

A HISTORICAL AND THEORETICAL APPROACH TO THE REESTABLISHMENT OF A MEDINA-CENTERED ISLAMIC POLITICAL UNION

Dr. Mevlüt POYRAZ

Assoc. Prof., Faculty of Theology, Department of Islamic History and Arts,
Artvin Çoruh University, Artvin, Turkey.

Email: mevlutpoyraz@artvin.edu.tr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8832-248X>

Abstract

This study addresses the necessity of political unity in the Islamic world within a historical context and through religious references, discussing whether a Medina-centered governance model can be reestablished. The loss of Medina's status as an administrative center during the era of Ali and the subsequent decision by no Muslim state to designate it as a capital is considered a significant rupture in terms of both political and religious unity.

In this framework, Abdullah b. Salam's warning that Medina could never again be the center of the caliphate aligns with historical developments. However, another narration attributed to him states that Ali would never return to Medina, and based on this interpretation, the study opens a discussion on the possibility of Medina once again becoming a center of governance in the future. In line with Quranic verses and the practices of the Prophet, the need for Muslims to rebuild the spirit of unity is emphasized.

In this context, the proposed "Council of the Union of Islamic States of Medina" is presented as a governance model based on justice and compassion, capable of addressing the religious, political, and legal issues of the ummah. This structure aims to unite the shared values, historical legacy, and contemporary political needs of the ummah, offering an alternative perspective that holds promise for both the Islamic world and humanity.

Keywords: Union of Islamic States, Medina model, Caliphate.

Introduction

The Islamic world, which comprises approximately one-third of the global population, is deeply fragmented both politically and internally due to sectarian, communal, and spiritual divisions (such as sects, religious communities, and orders). This fragmentation significantly facilitates the efforts of actors driven by imperialist ambitions to exploit Muslims and other oppressed peoples around the world. Considering Islam's emphasis on human dignity, the current state of Muslim societies is incompatible with both Islamic and humanitarian honor. The destiny of a believing community that seeks dignity and honor solely in the sight of Allah should not be as it is today. The divine command, "...do not dispute and [thus] lose courage..." (Al-Anfal, 8:46), is being directly experienced by Muslims across the globe today.

The fragmented, weak, and powerless condition of Muslim societies is a widely acknowledged reality. When Muslims forget the calls for unity found in the book they believe in and the prophet they follow, divisions among them become almost customary. These divisions have historically paved the way for internal conflicts and external pressures from non-Muslims,

ultimately becoming a major source of distress for Muslim communities. For centuries, thousands—perhaps millions—of Muslims who profess belief in the same faith, worship the same God, and follow the same holy book and prophet, have fought and shed blood due to ignoring divine commands. This bloodshed, whether in small or large amounts, has continued for generations. Meanwhile, non-Muslims observing the fragmented state of Muslim communities have turned this situation to their advantage, perpetrating various forms of oppression against Muslims across many regions. Similar circumstances persist today: some suffer at the hands of terrorist organizations that claim to represent Islam and use it as a shield, while others face oppression from non-Muslim authorities simply because of their Muslim identity. In the face of these developments, conscientious Muslims are often limited to sympathizing with the oppressed and protesting against the oppressors. However, such reactions do not contribute meaningfully to resolving the underlying problems.

Naturally, individuals who question this situation ask the fundamental question: “What can be done? Is there a solution to this?” It becomes evident that unless Muslims achieve political and religious unity, they will be unable to eliminate the threats posed by groups that commit violence in the name of Islam or the oppression inflicted by non-Muslims. This study offers brief evaluations of how Muslims have arrived at this point and how they might overcome it. The central thesis of the study proposes that political unity among Muslims can be achieved through the reestablishment of a Medina-based governance model—namely, the Union of Islamic States of Medina.

On the Process of Fragmentation and Division Among Muslims

To identify how Muslims have arrived at their current state, it is essential to briefly examine their political-historical trajectory, beginning with periods of unity. This approach allows for a clearer understanding of the processes of division. Looking at Islamic history, the existence of the Medina Islamic State—established by the Prophet and encompassing all local tribes and principalities on the Arabian Peninsula, whether they accepted Islam as a faith or not—stands out as a historical reality in which these groups submitted to a common authority. Within this state, the period of the Prophet, when political unity among Muslims was strong, and especially the era of Caliph Umar, marked by internal stability and institutionalization of the Medina Islamic State, are particularly noteworthy. These periods of stability serve as critical reference points when compared to the subsequent emergence of unrest, factionalism, the abandonment of Medina as the caliphate center, the transformation of governance into monarchy, and the broader state formation processes. Politically robust, the Medina Islamic State expanded its domain significantly during the era of the Four Caliphs—especially during the early phase of Caliph Uthman’s rule. However, the rapid expansion through conquests led to various internal challenges, resulting in political turmoil. Over time, this turmoil gave rise to numerous sectarian and political divisions.

The Departure of Medina from Its Role as the Administrative Center

Following the martyrdom of the third Caliph, Uthman, at the hands of a rebellious group, Ali assumed the caliphate under extraordinary circumstances. Unexpectedly, he faced opposition from prominent companions, including Aisha, the Mother of the Believers, and this tension escalated into military conflict. As a result of these political developments, Ali left Medina, appointing Sehl b. Hunayf as his successor (Sallabi, 2008, p. 436). According to sources, Abdullah b. Salam encountered Ali near the region of Rabadhah and warned him: “O

Commander of the Faithful! Do not leave Medina. By Allah, if you depart from here, the authority of the believers will never return to Medina” (Tabari, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 455; Ibn al-Athir, 1965, Vol. 3, p. 222; Ibn Hajar, 1328, Vol. 2, p. 321; Halabi, 1980, Vol. 2, p. 326). Another narration quotes a similar warning: “Do not go to Iraq! You must not leave the Prophet’s pulpit. By Allah, in whose hand is my soul, if you abandon this mihrab now, you will never see it again” (Dhahabi, 1996, Vol. 6, p. 147; Poyraz, 2021, pp. 111–112).

Historical developments show that these warnings did not alter Ali’s decision. His disregard for these appeals may be attributed to several reasons. Ali likely foresaw that any army sent in his place would lack his patience and moderation, and instead fall into the trap of agitators, engaging in indiscriminate warfare. He could not entrust this conflict to a group that intended to treat Aisha as a prisoner and considered Muslim property as spoils and captives as slaves. Moreover, he may have feared that these individuals would collaborate with dissenters in the opposing army and turn against him. Therefore, ignoring these warnings was not negligence or indifference, but rather a strategic necessity based on such foresight (Poyraz, 2023, p. 103). Ultimately, the unfolding events made it impossible for Caliph Ali to return to Medina. With Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Ali’s last deputy in Medina, choosing to move to Kufa instead of confronting the army sent by Muawiyah b. Abi Sufyan—who claimed the caliphate from Damascus—Medina lost its status as the capital of the Muslim state.

The statements made by Abdullah b. Salam raise intriguing questions: Were they reflections of divine truth expressed through his words? Or, given his background as a Jewish scholar before embracing Islam, were they based on prophetic insights found in the Torah or the Gospel (or their commentaries)? Or were they simply his personal predictions? It is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion. However, history seems to have validated his warning, as no Islamic government has since reestablished Medina as its administrative center. No Muslim state or claimant to the caliphate has shown interest in restoring Medina to its former political role.

Was the decision to abandon the Prophet’s pulpit and spiritual presence in favor of other capitals a result of internal division among Muslims, or a sign of increasing worldliness? It is not easy to attribute this shift to a single concrete reason. Regardless of the cause, the outcome remains unchanged: the Prophet’s pulpit was forsaken, and governance never returned to Medina.

After the era of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Muslim administrative centers shifted to other cities—such as Damascus under the Umayyads, Baghdad under the Abbasids, and Cairo under the Fatimids. The reasons behind Medina’s disappearance from the political stage and its exclusion as a capital by the Umayyads, Abbasids, and later dominant powers have often been overlooked. Was this a realization of Ibn Salam’s statement that “...the authority of the believers will never return to Medina” (Tabari, n.d., Vol. 4, p. 455), or merely a warning directed at Ali?

Given that narrations can sometimes be shaped by personal interpretations, additions, or omissions, different meanings may emerge. If the statement is viewed as a definitive judgment, one might conclude that a central government will never again be established in Medina. On the other hand, if it was merely a caution directed at Ali, the absence of a renewed administration in Medina thus far does not preclude its possibility in the future. This opens the door to the prospect of Muslim governance once again returning to a Medina-centered caliphate.

On the Reconstruction of a Medina-Centered Governance

In this context, by analyzing the historical process in reverse, it becomes essential to emphasize the need to return to the era of unity prior to the periods of division—namely, the understanding of the Medina Islamic State during the time before the Prophet’s death or under Caliph Umar. During that time, there were no ethnically or ideologically based states, political parties, sects, communities, or religious orders—even in the name of Islam. The Muslim society was not identified by lineage-based political structures (e.g., Umayyads, Abbasids, Fatimids), factions (e.g., Sunni, Shiite, Kharijite), schools of thought (e.g., Hanafi, Ja’fari, Shafi’i, Maliki), or Sufi orders (e.g., Naqshbandi, Qadiri, Sanusi), but simply as Muslims. The subjects of the Muslim state were classified as Muslim or non-Muslim and governed with justice and tolerance in accordance with divine rulings. Therefore, returning to that foundational point is possible—a Medina-centered Union of Islamic States governance can be reestablished.

Feasibility of Unified Governance

First and foremost, Muslims must firmly believe—both in mind and heart—that with Allah’s help, unity is attainable. Muslims (especially those aspiring to leadership) must internalize and act upon the warnings and guidance found in the Qur’an, which serves as a beacon of guidance. The Almighty has revealed verses that point to the conditions of Muslims and offer paths to salvation. Some of these include: “Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another, lest you lose courage and your strength depart. Be patient; indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (Al-Anfal 8:46). “Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you—when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became brothers by His favor...” (Al-Imran 3:103).

Muslims must heed these verses, abandon disputes for the sake of Allah, and persist in obedience to Allah and His Messenger with patience. The desired path to salvation for Muslims lies in holding fast to the rope of Allah—the Qur’an—and obeying the Messenger. “Indeed, honor, dignity, and strength belong to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers.” (Al-Munafiqun 63:8).

Furthermore, the Qur’an emphasizes the necessity of a higher governing authority among Muslims—one that can reconcile disputes and intervene against extremism. Such a body must possess strength and credibility to establish peace among conflicting groups. Otherwise, how can someone without power or influence act as a reformer? An illustrative verse states: “If two groups among the believers fight, make peace between them. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it complies with the command of Allah... The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers.” (Al-Hujurat 49:9–10)

During the struggle, Muslims will face obstacles from both internal and external enemies. Yet, they must not forget the divine command: “Strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you... He is your Protector. What an excellent Protector and what an excellent Helper!” (Al-Hajj 22:78). In times of threat or obstruction, this example should be remembered: “Those to whom people said, ‘Indeed, the people have gathered against you, so fear them.’ But it increased them in faith, and they said, ‘Sufficient for us is Allah, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.’” (Al-Imran 3:173). Finally, for believers who doubt whether they will succeed, the Lord declares: “Do not weaken and do not grieve, for you will be superior if you are [true] believers.” (Al-Imran 3:139). “If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He

should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely.” (Al-Imran 3:160).

Formation of the Medina Islamic States Union Assembly

The governance model of the Medina Islamic States Union should be viewed as a contemporary adaptation of the confederate political structure that emerged during the Prophet Muhammad’s era. This structure included both Muslim and non-Muslim cities (such as Mecca, Taif, Khaybar, Ezra, Makna, Ezruh, Yamama, etc.) and their leaders, as well as provinces inhabited by newly converted populations (like Yemen, Bahrain, Oman, etc.). During the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, who held both religious and political authority, the administration of the governed regions was carried out through appointed commanders, governors, and officials (Hamidullah, 2004, pp. 185–545).

Following his call to Islam, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) allowed tribal chiefs, city governors, and regional rulers who accepted Islam to remain in their positions. He sent judges, envoys, preachers, and zakat/tribute collectors to them solely for the purpose of teaching and implementing religious rulings (Ibn Khaldun, 1990, Vol. 1, p. 600). This practice established a functional link between central authority and local administrations, forming an early example of a multi-centered governance model. Given today’s modern state structures and administrative systems, it seems impractical to directly reconstruct the absolute authority model employed by the Prophet. However, a newly established Presidency or Caliphate Institution of the Islamic States Union in Medina could assume general administrative responsibilities for Muslim states through a Union Assembly composed of representatives selected according to population ratios and a president (caliph) elected for a limited term. Medina holds a unique place of reverence among all Muslims, transcending religious, political, and ethnic divisions. A new governance model established in the spiritual presence of the Prophet and dedicated to preserving his legacy could be both divinely favored and widely accepted by the ummah.

The formation process of this structure could begin by taking inspiration from existing international Islamic organizations (such as the OIC, D-8), with founding assembly members selected from member states based on population proportions. Muslim communities living in non-Muslim countries could also be included within the framework of representative rights. Through representatives in the position of ahl al-hall wa’l-‘aqd, the assembly should elect presidents (caliphs) to serve temporarily or for fixed terms. The primary duties of the president/caliph would include implementing Islamic rulings, safeguarding the religion, and managing both religious and worldly affairs by following the path of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) (al-Mawardi, n.d., p. 76). Therefore, the elected individual must be sincerely devoted to Islam, competent, capable, and wise. The constitutional framework prepared by the assembly should be based on the universal principles of Islam, transcending sectarian interpretations. This constitution could be drafted in harmony with modern state structures, drawing upon the practices from the time of the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs (Hamidullah, 2004, pp. 185–545; Bulaç, 2006, Vol. 4, pp. 105–119).

Authority and Scope of Governance: As a central authority, the Medina Islamic States Union Administration should hold a position of jurisdiction above all member states, particularly serving as a body for resolution and guidance in the following areas:

- Internal conflicts within member states (e.g., war, rebellion)
- Religious and political disputes between member states
- Potential crises between Muslim and non-Muslim states

In this framework, member states would retain autonomy in domestic affairs, but in matters of foreign religious and political policy—especially those that could escalate into hostility or war—they must be subject to the central authority. The foundation of governance should be structured around the core principles of Islam, emphasizing justice and public welfare. Under certain conditions, non-Muslim countries may also be included in this structure. Their status could be redefined according to the principles outlined in the Medina Charter, which the Prophet Muhammad applied to non-Muslim subjects (Hamidullah, 2004, pp. 166–184).

Institutional Structures

For the Union to function effectively, the following core institutions must be established in Medina:

- Assembly of the Union of Islamic States
- Joint Judicial Organization of Islamic States
- Central Command of the Islamic States Joint Defense Pact
- Organization for Communication, Transportation, and Information
- Center for Joint Economic Policies of Islamic States

Units related to governance, law, and communication—due to their need for direct intervention and oversight—should be located in the city center of Medina. Defense and economic centers, however, may be established in strategically selected cities.

Conclusion

As presented in this study, both Muslims and all of humanity are in greater need than ever of justice, compassion, and tolerance in our present age. The urgent necessity of correctly understanding the message of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), who was sent as a mercy to the worlds, and reconstructing the justice- and compassion-based order of life he offered to humanity within today's societies is undeniable. In today's world, wars, ethnic and ideological conflicts, income inequality, cultural polarization, and social alienation are deepening. In this context, seeking refuge in the mercy of our Lord who calls humanity to truth, justice, and salvation, holding fast to His revelation, and adopting the Prophet's Sunnah as a guide has become a vital necessity for individuals and societies alike.

The justifications, findings, and proposed solutions outlined in this study should be further developed into a more comprehensive and detailed framework and translated into practical applications. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established a just governance model that led people from darkness into light in a world polarized by the Sasanian and Roman Empires, offering hope to oppressed peoples and laying the foundation for a new world order. Likewise, under his spiritual leadership and guidance, the proposed Islamic States Union Administration in Medina could reshape the injustices produced by today's global order—centered on money, interest, and power—through Islam's justice- and mercy-oriented

approach. This structure has the potential to become a governance model that speaks to the shared conscience of humanity and offers hope to Muslim societies and oppressed peoples adrift in the ideological void created by East-West polarization.

Therefore, a new political union centered in Medina would not only serve as a catalyst for the revival of the Islamic ummah but also stand as a universal proposal capable of responding to humanity's collective need for peace, justice, and compassion. To realize this proposal, a collective will grounded in awareness and responsibility must be demonstrated—especially by scholars, jurists, political leaders, and the broader Muslim communities.

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