebellion. Perhaps the saying: *"The liar of Rabia (Musaylimah) is dearer to us than the truthful one of Mudar (The Prophet),"* summarizes the core of the scene. This is not a theological statement, but a purely political one. The struggle was not only over divine truth but over sovereignty, leadership, and the center of power.

The new authority viewed this as a political rebellion and dispatched armies. The **Ridda Wars** (The Wars of Apostasy) broke out—bitter and fateful wars. Abu Bakr's victory was a victory for the organized Asabiyyah of Quraysh and its allies over the fragmented loyalties of other tribes.

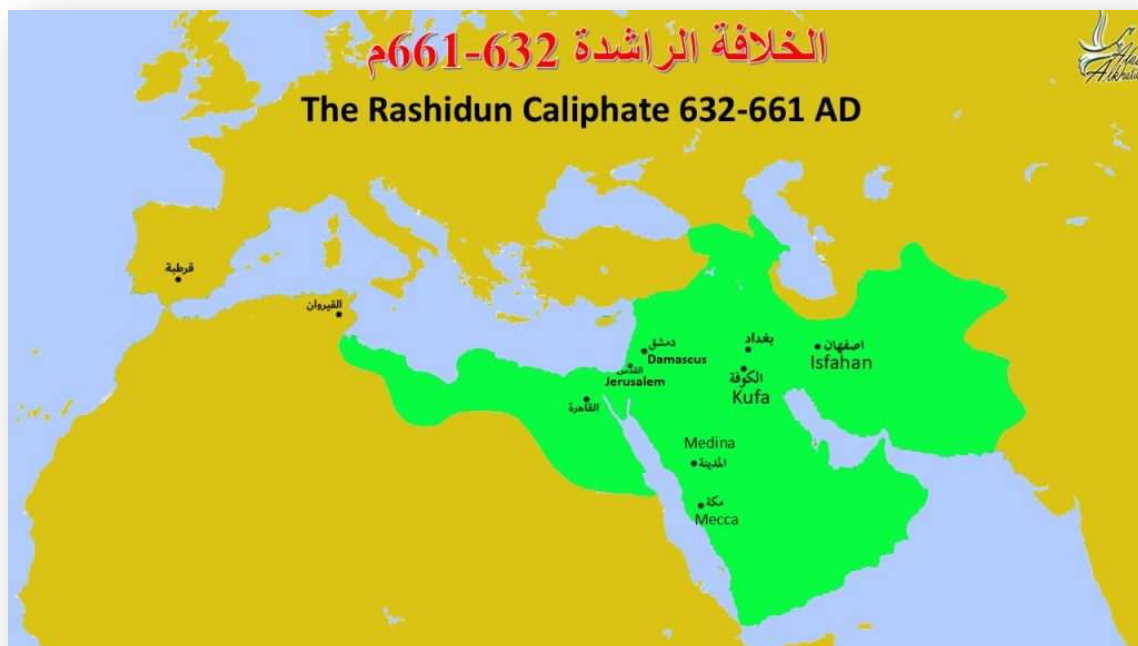
This rebellion against the central authority of Quraysh was, in a **theological reading**, an apostasy from religion (**Ridda**). However, in a **sociological reading**, it was a rebellion against the center and a refusal of the redistribution of power. The nascent state could

not survive without a monopoly on decision-making and taxation. Thus, the first war the state fought after the Founder was a war to establish **Centralization**.

The Dialogue Between Abu Bakr and Omar: The Monopoly on Force

A famous narration recounts the dialogue between Omar and Abu Bakr regarding fighting those who refused to pay Zakat. Omar asked: "How can we fight them (when they still profess faith)?" Abu Bakr replied: *"By Allah, if they withhold even a camel-tether (a small piece of rope) which they used to give to the Messenger of Allah, I will fight them for withholding it."* Omar later stated that he realized God had opened Abu Bakr's heart to the fight and knew it was the truth.

This dialogue is usually read as an example of creedal firmness. However, politically, it is the first explicit application of the principle of the **State's monopoly on the use of force** and the monopoly on taxation. The issue was not just worship; it was **Financial Sovereignty**. The state needed resources to survive and prepare for its expansion project. It either had to be a coercive central power or return to being a transient tribal alliance. Therefore, the Ridda Wars were wars to establish sovereignty, not just a theological debate.



The Conquests: State Expansion, Not Just a Religious Call

After securing the interior, the armies headed outward. We are no longer facing a missionary group, but an organized military machine. The **Conquests** were not merely a spiritual impulse; they were a response to economic necessities (need for resources), tribal dynamics (directing the energy of raiding outward), and political needs (expanding the "Lebensraum" or vital space).

The tribes, having stopped internal fighting, needed a new arena. **Ghanima** (Spoils of war) was not a minor detail in the wars of expansion; it was a material engine that ensured tribal loyalty to the center. The nascent state realized its survival depended on the flow of resources from abroad. The Persian and Byzantine empires were relatively weak, opening the way for rapid expansion. The matter was no longer just a "spreading call," but an expanding state.

Omar's Diwan: The Birth of Bureaucracy and Hierarchy

During the era of **Omar ibn al-Khattab**, the "**Diwan al-Ata**" (The Department of Distribution/Stipends) was born. For the first time, the names of fighters and early converts to Islam were recorded, and the distribution of salaries from the **Bayt al-Mal** (The State Treasury) was organized.

However, the distribution was not equal. Clear criteria were set for distributing wealth among Muslims, including: seniority in Islam, kinship to the Prophet, and performance in battles. Thus, the distribution order was graded from the Muhajirun to the Ansar and the veterans of the Battle of Badr, followed by other categories. Consequently, a **financial-political hierarchy** emerged. Society was no longer just an equal community of believers; it became financial classes linked to their proximity to the center and the "Sword of the State."

Al-Ata and Asabiyyah: The Nationalization of the Tribe

The **Ata** (Stipend) was not paid only to individuals, but through the tribal gateway. The tribal leader would distribute it within his tribe. In this way, **Asabiyyah** (Tribal solidarity) was not abolished but "nationalized." The state linked tribal loyalty to salaries, transforming it from a potential threat into a tool of control. Therefore, "citizenship" did not pass through the individual, but through the tribe. This model merged the state with tribalism instead of dismantling it.

The Machinery of Wealth and Sovereignty

When Omar established the **Diwans** (Administrative departments/registers), he was not practicing preaching; he was building resource management. Every Muslim became a financial entry in the state's records. The fighter transformed from a volunteer raider into a **professional soldier** receiving a regular stipend.

However, the system carried the seed of internal tension: the closer you were to the center of Quraysh and the earlier you were in the struggle, the higher your stipend. Here, a **financial-political elite** was born, which would play a major role in future conflicts.

Conclusion: From Spiritual Legitimacy to the Legitimacy of Dominance

We have seen that the **Saqifa** was a negotiation over power, the **Ridda Wars** were a war over the centralization of the state, the **Conquests** were wars of state expansion, and the **Diwan al-Ata** was the foundation of the ruling class and socio-economic stratifications.

Power did not transition smoothly through a written text, but through the sharpness of decision and the speed of resolution. The state was not born from a ready-made "catalog," but was shaped through a conflict of wills and the necessities of survival.

In the next article, we reach the most dangerous moment: when the conflict moves from the peripheries to the heart of the house of governance. From the assassination of Omar to the **Great Fitna** (The first civil war in Islam), when Muslim blood was shed in abundance and politics within Islam was redefined once again.

Ch. 3, From Omar's Assassination to the Great Fitna:

When the State Devours its Children

The history of nations teaches us that the moment of collapse does not begin at the borders, but at the center. After years of spectacular expansion, the nascent state did not fall to the blows of the Romans or the Persians; instead, it fractured from the heart of **Medina**. We are facing a classic case in the sociology of the state: when the speed of imperial expansion outpaces the institution's ability to regulate and contain, the danger of collapse arises from within the state, not from the outside. In this article, we dismantle how the "dispute" transformed from a scholarly disagreement over text into a struggle for sovereignty and de facto reality.

The Assassination of Omar: The End of Strict Stability

The assassination of **Omar ibn al-Khattab** was not merely a political crime; it was the collapse of the "Strict Centralization" model. Omar represented the "**Prestige of Decision**" and the power of regulation that prevented regional commanders from turning into feudal lords in the **Amsar** (The garrison cities or newly established provinces). His death opened the door to the deferred question of sovereignty: How can a state be managed without binding rules for the transition of power?



Before his death, Omar formed a committee of six companions from **Quraysh** (The Prophet's tribe and the political elite) to choose a successor from among themselves. This "**Shura of the Six**" (Consultative Council) was the first institutional political exercise, but it lacked a "Constitution" to protect the next Caliph from the ambitions of rising elites. Although it was an attempt to institutionalize the transition of power, it restricted the choice to the "**Quraysh Elite**," which later deepened the sense of marginalization among other tribes and paved the way for the socio-political conflict that exploded during the reign of Othman.

Omar represented the "**Prestige of the State**" in its highest form. His murder meant the absence of the charismatic personality capable of curbing the regional leaders. While the assassin (**Abu Lu'lu'a al-Majusi**) acted on a personal grievance regarding **Kharaj** (Land tax) and taxation, historical accounts suggest that the general context carried signs of resentment from some **Mawali** (Non-Arab subjects or converts) or those disadvantaged by the Islamic expansion and the fall of old empires, specifically the Persian one.

Some accounts describe Omar as the "**Locked Door**" against **Fitna** (Civil strife or sedition). With his death, this door swung wide open, giving rise to social transformations manifested in two primary phenomena:

1. **Wealth Accumulation:** The absence of Omar's strict oversight allowed capital to accumulate in the hands of the elites.
2. **The Rise of Asabiyyah:** Tribalism (Social solidarity based on kinship), which Omar had suppressed through his rigorous justice, began to resurface in demands for high offices and governorships.

Omar's assassination was a "**Structural Shift**"; the state after him was no longer the state it was before. It transitioned from "Administrative Austerity" and absolute central discipline to a phase of "**Political Fluidity**," which eventually led to the **Great Fitna** and the subsequent establishment of the Umayyad State.

The Choice of Othman: The Beginning of Social Transformation in Power

With **Othman ibn Affan**, the state entered a new phase where wealth inflated due to imperial expansion, and the "**Quraysh Aristocracy**" rose to prominence, specifically the **Umayyad House** (Othman's clan).

Structural analysis reveals that the protests were not merely "religious"; they were a protest from the "**Peripheries**" (The provinces) against the "**Center's**" (Medina) monopoly over decision-making and resources, and the perceived favoritism toward Othman's Umayyad relatives. The siege and assassination of the Caliph marked the moment when the "**Sanctity of the Ruler**" fell before the "**Will of Power**." The state lost its capacity for arbitration and became a direct adversary in the conflict.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TJVSs9DlpRw>

While Omar viewed authority as a "Central Trust," Othman viewed it as **Silat al-Rahm** (Kinship ties) and a tribal entitlement for the Umayyad **Asabiyyah**. He appointed relatives like **Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh** over Egypt and **Marwan ibn al-Hakam** as a chief minister—noting that some of these figures had been previously ostracized during the Prophetic era. However, the most dangerous move was his decision to **"Free the Companions."** Omar had prevented high-ranking companions from leaving Medina to keep the "Head" in control of the "Elite." Othman allowed them to depart and own estates in the provinces, transforming the companions from "Central Advisors" into "Feudal Lords and Power Centers" in the regions. Here, the features of a **Financial Empire** began to consume the simplicity of the early state.

The Siege of Othman: Opposition Moves to Action

The rebels besieged Caliph Othman in his house in Medina. This siege was a massive political event characterized by organized opposition, direct pressure on the head of authority, a failure of mediation, and the collapse of the center's prestige, ending in assassination. For the first time, the sanctity of the head of authority was broken from within the **Ummah** (The Muslim community) itself. This was the moment the state entered the phase of **Open Internal Conflict**.



Ali and the Caliphate: Legitimacy in a Divided Environment

The succession of **Ali ibn Abi Talib** occurred in a climate of turmoil, division, accusations, and demands for **Qisas** (Retribution/Legal retaliation) for Othman's blood. Thus, the Caliph began his reign while the state was already fractured. The Islamic state under Ali was no longer an environment of "foundation," but an environment of **Deep Crisis**.

The battles of **al-Jamal** (The Camel) and **Siffin** were not mere historical "sedition," but a struggle over the "**Definition of Legitimacy**." For the first time, the state's army faced another army from within the same community. Here, religion transformed into a "**Language of Justification**"; each side raised a divine slogan to mask a purely political decision. The acceptance of **Arbitration** (Tahkim) at Siffin was an admission that the sword alone was no longer sufficient to impose sovereignty, and that political negotiation had returned to rule the scene above the blades of swords.

Consider this terrifying paradox: the number of Muslims who fell by each other's swords within months in the battles of al-Jamal and Siffin (some accounts cite 70,000 at Siffin and 10,000 at al-Jamal) far exceeded the casualties in the long years of war against the Great Byzantine and Persian Empires. These numbers are not just statistics; they are an announcement of the "**Suicide of the Utopian Model**." The sword that was once pointed outward to open the world turned inward to the heart to settle a struggle over the "Chair" and sovereignty.

Religion here did not prevent conflict; rather, it entered the conflict as a set of opposing justifications. It did not overcome tribalism or the power struggle; instead, tribalism returned forcefully, manifesting in the struggle between the **Hashimites** (Ali's clan) and the **Umayyads**. When a state enters an internal war of legitimacy, **Sectarian-Political Divisions** are born. The struggle between Ali and Muawiya was a conflict between the model of a "**State based on Religious Seniority**" (Ali) and a "**State based on the power of Asabiyyah and Tribal Alliances**" (Muawiya).

Conclusion

What we witness in this fracture is not a lack of faith, but a natural "**Sociological Struggle**" in the rise of empires. The state was no longer a puritanical "Missionary Group"; it had become a complex entity where tribalisms, interests, and regionalism clashed.

The slogan "**No Rule but God's**" (La Hukma Illa Lillah), raised by the **Kharijites** (A group that seceded from Ali), was not jurisprudence; it was "**Political Excommunication**" aimed at stripping everyone of sovereignty. We have seen: the assassination of the head of authority, a crisis in the distribution of influence, regional opposition, siege, civil war, and sectarian-political division. The state here did not collapse, but it lost its "**Initial Innocence**."

In the next article, we will see how this bloody chapter concluded with the establishment of the **Umayyad State**, where the Caliphate ended and "**Gripping Monarchy**" (Al-Mulk al-Adood) began.

Ch. 4, From Caliphate to Kingdom: The Birth of the Empire and the "Real-State"

The Umayyad Dynasty

After two decades of civil wars and political fluidity, society reached a point of **"inertia before explosion."** The central question was no longer: "Who is the most pious?" but rather: "Who is most capable of containing this massive expansion?" Here, the Umayyad state was born—not as a religious choice, but as a structural necessity to end the chaos. In this episode, we dismantle the transformation from "Contractual Allegiance" (**Bay'ah**) to "Hereditary Monarchy," and how theology (**Kalam**) was transformed into a tool to serve the authority or to ignite a revolution against it.

The End of Civil War and the Beginning of Forced Stability

The relocation of the capital to **Damascus** was not merely a geographic change; it was a functional transition. The Umayyad state offered "Security" in exchange for "Political Participation." This model was accepted by the public, not out of a love for autocracy, but as an escape from the nightmare of civil war. Here we observe a constant political law: societies exhausted by insecurity prefer a **"Strong State"** over **"Chaotic Democracy."** The Umayyads did not rule by divine revelation, but through the **"Pragmatism of Control."** It was a governance that provided stability in exchange for the old form of legitimacy. This is where the Umayyad state truly began.

The Transition to the Hereditary Pattern

The appointment of a Crown Prince (the **Yazid** model) was the shock that ended the "Utopia" of the Rightly Guided Caliphate. From the perspective of "Critique of Modernity," this shift represented the institutionalization of the state. Instead of elite struggles upon the death of every ruler, the "Family Inheritance" model was adopted to ensure the stability of the empire's infrastructure. The state chose **"Dynastic Stability"** as a sovereign tool to avoid the collapse of the center.

This return to the traditional hereditary form was due to the absence of an institutional model for power transition. This is not an attacking description, but an institutional one: the state chose a model of family continuity over open competition.



Tribal and Ethnic Solidarity (Asabiyyah)

The Umayyads did not rule from Damascus solely by the power of administrative bureaus (**Diwans**), but through the "**Balance of Tribes**." Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan was the "**Architect of Balances**"; he married into the powerful **Yamani** tribes in the Levant to create a shield for his throne. However, this policy was a dangerous gamble, as it linked the state's fate to ancient Pre-Islamic conflicts. The struggle between the "**Qaysites and the Yemenites**" eventually eroded the state's stability.

Furthermore, the Umayyad state did not view the "**Mawali**" (Non-Arab converts such as Persians, Berbers, and others) as equal partners in the nation, but as subjects of the **Quraysh Empire**. This ethnic superiority was the "time bomb" that dismantled the state from within. The concept of "Imams are from Quraysh" evolved from a religious discourse into an "**Exclusive Sovereign Right**," leading to the emergence of two classes: the Arabs (The Masters) and the Mawali (Second-class citizens). Consequently, the Umayyad state was an "**Arab Empire**" more than a "Comprehensive Islamic State." Administration, leadership, and land were exclusive to the Arabs, fueling the resentment that eventually led to the Abbasid Revolution.

The Ideology of "Jabr" and "Qadar" (The Politicization of Creed)

Theology (**Kalam**) was not born in mosques, but in the palaces of rulers and the corridors of the opposition. Theological disputes did not emerge in a vacuum, but in an

environment of authoritarian political conflict and interaction with other cultures and religions.

The Umayyad authority supported "**Jabriyyah**" (Predestinarianism) as political propaganda, claiming: *"We are only the decree of God over His servants."* If the ruler is destiny, then revolting against him is heresy. In contrast, the opposition (**Qadariyyah** and **Mu'tazilah**) raised the banner of "**Free Will**" to justify political responsibility and accountability. Here, we see how "religious information" is transformed into a coercive tool for social control or incitement:

- **Jabriyyah:** Justifies authority through destiny. It posits that humans are "compelled" in their actions, with no independent will. It told the people: *"Be patient, for this is God's judgment"* (to maintain stability).
- **Qadariyyah:** Emphasizes human responsibility. It emerged as a reactive movement, asserting that humans are "free" and have an independent "power" and will to choose their actions. It told the people: *"Take action, for the ruler is responsible for his injustice"* (to legitimize change).
- **The Early Mu'tazilah:** Linked divine justice to the responsibility of the ruler.

During this period, the execution of **Ma'bad al-Juhani** occurred—the first martyr of opinion. He was killed and crucified by the state because he was the first to speak of the Qadariyyah doctrine. He was followed by the killing of **Ghaylan al-Dimashqi** and **Ja'd ibn Dirham**. Thus, the policy of persecuting intellectual dissent became established. The political struggle posed a creedal question: *Is the unjust ruler a divine decree or a human responsibility?* This was not a theoretical question, but a "**State Question.**" It



marked the point where the alliance between the ruler and the cleric took a different turn.

Revolutions and Early Opposition

The Umayyad state was not accepted without resistance. Political revolutions, opposition movements, regional rebellions, and movements with religious-political rhetoric emerged. No Umayyad Caliph was spared from clashes with revolutions against the center in Damascus, except for **Hisham ibn Abd al-Malik**. Crucially, the opposition began to produce an **alternative discourse of legitimacy**, marking the beginning of the formation of oppositional Islamic political thought.

Imported Bureaucracy (Tools of the Empire)

The Umayyad state was not built upon sacred texts alone, but upon the experiences of cities. The Umayyads borrowed Byzantine **Diwans**, the Persian postal system, and Roman tax records. The later Arabization of the bureaus and the minting of coins were declarations of **"Administrative Sovereignty."** Islam was no longer just a "Call" (**Dawah**); it became an **"Ideological Framework"** for an empire managed by a bureaucratic machine inherited from previous civilizations. The Islamic state was not built as a model isolated from history, but through the tools of great powers. It was built through **Administration**, not just through "Text."

Conclusion

The era of "Political Innocence" ended, and the era of the **"Imperial State"** began. The Umayyads did not create a unique system; they followed the traditions of the great states of their time: monarchy, inheritance, and bureaucracy. However, this "forced stability" hid a national and intellectual boiling point that would soon explode in the **"Abbasid Coup."** In the next article, we will see how the revolution devoured its children and how non-Arab nationalities entered to change the face of the state completely, following the first comprehensive coup against this model via the **Abbasid Revolution**.

Ch. 5, The Global Empire: The Labor of Nationalities and the Making of the Muslim Mind.

The Power vs. The Jurist

Imagine waking up to find that the "race" which ruled the world for a century has been completely displaced, and that other languages and ethnicities have begun to manage the levers of power. The Abbasid Revolution was not merely the replacement of one ruling family by another; it was a **"Structural Coup"** that transformed the state from an "Arab Club" into a Global Empire.

The Abbasid Revolution was a "Structural Explosion." While the heads of the Umayyad dynasty fell, other minds were building intellectual systems that would endure for a thousand years. In this article, we will not only discuss palaces but the making of the **"Muslim Mentality."** How were the sects (Madhahib) born from the womb of conflict with authority? How did "Usul" (The fundamental principles of jurisprudence) become the state's secret constitution? And why did the Abbasids fail to maintain the territorial unity that the Umayyads had gathered?

The State of Blood and Shrinking Borders

The Abbasids rose upon the ruins of the Umayyads with excessive bloodshed; **Abu al-Abbas "al-Saffah"** (The first Abbasid Caliph, whose nickname means "The Bloodshedder") showed no mercy even to the dead in their graves. However, the historical paradox is that this state, born in blood, faced a harsh geographic reality: absolute centralization vanished. For the first time, vast territories exited the Caliph's sovereignty; North Africa became independent under the **Idrisids**, and Al-Andalus (Spain) remained Umayyad under **"The Falcon of Quraysh"** (Abd al-Rahman al-Dakhil).

The Abbasid Empire, despite its Baghdadi splendor, never reached the horizontal expanse of the Umayyad state. It was an empire of **"Civilization and Center"** rather than an empire of "Horizontal Expansion."



Abu Muslim al-Khurasani: The Murdered Kingmaker

Here, the role of the Persians as "Kingmakers" emerges. **Abu Muslim al-Khurasani** (The Persian military leader of the revolution) was not just a commander; he was the "National Engine" who mobilized the Eastern armies. However, **al-Mansur** (The second Abbasid Caliph and the real founder of the state) realized early on that the kingmaker is the greatest threat to the king. Thus, Abu Muslim's treacherous assassination was the political tool used to balance the scales of power. The Abbasid state was built on Persian shoulders but feared their growing influence, creating a national "struggle of wings" between the "**Persian Wing**" managing the administration and the "**Arab Wing**" clinging to legitimacy.

National Solidarity (Asabiyyah): Replacement, Not Exclusion

With the construction of Baghdad, the center of gravity shifted from Damascus to the heart of the old **Sassanid** (Ancient Persian) civilization. The rise of the **Barmakids** (A powerful Persian family of viziers) and other Persians within the state's apparatus was not "pluralism" in the modern sense, but rather the replacement of one ethnic solidarity (**Asabiyyah**) with another. The Barmakids monopolized the bureaucracy and administration, marginalizing not only the Arabs but even other ethnicities that participated in the revolution. At its peak, the empire suffered from this ethnic rivalry, which eventually led to the "**Fall of the Barmakids**"—a sovereign act by Caliph Harun al-Rashid to regain absolute control.

The Mind and the Mihrab (The Prayer Niche)

The Crystallization of Shiism: From Revolution to Creed

After the Abbasids betrayed their **Alid** allies (descendants of Ali ibn Abi Talib), the Shia movement began to transform from a "political opposition movement" into a comprehensive "creedal entity." This path crystallized with **Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq** (The sixth Imam and the founding father of Shia jurisprudence). He made a strategic decision to move away from armed confrontation to build an independent "theological and legal school." Here, the concepts of "**Imamate**" (Divine leadership) and divine authority were born as alternatives to the authority of the Caliph, whom the Shia viewed as a usurper. Shiism thus became the "intellectual refuge" for those resentful of the new regime.

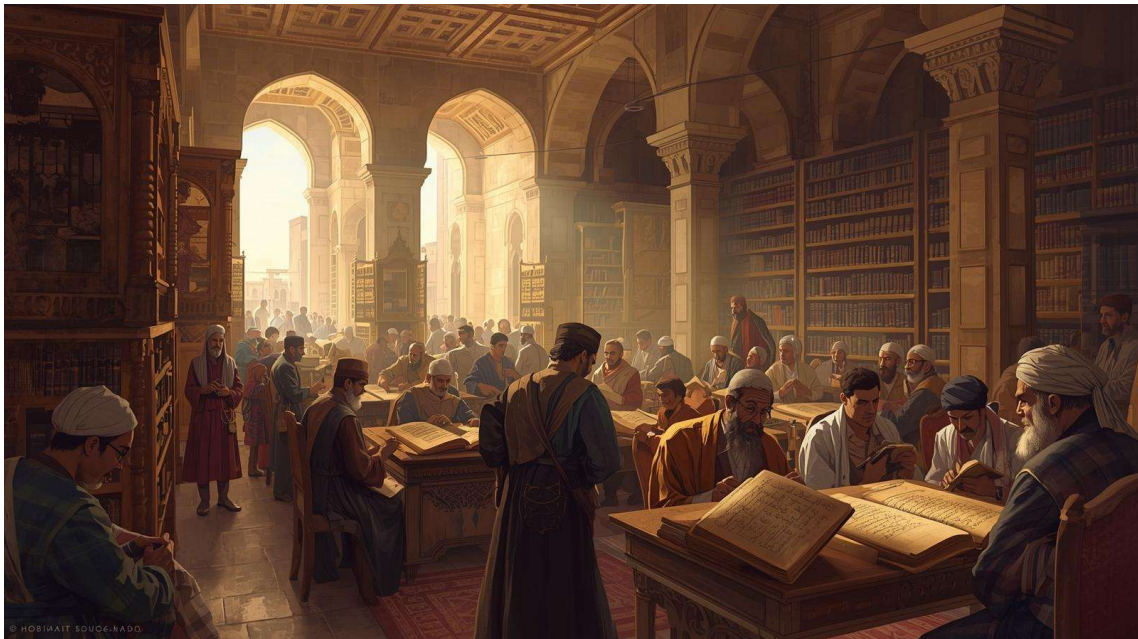
Abu Hanifa and the Four Imams: Politics Over the Pulpit

In Baghdad and Kufa, the "**Sunni Juridical Mind**" began to take shape in the face of authority:

- **Abu Hanifa al-Nu'man:** Represented the "rationality of the merchant-jurist." He relied on analogy (**Qiyas**) and personal opinion (**Ra'y**). He refused to be a "tailor" for the Sultan's laws and died in prison after refusing to serve as a judge for al-Mansur.
- **Malik and al-Shafi'i:** Malik (Founder of the Maliki school) suffered from al-Mansur's brutality, while al-Shafi'i (Founder of the Shafi'i school) was brought in chains to Caliph al-Rashid on charges of pro-Shia sympathies.
- **The Architect of the Sunni Mind:** The greatest shift came with **al-Shafi'i**. Through his book "*Al-Risala*," he established "**Usul al-Fiqh**" (Principles of Jurisprudence) to regulate the religious mind within a framework of (The Quran, Sunnah, Consensus, and Analogy). Al-Shafi'i formulated the "logic" that later stabilized the state and society, transforming jurisprudence from open independent reasoning (**Ijtihad**) into a "disciplined institution." In effect, al-Shafi'i built the "prison of the mind" for the Sunni school, a restriction that later migrated to the Shia school as well.
- **Ahl al-Hadith (The Traditionalists):** Emerged under the leadership of **Ahmad ibn Hanbal** as a "religious conservative" movement. They rejected the introduction of philosophy and Greek logic—championed by the **Mu'tazilah**—into the creed. The conflict between the "People of Opinion," supported by the authorities (like Caliph al-Ma'mun), and the "People of Hadith," supported by the public, was a struggle over: **Who owns the right to interpret the truth? The State or Society?**

The Mu'tazilah: The Dream of Coerced Rationality

While the jurists were building the sects, the **Mu'tazilah** (A rationalist school of theology) were building a "State of Reason." Caliph **al-Ma'mun** adopted this school as the official state ideology. However, al-Ma'mun committed a structural error: he tried to impose "Reason" by the "Sword" through the **Mihna** (The Inquisition regarding the createdness of the Quran). Here, the "State's Reason" clashed with the "Society's Text," represented by Ahmad ibn Hanbal. The Mu'tazilite rationalist dream collapsed under the weight of the clash with the street, and the "Ahl al-Hadith" school triumphed—especially with Caliph al-Mutawakkil's ascension—as the expression of the people's conscience against palace philosophy.



Gold and Paper: The Sovereignty of Knowledge

During the era of **Harun al-Rashid** and **al-Ma'mun**, the state reached the peak of "Knowledge Sovereignty." The translation movement was not a luxury; it was a desire to possess the "Technology of the Mind" (Greek logic) and Persian administration. The state became a patron of science because knowledge was the "**Soft Power**" that supported military hegemony. Golden Age Baghdad did not rule by swords alone, but by logic, gold, and bureaucracy.

Conclusion

The Abbasid era was the "Great Laboratory" of Islamic identity. Within it, Islam transformed from "Fighting Arabism" into a civilization of sects, nationalities, and intellectual currents. The state no longer ruled by the holy text alone, but through "**Political Jurisprudence**." However, the division that began in Damascus was solidified in Baghdad as a structural conflict between race, sect, and mind.

In the next article, we will witness the entry of the "**Turkish Element**" and see how the Caliphs were transformed into mere ghosts in their palaces, while military commanders ruled a torn empire.

Ch. 6, The Breaking of the Center: The Era of Sultans and the Making of Orthodoxy

What happens when the Caliph transforms from an absolute ruler into a mere "hostage" in his own palace? How did the empire shift from a geographic unity into fragmented states divided by ethnicity and sect? In this episode, we deconstruct the great "Structural Coup" in Islamic history: from **Al-Mutawakkil**, who buried the "Mu'tazilite Mind," to the "**Qadiri Decree**" (The first official state creed), which set rigid boundaries for thought. We explore the ordeal of **Al-Tabari**, which revealed the rise of street extremism, and the works of **Al-Ghazali** and **Al-Mawardi**, who respectively shackled logic and legitimized the "ugly reality" of political decay. This is the story of the erosion of politics and the rise of sects as an alternative to the state.

Al-Mutawakkil's Era: The Coup Against Reason

This era began with a political decision that shook the state's foundations. Caliph **Al-Mutawakkil** decided to end the "Mihna" (The Inquisition regarding the createdness of the Quran) and turned completely against the **Mu'tazilah** (The Rationalist school). This stagnation was later codified in the "**Qadiri Decree**" during the reign of Caliph Al-Qadir. This official theological document imposed the "Traditionalist" view and excommunicated dissenters. This was not merely a religious victory; it was a functional shift. The authority abandoned the attempt to "rationalize religion" and embraced "popular traditionalism" to ensure the loyalty of the masses, transforming the state from a patron of science into a "Religious Police."

Al-Mutawakkil's coup extended beyond theology to redefine the state's relationship with its non-Muslim citizens. In 235 AH, he issued the strictest decrees in Abbasid history, forcing Christians and Jews to wear the "**Ghiyar**" (Yellow distinguishing clothes), banning them from riding horses, and destroying newly built churches. This was a calculated move to court conservative forces and construct a "rigid," closed Islamic identity—a precursor to the later policies of Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah in Egypt.



Ghost Caliphs and the Rise of Sultans

In Baghdad, the Caliph no longer held true power. The **Mamluks** (Turkish slave soldiers) brought in by Caliph Al-Mu'tasim became the masters of the palace, assassinating Caliphs and appointing others at will. This central weakness led to the emergence of "Independent States" based on geography and ethnicity:

- **The Tulunids and Ikhshidids** in Egypt.
- **The Hamdanids** (Arabs) in Aleppo.
- **The Samanids and Ghaznavids** in the East (Persia and Central Asia). The empire became a "Sick Man" ruled by military commanders (**Sultans**), while the Caliph remained a mere figurehead, his name mentioned in Friday prayers and struck on coins but possessing no real authority.

The Alliance of Ruler and Cleric: Al-Tabari's Ordeal

The alliance to legitimize power, which began under the Umayyads, reached a more dangerous stage. A politically weak state required the legitimacy of hardline jurists to control the street, making persecution "populist." The best example is **Imam Al-Tabari**, the author of the most significant works of history and Quranic exegesis. He died under house arrest and was buried secretly at night for fear of **Hanbali** mobs (extremist followers of the traditionalist school) who accused him of heresy simply for

acknowledging diverse scholarly opinions. Here, the "extremist street" became the actual ruler under the Sultan's protection.

The Duality of the Era: Natural Philosophers Under Fire

A striking paradox emerged: while jurists were stifling theological reasoning, natural scientists were reaching global heights. **Avicenna (Ibn Sina)**, **Rhazes (Al-Razi)**, and **Alhazen (Ibn al-Haytham)** achieved greatness not because of the official religious establishment, but in spite of it. They lived anxious lives between the palaces of princes who needed their medical and scientific skills, and the accusations of heresy (**Zandaqa**) launched from the pulpits. This created a historical gap between "Experimental Science" and "Religious Thought" that has lasted for centuries.

The Rise of Ash'arism: Institutionalizing the Division

Amidst this political noise, **Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari** emerged. A former Mu'tazilite, he built a school (Ash'arism) that attempted to reconcile "Reason" and "Text." This was the "Middle Way" adopted by the state (especially under the Seljuks) to unify the Sunni front against the expansion of Shia dynasties (the Fatimids and Buwayhids). This solidified what we now call "**Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah**" (Sunni Orthodoxy).

This closure was physically manifested in grand mosques through the appearance of **Four Mihrabs** (prayer niches)—one for each of the four Sunni legal schools. Muslims no longer prayed behind any Imam, but only behind the Imam of their specific sect. Jurisprudence was transformed from a "search for truth" into a "sub-identity" that divided society.

Slave Society and the Making of Mamluks

Socially, slavery spread widely, and slave markets became a staple of the landscape. The state, having lost trust in Arabs and Persians, relied on the **Turkish Mamluks**. These warrior-slaves, who began as palace guards, would soon transform into kings, displacing the Caliphs and beginning the era of Mamluk Sultanates that would rule the region by the sword.

Al-Mawardi: The Jurist of the "De Facto"

How can a jurist legitimize a powerless Caliph and a Sultan who lacks religious legitimacy? **Al-Mawardi**, in his book *"The Ordinances of Government"* (Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyya), provided the legal engineering for this "Ugly Reality." He recognized the "Emirate of Seizure" (**Imarat al-Isti'la**), arguing that whoever holds power (the Sultan) is legitimate as long as he protects the community and upholds the prayer. Al-Mawardi established the pragmatic principle: *"An oppressive Sultan is better than lasting strife (Fitna)."*

Al-Ghazali: Shackling Philosophy

The peak of this intellectual shift came with **Abu Hamid al-Ghazali**. In his book *"The Incoherence of the Philosophers,"* he delivered a fatal blow to Greek philosophy within Islamic thought. Al-Ghazali was the "ideological engineer" for the **Nizamiyya** schools (the first state-sponsored university system). He rearranged the Muslim mind to prioritize **"Bayan"** (revelatory text) over reason, setting strict boundaries on where the mind could wander, leading to long-term intellectual stagnation.

Sectarian Strife: The Streets on Fire

Conflicts in Baghdad were not confined to books; they burned in the streets. Historians describe the bitter civil strife between Hanbalis and Ash'aris, and between Sunnis and Shia. Baghdad was periodically consumed by sectarian riots fueled by politicians to distract from their own incompetence. Religion was transformed from a "spiritual message" into a **"deadly identity"** used for settling political scores.

The Tragedy of Al-Hakim: Extremism as Demographics

In Fatimid Egypt, the reign of **Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah** saw a dramatic shift. He demolished the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and imposed unprecedented restrictions on Egyptian **Copts**, forcing them to carry heavy crosses and banning them from riding horses. This persecution led to the largest wave of conversion to Islam in Egypt's history as people fled the Sultan's tyranny and the burden of the **Jizya** (tax on non-Muslims). This shows how extreme political decisions can permanently alter a nation's demographic map.

Almohad vs. Almoravid: When Creed Breeds Genocide

In the far West (North Africa), **Ibn Tumart**, the founder of the **Almohad** movement, formulated a strict creed based on "Absolute Monotheism" as he interpreted it. For him, the ruling **Almoravids** were not just rivals but "Infidels" and "Anthropomorphists" (those who personify God). This theological framing was a "blank check" for atrocities.

In Marrakesh, the war was not a political battle but a **"Creedal Cleansing."** The Almohads committed mass genocide based on sectarian excommunication decrees (**Takfir**). In just a few days, nearly 70,000 Almoravids were killed—not in a battlefield, but in "executions based on identity." Political ambition wore the mask of creed, turning neighbors into butchers. This was the harshest scene in Islamic history before the arrival of the Mongols.

Conclusion

Episode 6 teaches us that state weakness inevitably leads to the rise of "sub-identities" and sectarian extremism. When strong law vanished, the jurist and the military commander took over. Islam entered a phase of **"Intellectual Encapsulation,"**

attempting to preserve its identity amidst political collapse, but the price was an "open-ended leave for the mind."

In the next episode, we will face the greatest earthquakes: the **Crusaders** from the West and the **Mongols** from the East, and witness how the Mamluk state grew from the ruins of the Caliphate.

Ch. 7, The Era of Fracture: Crusaders, Mongols, and the Fiqh of Siege

What does a society do when faced with annihilation? In this episode, we experience the "Black Comedy" of an era where cities fell and "brothers" allied with "invaders" against one another. From the fall of a fragmented Al-Andalus (Islamic Spain) under the **Taifa Kings**, to the burning of Baghdad by the Mongols, and finally the rise of the **Mamluks** from the womb of slavery to save what remained. In the heart of this rubble, the "Fiqh (Jurisprudence) of Extremism" was born with **Ibn Taymiyya** as a shield for a besieged society, while **Sufism** spread as a spiritual escape for the soul from a hellish reality.

The Taifa Kings: The Al-Andalus That Devoured Itself

While the East was boiling, Al-Andalus provided a profound lesson in "Structural Fall." The once-great Umayyad Caliphate fragmented into 22 "cartoonish" petty states known as the **Taifa Kings** (Reyes de Taifas). Political surrealism was at its peak: Muslim princes paying tribute (Parias) to Christian Castilian kings in exchange for protection against their own Muslim neighbors. Sovereignty here was not for religion or nation, but for the "survival of the throne," even at the expense of history itself.

Black Comedy: When the Compass Was Lost

When the "Franks" (Crusaders) arrived, they did not find a unified nation, but rather warring "fiefdoms." The Black Comedy lay in cross-religious alliances; you could find a Muslim prince allied with a Frankish commander to fight another alliance composed of both Muslims and Franks! The conflict was not always "Crusading" in the field as later Western narratives portrayed it; it was a struggle over feudal estates.

In the midst of this humiliation, the story of the Judge of Damascus (**Abu Saad al-Harawi**) stands out. He went to Baghdad to seek help, but when he found the Caliph and his entourage drowned in luxury, he sat in the Great Mosque on a Friday in Ramadan and ate publicly! When people were shocked by his action, he said: "You wonder at my eating in Ramadan, but you do not wonder at the blood of Muslims being shed?" It was a desperate cry of protest against a clinically dead authority.



The Mongol Earthquake: The End of the Ancient World

If the Crusaders were a pain in the extremities, the Mongols were a cardiac arrest. The fall of Baghdad (1258 AD) was not just the fall of a city, but the end of the "Idea of the Caliphate." Books were dumped into the Tigris until its waters turned black with ink, and the Caliph was kicked to death. This collapse created a massive political and psychological vacuum, leaving society feeling "orphaned," searching for a strong "savior" who possessed the legitimacy of the sword rather than the legitimacy of lineage. The age of "Qurayshi Lineage" (the traditional requirement for a Caliph) ended, and the age of the "**Mamluk Sword**" began.

The Rise of the Mamluks: Sovereignty to the Victor

From the heart of the slave markets discussed in the previous episode, the saviors emerged. The Mamluks, who inherited the Ayyubid legacy, proved that "military competence" was the only remaining legitimacy. At the **Battle of Ain Jalut**, they did not just defend Islam as a creed; they defended their "existence" as a new ruling class. The Mamluk state was a "Military State" par excellence, prioritizing power over ethnic origins.

Ibn Taymiyya & Ibn Khaldun: The Farewell of Reason

In this besieged atmosphere, **Ibn Taymiyya** emerged to establish the "Fiqh of Resistance." He did not come from intellectual luxury but from beneath the smoke of wars. He believed the cause of defeat was "theological dilution," so he revived the "**Ahl al-Hadith**" (Traditionalist) school with unprecedented rigor, founding what would later be known as **Salafism**. Ibn Taymiyya established the "**Fiqh of Siege**"—an aggressive

discourse against the Shia, Sufis, and philosophers—to unify the Sunni front behind a single, rigid theological vision against outsiders.

However, the great tragedy was in science. While **Ibn Khaldun** was writing his "*Muqaddimah*" (The Introduction) as the final gasp of the grand analytical mind, scientific production in medicine, astronomy, and physics was slowing down to a halt. The state's preoccupation with wars and the restriction of education to religious **Nizamiyya** schools caused the Muslim mind to withdraw into "texts and commentaries," entering a tunnel of civilizational darkness at the dawn of the Ottoman era.

Sufism: The Final Sanctuary for the Exhausted Soul

On the other hand, Sufism was spreading like wildfire. When political reality became ugly and bloody, people collapsed inward. The **Zawiyas** (Sufi lodges) became the "alternative society." Sufism provided spiritual solace for the defeated, but it also contributed to numbing political awareness, as salvation became individual and metaphysical, far from the unbearable struggles of the Sultans.

Merchant Expansion: The Islam of Kings (Southeast Asia)

While political Islam was shrinking in Al-Andalus, "Commercial Islam" was expanding in the Indian Ocean. Islam did not enter Indonesia and Malaysia by the sword, but by the "pragmatic ethics" of merchants. History indicates that the conversion of local kings was not always purely spiritual; it was a clever political decision to join the "Global Trade Network" controlled by Muslims and to gain support against local rivals. Islam here was a "passport" into the economic elite club.

The Backlash: Persecution of the "Other"

The Crusades left a deep scar on the relationship between Muslims and Eastern Christians. Historians note that Mamluk periods of weakness saw restrictive measures and persecution that did not exist in the Umayyad or early Abbasid eras. The "Christian neighbor" was viewed by some as a potential "fifth column" for the Franks, leading to waves of social and legal tightening—a direct result of the "Fiqh of Siege" starting to dominate the collective mind.

Conclusion

When civilizations weaken, they give birth to the highest degrees of contradiction: the Mamluk's sword alongside the Sufi's asceticism, and Ibn Taymiyya's strictness alongside the loss of the Taifa Kings. At this stage, the Islamic state lost its central form forever, marking the beginning of the era of "Great Military Empires." In the next and final episode: we will see how the Ottomans inherited this diaspora and how Islam transformed into a "World State" once again, but with a completely different identity.

Ch. 8 The Autumn of the Empire: The Tunnel of Stagnation and the Shock of Awakening

How did scientific creativity fall silent for 500 years after Ibn Khaldun? How did the Ottoman Caliphate transform into the "Sick Man of Europe"? In this final episode of the season, we observe the rise of the Ottomans as a formidable military power and the violent sectarian transformation in Iran under the Safavids. We explore how the prohibition of the "Printing Press" isolated an entire nation from its era, and how Wahhabism emerged to revive the "Fiqh of Siege," leading to the moment of truth before Napoleon's cannons and the final collapse of the Sultanate.

Sovereignty of the Sword: The Ottoman Military Machine

While the East was drowning in the chaos of the Mamluks and fragmented emirates, the Ottomans emerged as a force unprecedented in history for its military organization. They did not just inherit the land; they inherited the **"Legitimacy of the Sword."**

Under Selim I, the Sultanate transformed from a frontier principality in Anatolia into a global empire that swallowed the old capitals of the Caliphate in Egypt, the Levant, and the Hejaz. The Ottomans introduced the concept of the "Central Military Sultanate," where the army was the pillar of the state and the **"Janissaries"** were the invincible strike force. They halted European expansion in the heart of the continent, but this colossal military might came at a heavy price: it lacked the philosophical and spiritual depth that characterized Baghdad or Cordoba. The state became a "fortified castle" protecting Islam, but it was no longer a "lighthouse" producing science.

Engineering Identity: How Iran Became Shia

Before the Safavids, Iran was a country with a clear Sunni majority. However, Ismail I (the Safavid Shah) was not just looking for a kingdom, but for a "distinct nation." By a decisive political decree, he declared **Twelver Shi'ism** as the official state religion.

This was not merely a religious calling; it was **"Forced Identity Engineering."** The Safavids gave the people two choices: "The Sect or the Sword." Historians describe how oratory in mosques and street surveillance were used to impose the new sect. Those who aligned with the ruler survived; those who clung to their heritage faced persecution. This moment proves how absolute power can flip the "people's religion" in a single generation—not necessarily out of spiritual conviction initially, but as a mechanism for political survival and distinction from the neighboring Ottoman environment.

The War of a Million Victims: The Ottoman-Safavid Clash

While Europe was waking up, the East was burning in the fiercest sectarian-national conflict. The clash between the Ottomans (protectors of Sunnism) and the Safavids (protectors of Shi'ism) was not a mere military excursion; it was a **"War of Continuous Annihilation."**

The Battle of Chaldiran (1514) and the conflicts that followed for two centuries were not just army confrontations; they involved the pillaging of cities and villages. Shocking historical estimates suggest that the victims of this extended conflict, between battle casualties and mutual sectarian cleansing in border cities, reached nearly **one million**. This "Million-Victim War" drew the bloody borders between the two neighbors and caused the East to bleed its energies internally rather than facing the coming Western rise.

The Tunnel of Stagnation: When the Mind Stopped

Between the 15th century and the modern era, the Islamic world entered a terrifying intellectual silence. Figures like Avicenna or Ibn Khaldun vanished. Even in religion, no scholars emerged with the weight of the great Imams or Al-Ghazali. Science turned into **"Glosses on the Texts"** (marginalia) and commentaries on commentaries.

The greatest symbol of this closure was the **Prohibition of the Printing Press** for over 200 years. While Europe was printing millions of books and entering the Renaissance, the Islamic world was still copying manuscripts by hand, creating a knowledge gap that has not been bridged to this day.



Wahhabism: The Return to Radicalism

In the heart of the Arabian Peninsula, the Wahhabi movement emerged. Inspired by Ibn Taymiyya's thought from eras of "siege," the first Saudi state was founded on the alliance of **"The Sheikh and the Sword."** Wahhabism revived the concept of **Takfir** (excommunication) against other Muslims under the guise of fighting "innovations and polytheism," launching bloody wars that shook the Ottoman Sultanate and reproduced the "Fiqh of Closure" in its harshest forms.

The Millet System: Stability Under a Ceiling of Discrimination

Under the Ottoman Sultanate, religious minorities lived under what was called the **"Millet System."** The Ottomans granted them autonomy in their worship and personal status laws, but this "administrative tolerance" did not prevent a strict social hierarchy. Christians and Jews remained confined behind the inherited **"Ghiyar"** system; they were forced to wear distinguishing clothes and were forbidden from riding horses or wearing luxury turbans—a constant signal of the subordination of "Dhimmis" to the state. Meanwhile, sectarian minorities (Alawites, Druze, Shias) fared worse, viewed with political suspicion as a "fifth column" in the conflict with the Safavids.

Muhammad Ali and His Son: The Aborted Modernization

Muhammad Ali Pasha emerged in Egypt as a modern force that nearly swallowed the Ottoman Sultanate itself. His son, Ibrahim Pasha, reached the walls of Istanbul (The Sublime Porte) with his army. Here, the great irony occurred: Britain and European powers intervened to save the **"Ottoman Caliph"** from the ambitious Muslim commander! It was not love for the Ottomans, but a desire to keep the center weak until the time came to partition it.



The Shock and Collapse: From Napoleon to the Great War

Contact with the West began as an "electric shock": Napoleon's campaign in Egypt, and interventions in Lebanon and North Africa. Muslims suddenly discovered they were living in the Middle Ages while the enemy possessed cannons and printing presses. The Ottomans attempted reform (**The Tanzimat**), but it was too late. World War I was the final bullet to the "Sick Man," as the Sultanate fragmented and the Caliphate became a memory of the past.

Ibrahim Pasha's Earthquake: When the Christian Rode a Horse

In 1831, an earthquake shook these ancient structures. Ibrahim Pasha entered Damascus as a conqueror, bringing with him not just cannons, but shocking concepts of **"Citizenship."** In a historic moment that broke centuries of tradition, he issued a bold decree: abolishing restrictions on clothing and riding.

Imagine the scene in the alleys of old Damascus: Christians wearing colorful turbans and luxury clothes, riding purebred Arabian horses amidst the shock of traditionalist groups. This was not a change in "fashion"; it was the announcement of the fall of the **"System of Discrimination."** By including minorities in consultative councils, Ibrahim Pasha planted the seeds of the **"Modern State"** where people are equal before the law, not the sect—a shock that paved the way for the Arab Renaissance (Nahda).

Conclusion

With the departure of Ibrahim Pasha and the fragmentation of the "Sick Man," the history of Islam did not end; it entered a new, more complex phase. The political institution (the

Caliphate) fell, but the big questions remained: How do we face Western modernity? Can religion be reconciled with the modern state?

While European cannons were drawing the **Sykes-Picot** borders, there was an intellectual movement under the ashes trying to answer—led by men like **Al-Afghani** and **Muhammad Abdu**, opening an era of "Anxious Enlightenment" before political slogans swallowed the spark of reform.

Ch. 9

The Crossroads: Aborted Enlightenment and the Rise of Ideology

The Shock of Awakening: Al-Afghani's Surgery and Muhammad Abdu's Rationalism

Napoleon's campaign in Egypt was not merely a military invasion; it was a "cognitive earthquake" that woke the East from centuries of slumber. In this atmosphere charged with defeat, **Jamal al-Din al-Afghani** appeared. A man who traversed capitals from Kabul to Paris, he cried out to the Islamic world: "Wake up!" Al-Afghani was not interested in traditional jurisprudence; he was a "political revolutionary" who saw Islam as a tool for liberation from colonialism.

However, the project took a deeper and more serious turn with his disciple, **Muhammad Abdu**. Abdu realized that the ailment lay not just in Western cannons but in the "calcified Muslim mind." He called for liberating thought from the shackles of tradition (stagnant clericalism) and believed that reason and revelation do not collide. He sought a "**Civil Religion**" that respects women, sanctifies science, and reconciles with the constitution. Yet, this "Enlightenment" project was fragile, colliding with the stagnation of Al-Azhar (the traditional clerical institution) on one hand and political ambitions on the other.

Rashid Rida: The Shift Toward Reformist Salafism

After Muhammad Abdu's death, his legacy passed to his student, **Rashid Rida**. However, Rida lacked his mentor's flexibility. With the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate in 1924, the "Reformist Mind" suffered an identity panic. Rashid Rida gradually shifted from "Rational Enlightenment" to "Introverted Salafism." Through his influential magazine, *Al-Manar*, he began pumping ideas that saw returning to the past and adhering to the "Salaf" (the ancestors) as the only way to save the Muslim identity from melting before the West. Rida was the "bridge" over which Islamic movements later crossed from the shore of "Reform" to the shore of "Ideology."

The Birth of "Activism": Hassan al-Banna and the Nationalization of Religion

In 1928, in the city of Ismailia—then under British occupation—**Hassan al-Banna** picked up Rashid Rida's threads and turned them into an "organizational machine." Al-Banna was not a philosopher like Abdu; he was an **"Organizational Engineer."** He moved Islam from being an "individual faith or philosophical inquiry" to becoming "Comprehensive" (The slogan: Islam is the Solution for everything: politics, sports, economy).

Here, **"Activist Islamism"** was born. Religion gained a "secret apparatus," a pledge of allegiance (*Bay'ah*), and the principle of "Hearing and Obedience." Al-Banna replaced the "Critical Mind" with "Organizational Emotion." At this moment, religion began to lose its function as a "moral compass" and became a "political identity card" aimed at reaching power and restoring an "imagined Caliphate."



Mawdudi and Sayyid Qutb: Inventing "Hakimiyya" and Jahiliyya

While Al-Banna was building the organization in Egypt, **Abul A'la al-Mawdudi** in India was founding "Emotional Separation." Mawdudi invented the term **"Hakimiyya"** (God's absolute sovereignty), the idea that any human legislation is "Shirk" (polytheism). This intellectual contagion moved to **Sayyid Qutb** in Nasser's prisons in Egypt.

Qutb went to the extreme, dividing the world into two camps: "Islam" and **"Jahiliyya"** (Pre-Islamic state of ignorance). For Qutb, the contemporary Muslim society was no longer Muslim, but a pagan society from which one must separate "organically and emotionally." This "Qutbist" thought removed the sense of security within societies and transformed the concept of "Jihad" from a defense of borders into a struggle against the

"Infidel Interior." This gave birth to the first seeds of *Takfiri* (excommunicating) groups and the bloody clashes of the 20th century.

The Duality of the "Activist" and the "Cleric": The Struggle for Sovereignty

In the 20th century, the Muslim lived lost between two distorted models:

1. **Clerical (Official) Islam:** Prestigious institutions (like Al-Azhar) fell into the trap of "Functionalism." The cleric became a "state employee" blessing the ruler's decisions and using jurisprudence to numb the masses or suppress opponents. This "**Domesticated Islam**" cost the religious institution its moral prestige.
2. **Activist (Oppositional) Islam:** Movements using religion as "fuel" to reach power. They raise bright slogans but lack any real project for development or freedom and possess no viable theory of state.

The clash between the "Cleric" and the "Activist" was not a struggle over values, but over "who has the right to speak on behalf of God." The ruler uses the cleric, the organization uses victimhood, and the citizen sees their religion reduced to a "beard," a "veil," or a "political slogan," while nations advance in science and technology.

Sectarianizing the Gulf: When the Sect Became a Nuclear Weapon

The rise of "Clerical and Political Islam" cannot be understood without looking at the 1979 Iranian Revolution. It was not just a regime change but the birth of a transnational "Shia Radicalism." The regimes on the opposite shore felt an existential threat.

Instead of facing this challenge with development or democratic projects, the authorities (through their political-clerical alliance) summoned the "**Sectarian Boogeyman**." Billions were pumped into traditional clerical institutions to reproduce a Wahhabi-Salafi discourse that views the "Shia Other" as an eternal enemy. Conversely, Iran did the same by exporting "Shia Victimhood." The sect became a "**Social Nuclear Weapon**." This aimed at one purpose: consolidating power and delaying any political or rights-based demands. The Muslim citizen became fuel in an ideological war where reason was absent, leading to the destruction of social fabrics in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and Lebanon.



Sadat's Deal: When Religion Became a Taming Tool

Regional politics alone were not the driver; "local deals" changed history. In Egypt, President **Anwar Sadat** made a dangerous gamble: his famous deal with the Muslim Brotherhood. The trade-off was clear: Sadat gave them a free hand in society—controlling universities, syndicates, and the streets—and opened media and mosques for them to strike his leftist and Nasserist rivals. In return, they were to provide "religious legitimacy" or neutralize opposition to his political projects, specifically the Camp David Accords.

This deal was the "catastrophe" that legalized the presence of Activist Islamism in the heart of the state, turning it from an opposition thought into a parallel "Social Authority." This moment solidified the "**Clerical-Political Authority**" where religious discourse was used to tame the masses.

The End of the Tunnel: From Afghanistan to the Arab Spring

This ideology peaked in the "Afghan Jihad," where Gulf money met American weapons and Qutbist thought to produce **Al-Qaeda** and later **ISIS**. These distorted entities were the logical result of turning religion into a combatant ideology.

With the explosion of the "Arab Spring," political Islam (like the Brotherhood in Egypt) reached power, but the shock was horrific. People discovered that slogans do not provide bread, and the concept of "Hakimiyya" knows nothing about managing an economy or respecting pluralism. The failure of this experiment has led to what we see today: a state of "fluidity," atheism, or abandoning activist religiosity, and an anxious search for a "**New Islam**" that returns us to the lost values of Muhammad Abdu—an Islam of reason and human dignity, not of a "Supreme Leader" or a "Sultan's Cleric."

Conclusion

In this episode, we have toured over the corpses of grand ideas; we saw how "Reform" turned into an "Explosion." But is there a way out? After all this sectarian and ideological destruction, can the Muslim mind reconcile with modernity without losing its soul? In the tenth and final episode, we will summarize the results of our journey and map the path toward the future.

Ch. 10

The Historical Trial: Toward an Islam Without Idols

The Grand Deception

After nine episodes diving into the blood of conflicts, the corridors of palaces, and the shocks of modernization, we arrive at the existential questions: Is Islam truly "Religion and State" as ideologies promote? Or is it a "Religion" that found itself compelled to build a "State" using purely human tools?

In this final episode, we place our history on the dissecting table to discover how the "State" transformed from a tool to serve the people into an "Idol" worshipped in God's name. Is the Islam that reached us truly the one brought by its founder? Is there really "no priesthood" in Islam as clerics claim, or does history prove that Muslim scholars formed a parallel authority, often allied with the ruler? Most importantly: does Islamic enlightenment have a new chance after the accelerating tragedies facing Muslim nations?

Illusions of the Utopian State: From Saqifah to the Sublime Porte

We saw in early episodes that the Prophet ﷺ left no constitution for governance nor a system for succession. The Umayyad state was not a "Rightly Guided Caliphate" but a realistic empire that borrowed its administration from Byzantium and Persia.

Statehood in Islam did not descend from heaven with a ready-made manual. At the **Saqifah** (the first political gathering after the Prophet), the language of "interests and tribe" was present, not divine texts. History proves that the "Caliphate" was not a theological pillar but an administrative human necessity. The deception began when jurists tried to clothe the "human body of the state" in "divine sacredness"; thus, criticizing the ruler became a criticism of religion, and maintaining the "Throne" became a "Holy Jihad." The state turned from a means to organize life into an idol for which humans are sacrificed to ensure its survival.

Manufacturing the "Sultan's Jurist" and Mental Stagnation

Why did the illusion persist? Because power needed legitimacy, and the jurist needed protection. This gave birth to the "Clerical and Activist" duality. Since the late Abbasid era, the door of **Ijtihad** (independent reasoning) was closed, and a "Jurisprudence of Siege" was born. The jurist transformed from a truth-seeker into a "Justifying Employee" (The Cleric). Conversely, the "Ideological Rebel" (The Activist) emerged, seeking to seize the throne using the same old tools. Both agreed that "the state is religion" to monopolize the right to speak on behalf of Heaven.

The Masked Priesthood: The "No Mediator" Myth

Clerics often repeat: "There is no clergy or priesthood in Islam." But history and reality scream otherwise. The moment the jurist allied with the Sultan, the **"Islamic Priesthood"** was born. Clerics monopolized the "right to interpret" and granted themselves the authority of **Takfir** (excommunication). They formed a parallel authority: the Sheikh grants the ruler "legitimacy," and the ruler grants the Sheikh "protection and wealth." This alliance murdered the rationalist **Mu'tazilite** mind and persecuted **Averroes**. Today, "Clericalism" has become a security institution in religious attire.



Foundational Islam vs. Sectarian Islam

Is what Salafists or Activists practice today truly the Islam of Muhammad ﷺ? The historical journey says: No. Today's Islam is a product of centuries of "sectarian accumulation" and "jurisprudence of necessity" born under the executioner's whip or in the trenches of civil wars. They replaced "Grand Ethical Values" (Justice, Freedom, Dignity) with "Formalities" (Dress, Beards, Rituals). Even Salafism, which claims to return to the origins, actually returns to the "human understanding" of people who lived in eras of decline and stagnation, treating their historical interpretations as divine revelation.

Black Comedy: Sectarian Conflict as a Survival Tool

We saw how 70,000 were slaughtered in Marrakesh and a million died in the Ottoman-Safavid conflict. Was the conflict over "interpreting a verse"? Never. It was a purely geopolitical struggle where the sect was used as "mobilization fuel." History proves that

"politicizing religion" did not protect the faith; it destroyed societies and turned neighbors into enemies, all so the "Throne" could remain standing.

Modern Lessons: The Failure of Ideology

In our modern era, we tried everything: Sadat's deal, the Khomeini revolution, the "Islam is the Solution" slogan of the Brotherhood, and the brutality of ISIS. The result? Political Islam failed to provide a single successful model for a modern state. Why? Because it tries to fly a "Jet Plane" (The Modern State) using a "Medieval Manual." The schism between modernity and medieval jurisprudence led to "flattening religion" and turning it into empty slogans, driving new generations toward confusion or atheism.

Enlightenment: The Last Chance Amidst the Ruins

Does enlightenment still have a chance? The truth is that tragedy may give birth to the solution. The failure of "Political Islam" and the fall of "Clerical Islam" into the trap of state dependency have put the Muslim person before the mirror of truth. Enlightenment today is a "Lifeboat." The new opportunity lies in **"Dissociation"**: freeing religion from the state and purging the state of sectarian utility. It means returning to the ethical core of the message and regarding politics as a human affair managed by reason, science, and law—not by fatwas and incitement.



From History to the Future

We read history to understand it, not to sanctify it. Islam as a religion is fine as long as it resides in the hearts of believers as a source of ethics. As for "Political and Clerical Islam," it is in a historical deathbed. The road to the future begins by demolishing the "Human Idols" who ruled us in the name of the Lord. Sovereignty must be for the Human, Sacredness for Values, and Freedom for the Mind.

Final Conclusion: Toward an Islam Without Chains

What is the way out? It begins by admitting that Islam is a religion of ethics and values, not a catalog for political systems. The method of clerical indoctrination and the sanctification of the ancients against human rights is a war against the freedom of mind.

1. The state is a human social contract, measured by its success in providing freedom, justice, and prosperity.
2. Religion belongs to the conscience and the ethical system that monitors power, but does not merge with it.
3. Clerics are not guardians of people's morals, nor are they mediators between God and man, especially in the age of Artificial Intelligence and scientific explosions.

We wasted 1,400 years trying to "nationalize God" for the sake of a ruler or a party. It is time to return sacredness to God, humanity to the state, and priority to rationality.

Closing Word

Our brief historical journey has ended. But the journey of consciousness starts now. If we want to reclaim the "House of Wisdom," we must first demolish the "Prison of the Sect" and the "Idol of Ideology." History is a school, and its most important lesson: Islam is fine... as long as religious authority—the servant of political power—is far from monopolizing its interpretation.