

Published:
August 31, 2026

From Historical Model to Contemporary Ethical Framework: A Qualitative Textual Analysis of Prophetic Principles for Modern Governance

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Abstract

Modern governance is frequently assessed through institutional capacity, electoral procedure, regulatory performance, and economic delivery, yet these measures alone do not resolve the moral crises produced by corruption, arbitrary authority, social exclusion, and declining public trust. This article reconstructs an integrated ethical framework of governance from the Qur'an, authenticated Prophetic traditions, selected episodes from the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ, and the Constitution of Madinah. Using qualitative textual analysis, it examines five interconnected principles: justice ('adl), consultation (shura), entrusted authority (amanah), answerability (mas'uliyah), and human dignity (karamah). The study addresses a gap in scholarship that often treats these principles separately, describes Prophetic governance primarily as history, or transfers early Islamic institutions directly into the modern state without distinguishing enduring norms from historically contingent arrangements. The analysis finds that Prophetic governance joined moral agency to public institutions: authority was conceived as a trust; justice applied across status and affiliation; consultation disciplined unilateral power; welfare protected vulnerable persons; and covenant organized cooperation within a religiously diverse polity. The article does not claim that seventh-century administrative forms can be reproduced unchanged. It argues instead that their normative logic can inform contemporary constitutional design, public ethics, participation, anticorruption policy, minority protection, and social welfare. A Prophetic ethical framework is therefore best

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understood not as a substitute for modern institutions but as a moral architecture by which institutions may be judged, restrained, and directed toward the common good.

Keywords: Prophetic Governance; Seerah; Justice; Shura; Amanah; Accountability; Constitution of Madinah; Public Trust; Islamic Political Ethics

Introduction

The contemporary crisis of governance is not reducible to a shortage of laws, agencies, technologies, or administrative expertise. Many states possess elaborate constitutions and professional bureaucracies while still experiencing corruption, selective enforcement, exclusion, coercive politics, and profound distrust between citizens and public institutions. Governance becomes ethically deficient when legality is detached from justice, authority from responsibility, expertise from consultation, and state capacity from human dignity. This problem has renewed interest in normative traditions that can supply a moral vocabulary for public power. Within Islamic thought, the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ offers an especially important field of inquiry because the Seerah joins revelation, moral formation, adjudication, diplomacy, social welfare, conflict management, and community building within a single historical experience.

Prophetic governance should not be reduced either to devotional admiration or to a blueprint for mechanically reproducing the institutions of seventh-century Arabia. The first approach praises virtues without investigating their public implications; the second confuses permanent ethical purposes with contingent administrative forms. The more productive scholarly task is reconstructive: to identify the principles expressed across Qur'anic commands, Prophetic decisions, covenants, and practices; to examine how those principles constrained authority and ordered collective life; and to ask how their normative logic may illuminate contemporary problems without erasing historical difference. Such reconstruction treats the Seerah as a source of political ethics rather than as a catalogue of isolated precedents.

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The Qur'an provides the central vocabulary of this framework. It commands the return of trusts and judgment with justice (Qur'an 4:58), requires believers to stand firmly for justice even against themselves or close relatives (4:135), describes consultation as a quality of the believing community (42:38), commands consultation in public affairs (3:159), affirms the dignity of the children of Adam (17:70), and rejects hatred as a justification for injustice (5:8). These directives are not separate moral ornaments. Read together with the Prophetic practice, they establish relationships among authority, public reason, legal equality, covenant, compassion, and answerability before God.

The Prophetic period in Madinah translated these norms into communal arrangements under conditions of diversity, insecurity, economic inequality, tribal rivalry, and external conflict. The Constitution of Madinah organized mutual obligations among distinct groups; the Prophet's consultations before major decisions made public reasoning part of leadership; his legal pronouncements rejected status privilege; his appointment of officials treated office as responsibility rather than possession; and his attention to the poor, debtor, orphan, traveler, and neighbor embedded welfare within the moral purpose of community. The importance of these practices lies not in their superficial resemblance to modern constitutional categories but in the ethical direction they imposed upon public authority.

This article argues that justice, shura, amanah, accountability, and human dignity form an integrated Prophetic framework for governance. Justice defines the end and boundary of authority; shura structures participation and corrects individual judgment; amanah characterizes office as a fiduciary obligation; accountability connects earthly responsibility to transcendent answerability; and dignity determines whose interests government must protect. Covenant supplies the political form through which diverse groups can cooperate without losing their identities. When separated, each principle can be weakened: consultation without justice may legitimize majoritarian abuse; accountability without dignity may become punitive surveillance; trust without

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institutions may remain personal rhetoric; and welfare without participation may become paternalism. Their integration is therefore the principal analytical contribution of the study.

Literature Review and Research Gap

Classical Muslim scholarship did not generally isolate “governance” as a modern academic discipline. Political and administrative questions appeared across Qur’anic exegesis, hadith commentary, jurisprudence, works on public law, mirrors for princes, ethics, and historical writing. Al-Mawardi discussed the imamate, public offices, judicial authority, and market supervision in *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, while Ibn Taymiyyah connected political authority with the discharge of trusts and the establishment of justice in *Al-Siyasah al-Shar‘iyyah*.¹ Ibn Khaldun later examined authority, solidarity, institutional rise, and political decline through a historically attentive sociology. These works demonstrate the breadth of Islamic political reflection, but they emerged after the Prophetic period and addressed institutional circumstances different from both Madinah and the contemporary nation-state.

Modern studies of Islamic political thought have explored sovereignty, consultation, law, leadership, democracy, human rights, and the relationship between religious norms and state institutions. Muhammad Asad and Muhammad Hamidullah read early Islamic sources as resources for constitutional thought, whereas Fazlur Rahman emphasized the extraction of moral objectives from revelation through historically disciplined interpretation.² Khaled Abou El Fadl has argued that justice, mercy, and human moral agency must remain central to the interpretation of authority, while Mohammad Hashim Kamali has examined constitutionalism, freedom, and good governance through the objectives and values of the Shariah.³ These approaches are valuable because they move beyond a narrow identification of Islamic government with a particular regime label.

The Constitution of Madinah has attracted a distinct body of scholarship. Ibn Ishaq’s recension, preserved by Ibn Hisham, remains a major early source, while W.

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Montgomery Watt treated the document as evidence for the formation of the Medinan community. R. B. Serjeant analyzed it as a set of agreements produced in different circumstances, and Michael Lecker offered a detailed study of its text and social setting.⁴ This scholarship supports the document's historical importance but also counsels methodological restraint. The frequently used term "constitution" is modern; the text is better approached as a covenantal arrangement containing political, legal, security, and communal provisions. Its significance does not depend on claiming that it reproduced the institutional form of a contemporary written constitution.

Other research treats the Prophet's leadership through management, conflict resolution, transformational leadership, or public administration. Such studies make the Seerah accessible to contemporary fields, but they sometimes fragment the evidence into lists of leadership traits. Justice, consultation, mercy, strategic intelligence, and trustworthiness can then appear as independent competencies rather than mutually conditioning principles. A managerial vocabulary may also understate the theological dimension of Prophetic authority: public office is not merely a technique for achieving compliance but a trust for which the officeholder is morally answerable.

A further strand presents the Prophetic polity as a ready-made model for modern state reconstruction. It correctly insists that the Seerah has public relevance, yet it may pass too quickly from moral precedent to institutional prescription. Modern states possess mass citizenship, codified bureaucracies, political parties, industrial economies, international legal obligations, and technological capacities that did not exist in early Madinah. Direct institutional equivalence can therefore produce anachronism. Conversely, approaches that confine the Seerah entirely to its original environment risk stripping it of normative relevance. The task is to hold historical specificity and ethical continuity together.

Four gaps emerge from this literature. First, an integration gap remains because justice, shura, amanah, accountability, and dignity are frequently discussed in separate thematic compartments. Second, an application gap appears when scholarship either narrates the

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Prophetic period without developing evaluative criteria for present institutions or invokes it rhetorically without explaining mechanisms of application. Third, a contextualization gap arises when historically contingent practices are insufficiently distinguished from transferable moral purposes. Fourth, a plural-governance gap persists in treatments of the Constitution of Madinah that celebrate diversity without examining the precise ethical relationship among covenant, security, legal responsibility, group identity, and common political obligation.

This study addresses these gaps by constructing a relational framework rather than a list of virtues. It asks what each principle requires, how it limits or supports the others, what historical evidence illustrates its operation, and how it can be translated into contemporary institutional criteria. “Translation” here does not mean copying. It means identifying an ethical purpose and asking what laws, procedures, professional norms, and avenues of participation could reasonably embody that purpose under modern conditions.

Research Questions and Objectives

The principal research question is: How can the interconnected Prophetic principles of justice, consultation, accountability, public trust, and human dignity be reconstructed as a coherent ethical framework for addressing contemporary governance challenges? Three subsidiary questions follow. First, how do the Qur’an, authenticated hadith, the Seerah, and the Constitution of Madinah represent political authority and public obligation? Second, how can universal ethical norms be distinguished from administrative practices shaped by the specific social conditions of early Madinah? Third, what evaluative and institutional implications follow for contemporary governance, particularly in relation to corruption, arbitrary power, participation, minority protection, and welfare?

The study has four objectives: to identify the principal ethical concepts governing public authority in the selected texts; to analyze their interdependence within Prophetic practice; to develop a historically responsible method for translating those concepts into present governance criteria; and to propose recommendations that connect moral aspiration with

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institutional design. The article is interpretive rather than empirical: it does not measure the performance of a particular state, nor does it claim that modern political legitimacy can be derived from a single historical document.

Research Methodology

This study employs qualitative textual analysis. Its primary corpus comprises selected Qur'anic verses directly relevant to trust, justice, consultation, dignity, covenant, responsibility, and welfare; authenticated reports in Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; early Seerah material associated with Ibn Ishaq through Ibn Hisham; and the text commonly known as the Constitution of Madinah. Secondary materials include major historical studies of the Medinan polity and contemporary scholarship on Islamic ethics, constitutionalism, and governance.

The analysis proceeded through four interpretive stages. First, relevant passages were coded under the preliminary concepts of justice, shura, amanah, accountability, dignity, welfare, and covenant. Second, passages were examined relationally to determine how one concept qualified another. Third, historical episodes were read in context, with attention to whether they expressed a general norm, an institutional mechanism, or a decision responsive to a particular circumstance. Fourth, the resulting norms were translated into contemporary evaluative criteria such as impartial law, reason-giving, public participation, transparent office, protection against discrimination, and social inclusion.

Source hierarchy is important. The Qur'an supplies the normative foundation; authenticated hadith provide Prophetic explanation and practice; Seerah reports supply historical context but require greater caution regarding transmission and chronology; and later political writings illuminate reception rather than serving as direct evidence for the Prophetic period. The Constitution of Madinah is used as a historical covenant whose text has received substantial scholarly analysis. Contested questions about its compilation and clauses are acknowledged rather than resolved through confessional assertion.

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The method has three limitations. Textual interpretation cannot by itself demonstrate that a contemporary institution will achieve its intended effect. The selected corpus does not exhaust the political implications of the Qur'an and Sunnah. Finally, movement from historical example to present policy necessarily involves judgment. These limitations are addressed by making the translation process explicit and by framing the conclusions as ethical criteria, not as claims of institutional identity.

Authority as Amanah: The Moral Constitution of Public Office

The Qur'anic command to deliver trusts to those entitled to them and to judge with justice (4:58) joins appointment and adjudication in one moral sentence. Authority is thus not private property, inherited privilege, or an unrestricted mandate. It is an amanah: something held on behalf of another and governed by obligations intrinsic to the trust. In political terms, the community's security, wealth, rights, and institutional resources are placed temporarily in the hands of officeholders. The holder does not become their owner.

Prophetic teaching deepens this fiduciary conception. The well-known hadith that every person is a shepherd and responsible for those under his or her care locates answerability across social roles, including the ruler's responsibility for the people.⁵ Responsibility is not exhausted by formal jurisdiction. It includes care, protection, and the consequences of decisions for person whose interests have been entrusted to the decision-maker. Another report records the Prophet ﷺ warning Abu Dharr that public office is a trust and may become a cause of regret for one who assumes it without fulfilling its obligations.⁶ Competence and moral capacity are therefore relevant to appointment; good intention alone is insufficient.

This principle challenges personalization of the state. When rulers treat public funds, appointments, information, or coercive agencies as extensions of personal loyalty, amanah has been displaced by possession. Nepotism is ethically objectionable not only because it may reduce efficiency but because it diverts an entrusted good from its rightful

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beneficiaries. The same reasoning applies to patronage, undisclosed conflicts of interest, procurement manipulation, and the selective use of official information.

Amanah also has an institutional dimension. Modern governance cannot depend on the personal virtue of a ruler alone. Fiduciary responsibility must be embodied in transparent recruitment, declared interests, procurement rules, independent audit, access to information, and enforceable limits on discretionary power. These mechanisms are not alien additions to Islamic ethics; they are plausible contemporary forms for protecting the underlying trust. Institutions convert moral expectation into regular practice and make breach detectable.

Yet institutionalization should not evacuate character. A technically compliant official may exploit loopholes while avoiding formal sanction. Prophetic ethics therefore joins external regulation to inward consciousness of answerability before God. The distinctive contribution of amanah is precisely this double structure: office is subject to public rules, but the official is also responsible for motives, concealment, and harm that law may fail to detect. Modern compliance systems are strengthened, not replaced, by this moral interiority.

Justice and Equality before the Law

Justice is the governing end of the framework. Qur'an 4:135 demands steadfast witness even when the outcome is adverse to oneself, parents, relatives, rich, or poor. Qur'an 5:8 prohibits hostility toward a people from producing injustice. Together these verses dismantle two recurrent distortions: favoritism toward one's group and punitive unfairness toward an opponent. Justice is not loyalty applied to allies; it is a discipline that becomes most visible when impartiality is costly.

The Prophetic response to an attempt to intercede for a woman of high social standing from Banu Makhzum illustrates legal equality. The Prophet ﷺ rejected the intercession and warned that earlier peoples were ruined when they punished the weak while excusing the noble.⁷ The report is often cited as a general statement of equality before law, and its

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ethical logic is clear: status cannot convert wrongdoing into immunity. Its modern implications include prosecutorial independence, equal application of criminal and administrative law, and safeguards against elite capture.

Justice in the Prophetic model is not confined to punishment. Adjudicative fairness requires evidence, an opportunity to be heard, and caution concerning the limits of human judgment. The Prophet ﷺ explained that litigants might present their cases with unequal eloquence and that an erroneous judgment in someone's favor would not transform another's right into lawful property.⁸ This statement recognizes the fallibility of procedure while preserving moral responsibility. Courts and officials require procedures, but a favorable decision obtained through deception does not become ethically legitimate merely because it is legally final.

The prohibition on injustice toward opponents has exceptional relevance for polarized states. Emergency, security, and conflict frequently become contexts in which authorities relax ordinary protections. Qur'an 5:8 refuses this moral exception. A Prophetic criterion for governance would therefore ask whether surveillance, detention, policing, taxation, and access to services remain subject to law when directed at unpopular minorities or political adversaries. The legitimacy of public power is tested at its margins.

Justice also contains distributive and social dimensions. The Qur'an's repeated protection of orphans, the poor, debtors, travelers, and those excluded from wealth challenges a governance model that celebrates aggregate growth while tolerating avoidable deprivation. Zakat and other Prophetic welfare practices belonged to a particular legal and economic environment, but their normative purpose is wider: wealth carries social obligation, vulnerability creates public claims, and communal solidarity must take organized form. Contemporary equivalents may include equitable taxation, social protection, universal access to basic services, and focused support for structurally disadvantaged groups.

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The framework therefore rejects a false choice between rule of law and social justice. Impartial procedure without attention to structural exclusion can preserve unequal outcomes, while redistributive purpose without legal restraint can enable arbitrary power. Prophetic justice requires both: rules that restrain favoritism and public action directed toward human welfare.

Shura and Participatory Public Reason

The Qur'an associates believers with conducting their affairs through consultation (42:38) and instructs the Prophet ﷺ to consult his companions in affairs (3:159). Consultation is significant precisely because Prophetic leadership possessed exceptional religious authority. If consultation was meaningful in that setting, ordinary rulers cannot plausibly treat their judgment as self-sufficient. Shura establishes an ethic of epistemic humility: public decisions affect multiple groups, knowledge is dispersed, and authority needs correction.

Seerah narratives illustrate consultation in military and civic matters. Before the Battle of Uhud, the Prophet ﷺ considered views favoring defense within Madinah and views favoring movement outside the city; he adopted the latter position despite his initial inclination.⁹ At al-Khandaq, the defensive trench is associated with Salman al-Farisi's advice, demonstrating openness to useful knowledge beyond established Arabian practice. Such examples should not be romanticized as modern parliamentary procedure, but they show that leadership incorporated reasoned input and could act on counsel originating outside the leader's own preference or cultural repertoire.

Consultation is not equivalent to ceremonial listening. Its ethical value depends on whether participants have access to relevant information, freedom to disagree, and some prospect of influencing the outcome. Managed consultation that merely confirms a predetermined decision may satisfy appearance while violating purpose. The Prophetic model also links consultation to gentleness and forgiveness in Qur'an 3:159, suggesting that a climate of humiliation or fear destroys meaningful participation.

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Modern application requires multiple forms. Elections can authorize leadership, but shura extends beyond periodic voting. Legislative deliberation, public hearings, local councils, professional consultation, judicial review, civil-society participation, and avenues for petition all distribute knowledge and expose decisions to criticism. Digital platforms can broaden access, though they also risk manipulation, exclusion, and surveillance. The ethical test is whether participation is informed, inclusive, consequential, and protected. Shura does not mean that every question is decided by simple majority. Rights and justice constrain collective preference. A majority cannot make discrimination just, nor can consultation legitimize breach of covenant. Expertise also matters: complex health, environmental, economic, or technological decisions require competent knowledge. A contemporary Prophetic framework would therefore combine democratic participation, expert evidence, and rights-based limits. Consultation supplies public reason; justice supplies its moral boundary; amanah requires decision-makers to explain how they used the advice received.

Accountability and Answerability

Accountability in Prophetic ethics operates vertically and horizontally. Vertically, all authority is answerable to God; horizontally, officeholders owe duties to the people affected by their decisions. The first prevents the state from becoming the ultimate source of right, while the second prevents religious language from shielding officials against public scrutiny. Accountability is not only punishment after failure. It includes explanation, correction, restitution, and removal where trust has been seriously breached. The Prophetic warning against seeking office for self-aggrandizement and the careful assignment of responsibilities indicate that public position is morally hazardous.¹⁰ This orientation reverses the prestige economy of office: leadership is measured by discharged obligations rather than symbolic rank. It also exposes the ethical problem in personality-centered politics, where loyalty to a leader displaces evaluation of conduct.

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Financial accountability is integral to this principle. In a report concerning an official who returned from collecting alms and identified part of what he received as a personal gift, the Prophet ﷺ publicly questioned whether the gift would have been offered had the official remained in his parents' home.¹¹ The reasoning anticipates the modern concept of conflict of interest. A benefit formally labeled a "gift" may be ethically connected to office and therefore belong to the public domain or require prohibition and disclosure.

Contemporary states need auditable systems: clear budgets, traceable procurement, asset declarations, independent oversight, whistleblower protection, complaint mechanisms, and accessible reasons for administrative decisions. Yet transparency must be meaningful rather than performative. Publishing unusable data or overwhelming citizens with technical material can conceal as effectively as secrecy. Amanah requires intelligibility; shura requires information that enables participation; justice requires remedies when wrongdoing is established.

Accountability also applies to citizens and organized groups. Covenant creates reciprocal obligations, and public ethics cannot be sustained if every actor demands rights while refusing lawful responsibility. Nevertheless, the state bears special responsibility because it controls coercive power and public resources. The stronger the power, the more demanding the mechanisms of review must be. Prophetic accountability thus supports differentiated responsibility rather than a vague claim that everyone is equally at fault.

Human Dignity, Mercy, and Social Welfare

Qur'an 17:70 affirms that God has honored the children of Adam. The breadth of the formulation grounds dignity in humanity rather than wealth, ethnicity, office, or communal dominance. Prophetic practice repeatedly connected this moral worth with mercy. The instruction to show mercy to those on earth, the protection of neighbors, and concern for servants, widows, orphans, and the poor place vulnerable persons near the center of communal responsibility.¹²

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Dignity limits the means by which governments pursue legitimate goals. Security does not authorize torture, humiliation, collective punishment, or indefinite suspicion. Welfare administration should not degrade recipients. Public communication should not dehumanize minorities, migrants, political opponents, or persons accused of wrongdoing. A dignitarian state evaluates not only what policy delivers but how persons are treated throughout the process.

Mercy does not nullify justice. Rather, it guards justice against cruelty and indifference. The Prophet's general practice of forgiveness after the conquest of Makkah is frequently invoked as moral leadership, but its broader significance lies in preventing victory from becoming vengeance. Political transitions often reproduce violence because incoming groups treat power as an opportunity for retaliation. Prophetic mercy suggests mechanisms of reconciliation, proportionate accountability, and restoration that protect society without normalizing impunity.

Social welfare is a practical expression of dignity. Hunger, untreated illness, exclusion from education, and exploitative debt restrict a person's capacity to participate in communal life. A Prophetic framework therefore evaluates budgets as moral documents. Expenditure on prestige, coercion, or elite benefit must be judged against unmet basic needs. This does not produce one compulsory economic model, but it establishes priorities: protection of life, family, intellect, property, faith, and dignity; circulation rather than concentration of wealth; and special attention to those least able to convert formal rights into real opportunity.

Gender justice must also be included in this analysis. The Prophetic reform of women's legal and social position occurred within a seventh-century context, yet its ethical direction challenged treatment of women as property, recognized financial and marital rights, and affirmed moral agency. Contemporary invocation of Prophetic governance is incomplete if women are praised symbolically while excluded from education, expertise,

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consultation, or public decision-making. Shura and dignity require meaningful access, not token representation.

The Constitution of Madinah and Plural Governance

The migration to Madinah placed the emerging Muslim community within a city marked by tribal divisions, Jewish groups, polytheists, alliances, and unresolved violence. The document known as the Constitution of Madinah sought to order this environment through a series of commitments concerning security, blood liability, mutual defense, religious affiliation, dispute resolution, and opposition to wrongdoing. Its text has been preserved through the Seerah tradition and subjected to extensive historical analysis.¹³

The document's description of participating groups and its recognition that the Jews had their religion and the Muslims theirs demonstrate that common political obligation did not require erasure of religious identity. It established a covenantal space in which distinct communities could share security responsibilities and rules of peace. This does not map perfectly onto modern equal citizenship, and scholars differ over the document's compilation, chronology, and exact social reach. Its importance is therefore ethical and historical rather than a claim of institutional equivalence.

Covenant contributes three elements to the integrated framework. First, political order is relational: groups accept duties toward one another rather than existing merely under unilateral command. Second, security is shared; treachery and aggression threaten the entire community. Third, disputes require an acknowledged procedure and authority rather than cycles of tribal retaliation. In modern terms, these elements support constitutional commitment, equal protection, civic responsibility, and lawful conflict resolution.

Plural governance requires more than tolerance understood as the majority's discretionary permission. Amanah obliges the state to protect all persons within its covenant; justice prohibits discrimination rooted in hostility; dignity attaches to every human being; and shura requires that affected communities possess a voice in decisions. Religious freedom,

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security of places of worship, fair access to public services, and protection from collective blame are thus not external concessions but implications of the framework itself.

At the same time, responsible interpretation must acknowledge historical conflict between the Medinan community and particular Jewish tribes rather than using the covenant as a slogan detached from later events. Political agreements can break down amid war, contested loyalty, and competing narratives. The lesson is not that pluralism is effortless but that covenant needs credible institutions, agreed procedures, and reciprocal compliance. Modern states should avoid translating specific wartime judgments into permanent suspicion toward religious communities.

An Integrated Ethical Framework for Contemporary Governance

The five principles can now be stated as an integrated model. Justice supplies the public purpose and non-discrimination rule. Shura supplies epistemic openness and participatory procedure. Amanah supplies the fiduciary conception of office. Accountability supplies review, explanation, and remedy. Dignity supplies the human baseline that policy may not violate. Covenant connects these principles across a diverse political community.

Their integration matters because each principle corrects possible misuse of another. A leader may invoke amanah to claim personal righteousness while resisting audit; accountability requires verification. A government may hold consultations while excluding minorities; dignity and justice require inclusion. A majority may demand a policy through consultation; covenant and rights constrain discriminatory outcomes. A welfare program may distribute benefits while humiliating recipients; dignity governs implementation. An anticorruption campaign may punish selectively; justice requires impartial enforcement.

For constitutional governance, the framework favors limited and answerable power rather than sacralized rulers. No contemporary officeholder shares Prophetic authority. Invoking religion cannot elevate a ruler beyond criticism; it increases the duty to satisfy ethical

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constraints. Separation or distribution of powers, an independent judiciary, lawful succession, and review of executive action are defensible institutional expressions because they reduce the probability that entrusted power will be converted into domination.

For public administration, the framework favors merit-based appointment, service orientation, reason-giving, and conflict-of-interest regulation. Administrative discretion is unavoidable, but it should be guided by published criteria, reviewable decisions, and avenues of complaint. Officials need both technical competence and ethical formation. Training in rules without character produces formalism; moral exhortation without controls produces vulnerability to abuse.

For anticorruption policy, the framework shifts attention from spectacular prosecution to systems of prevention. Transparent procurement, asset disclosure, digital audit trails, independent investigation, protection for reporting wrongdoing, and clear rules concerning gifts embody the Prophetic concern with office-related benefit. Enforcement must be even-handed; otherwise anticorruption becomes an instrument against opponents and violates the justice it claims to defend.

For democratic participation, shura encourages continuous engagement rather than electoral minimalism. Local institutions are especially important because citizens experience governance through schools, policing, land administration, utilities, and municipal services. Participation should include women, minorities, persons with disabilities, youth, and economically marginalized communities. Consultation becomes meaningful when authorities publish proposals early, provide accessible information, respond to objections, and explain final decisions.

For digital governance, the framework offers an urgently needed moral test. Data and artificial intelligence can improve service delivery, but they can also centralize surveillance, reproduce bias, and make decisions opaque. Amanah treats data as entrusted rather than appropriable; justice requires testing for discriminatory effects; shura requires

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public deliberation over high-risk uses; accountability requires explainability and appeal; dignity prohibits treating persons as mere predictive profiles. Prophetic ethics therefore remains relevant even where the technology is entirely new.

For international and intercommunal relations, covenant emphasizes fidelity to agreements. The Qur'an repeatedly commands fulfillment of covenants, and Prophetic diplomacy relied on negotiated commitments even amid conflict. Modern governments should treat treaties, constitutional guarantees, and public promises as moral obligations rather than disposable tactics. Faithful commitment stabilizes expectations and transforms trust from sentiment into a political resource.

Discussion

The analysis shows that Prophetic governance is best reconstructed as a moral architecture rather than a fixed constitutional template. This finding resolves a persistent tension in Islamic political discussion. If the Medinan polity is treated as a complete modern state model, interpretation becomes anachronistic and may force contemporary institutions into categories they did not historically possess. If it is treated only as sacred history, its public norms become inert. Ethical reconstruction preserves authority without collapsing difference.

The framework also challenges the separation of virtue ethics from institutional analysis. Prophetic texts address character—truthfulness, patience, mercy, humility—but public power creates structural temptations that personal virtue alone cannot control. The hadith concerning official gifts is powerful precisely because it applies a structural test: would the benefit have arisen without the office? Similarly, consultation is not simply the leader's friendliness; it requires practices through which knowledge and disagreement can affect decisions. The Prophetic model points toward an interaction between moral agents and accountable systems.

A further finding is that pluralism is not an isolated theme. It follows from the convergence of justice, dignity, and covenant. The Constitution of Madinah shows a

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political community seeking coordinated order without immediate religious homogenization. Contemporary citizenship goes beyond the document's historical structure, but the covenantal logic provides an Islamic argument against treating minorities as permanent outsiders. Equal citizenship can be defended as a modern institutional realization of impartial justice and shared political obligation.

The framework is also compatible with institutional learning across civilizations. The adoption of Salman's trench proposal illustrates openness to effective knowledge. Nothing in amanah requires administrative isolation; entrusted authority must seek the best lawful means of serving the public. Muslim societies may therefore learn from global experience in judicial independence, auditing, social protection, deliberative democracy, and rights protection while evaluating those mechanisms through their own moral commitments.

The principal danger is rhetorical appropriation. Governments may invoke Prophetic language while suppressing consultation, shielding elites, or discriminating against vulnerable groups. The integrated model reduces this risk by establishing cross-checks. A claim to Islamic governance must be evaluated through observable commitments: Are laws applied equally? Can officials be investigated? Are public reasons supplied? Can citizens disagree without fear? Are minorities secure? Do budgets protect dignity? Ethical vocabulary without institutional evidence is insufficient.

Findings and Results

First, the selected sources consistently represent authority as an entrusted responsibility rather than unrestricted ownership. This establishes a fiduciary basis for office and supports competence, transparency, and conflict-of-interest controls. Second, justice is both procedural and substantive: it requires impartial law while directing public concern toward vulnerable persons. Third, shura is a discipline of leadership that recognizes distributed knowledge and makes disagreement valuable; its contemporary expression requires inclusive and consequential participation.

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Fourth, accountability combines transcendent answerability with public mechanisms of explanation, review, and remedy. Religious consciousness cannot substitute for audit, and audit cannot fully replace character. Fifth, dignity supplies a universal baseline that limits coercion and guides welfare. Sixth, the Constitution of Madinah provides evidence of covenantal political organization across religious difference, though it should not be equated uncritically with a modern constitution. Seventh, the principles are most powerful when integrated: each prevents the others from being reduced to rhetoric or misused in isolation.

The study therefore answers its principal question by proposing a six-part evaluative test for modern governance: public authority must be entrusted, impartial, consultative, reviewable, dignitarian, and covenant-faithful. These criteria do not determine every policy outcome. They establish moral boundaries and procedural duties within which legitimate policy disagreement can occur.

When these principles become evaluative standards rather than ceremonial language, Prophetic ethics can enrich constitutionalism, public administration, social welfare, minority protection, and digital governance. The resulting framework does not eliminate political disagreement. It makes disagreement morally accountable and directs governance toward service rather than domination. In that sense, the Prophetic model remains historical in form, universal in ethical aspiration, and urgently contemporary in its challenge to public power.

The enduring relevance of the Seerah lies in this moral integration. Contemporary institutions differ radically from those of early Madinah, but corruption, exclusion, arbitrary power, fear, and betrayal of trust remain recognizable human problems. A faithful contemporary application must therefore preserve normative purpose while designing institutions suited to present realities. The question is not whether a modern state looks administratively identical to Madinah. It is whether its power is restrained by

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justice, exercised as trust, opened to consultation, subjected to accountability, directed toward dignity, and faithful to its covenants.

Prophetic governance offers neither a license for sacralized authority nor a museum of inaccessible precedents. Read through qualitative textual analysis, it supplies a demanding ethics of public power. Authority is amanah, not possession; justice applies beyond loyalty and hostility; consultation corrects individual judgment; accountability joins conscience to public review; dignity protects every human person; and covenant enables cooperation across difference.

Conclusion

Recommendations

Muslim-majority states and Islamic institutions should articulate governance ethics through measurable standards rather than symbolic declarations. Constitutional and statutory provisions should strengthen judicial independence, equal protection, transparent appointment, legislative oversight, and peaceful transfer of authority. Public bodies should adopt enforceable rules on gifts, assets, procurement, conflicts of interest, and disclosure, drawing on the Prophetic distinction between personal benefit and office-generated advantage.

Consultation should be institutionalized through open legislative processes, empowered local councils, accessible public hearings, and mandatory responses to significant stakeholder concerns. Participation must include groups historically excluded from decision-making, particularly women, minorities, youth, and economically marginalized communities. Religious scholars, legal experts, social scientists, and affected citizens should contribute without any single group claiming immunity from public reason.

Governments should conduct dignity and justice assessments for security, welfare, and digital policies. High-risk data systems should be independently audited for bias, necessity, proportionality, and avenues of appeal. Welfare programs should protect

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privacy and avoid humiliating conditions. Security agencies should remain subject to law, civilian oversight, and effective remedies.

Educational institutions should teach Prophetic governance comparatively and critically. Students need access to Qur'anic norms, authenticated hadith, Seerah evidence, historical scholarship, and contemporary institutional analysis. This approach can replace both uncritical idealization and dismissive historicism with disciplined ethical reasoning.

Finally, researchers should test the framework empirically. Comparative studies could examine how public institutions operationalize trust, consultation, and dignity; citizen research could investigate whether explicitly ethical reforms improve legitimacy; and policy studies could evaluate which institutional forms best translate Prophetic purposes under different constitutional settings.

Endnotes

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Published:

August 31, 2026

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