


# Chapter 3

## Islamic Political Thought in Historical Perspective: Classical Foundation and Contemporary Extremism in South Asia

Sinduja Umandi W. Jayaratne

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3607-6666>

*Bandaranaike Centre for International Studies, Sri Lanka*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter offers a historical and conceptual exploration of Islamic political thought, with a focus on its evolution and contemporary manifestations in South Asia. The chapter highlights the expansion and background in Islamic governance during different caliphates and the regional adaptation of it during the Mughal empire. It also reflects on the colonial influence in South Asia and how it impacts to the emergence of reformist thinkers such as Syed Ahmad Khan and Muhammad Iqbal. Special attention is paid to the ideological contributions of Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, showing how modern extremist movements in South Asia have reinterpreted and occasionally distorted his vision of Islamic governance, which was first framed within democratic and nonviolent principles. This chapter provides insights into the origins and development of political Islam and violent extremism in the region by illustrating the intricate relationship between traditional Islamic political ideals and contemporary political realities through a historical and analytical lens.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Islamic political thought is a diverse and dynamic intellectual tradition that has had a significant impact on government, legislation, and political identity throughout the Muslim world. It proposes a picture of political order based on the Quran, Hadith, and early Islamic history, with divine sovereignty (Hakimiyyah), justice (Adl), consultation (Shura), and communal welfare (Maslaha) as essential foundations (Esposito, 1998; Khatab, 2006). Islamic political ideology is theocratic, emphasizing the need for legitimate power to align with divine will (Laski, 1919; Maksimović & Milosavljević, 2018).

This tradition has evolved significantly over the centuries, responding to internal theological discussions as well as external sociopolitical difficulties. From the example of the Prophet Muhammad and the Rashidun Caliphate to the imperial complexity of the Umayyad, Abbasid, and Ottoman empires, Islamic political thinking has continuously adjusted to evolving situations while maintaining its fundamental principles (Kennedy, 2023; Lapidus, 2002). The colonial era further damaged Islamic governance systems, resulting in intellectual resistance and reformist reactions that attempted to combine Islamic ideals with modern political demands (Brown, 1993; Silverstein, 2004).

In the modern era, particularly since the mid-twentieth century, Islamic political thinking has resurfaced in the form of political Islam or Islamism movements that seek to apply Islamic law and Islamic governance in the modern nation-state (Roy, 1996). While some of these movements have engaged in peaceful political campaigns, others have used violent measures to accomplish their goals. Thinkers like as Maulana Abul A'la Maududi, whose political theology established the groundwork for several Islamist groups in South Asia, have played a crucial role in this intellectual renaissance. Although Maududi advocated for a gradual, nonviolent approach to Islamic reform, violent extremist groups have used his works to justify insurrection and terrorism (Zaidi, 2009).

This chapter gives a thorough examination of Islamic political thinking, following its evolution from classical Islamic administration to modern political ideas that impact Muslim-majority states today. Special emphasis is placed on the South Asian context, where Islamic political principles have both inspired inclusive statecraft and been twisted to fuel extremist violence. This chapter uses historical research and critical reflection to explore the intricacies of Islamic political thinking and its ongoing importance in influencing political ideologies and violence in the world.

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