

181673 - Politics from an Islamic perspective

the question

Did the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) have a political outlook (siyaasah) on which he based his ruling of people or on which he based the running of the affairs of state?

Detailed answer

The word siyaasah (translated above as political outlook) comes from a root (saasa) meaning to become in charge and take care of something, which means looking after something in a manner that maintains its well-being. The phrase sawwasahu al-qawm refers to people appointing someone to run their affairs.

See: Lisan al-‘Arab (6/107); al-Qaamoos al-Muheet (p. 170).

Al-Bukhaari (3455) and Muslim (1842) narrated from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: “The Children of Israel were ruled by the Prophets (tasoosuhum al-Anbiyaa’); every time one prophet died, another prophet would succeed him.”

An-Nawawi (may Allah have mercy on him) said:

“[They] were ruled by the Prophets” means the Prophets took care of their affairs as rulers who are in charge of the people do. Thus siyaasah means to take care of something in a manner that maintains its well-being and serves its interests. End quote.

Ibn Nujaym said:

Siyaasah refers to an action taken by the ruler as he sees fit, even if there is no partial evidence for the action he takes.

Al-Bahr ar-Raa’iq (5/11).

Ibn Khaldoon defined as-siyaasah ash-shar'iyyah [siyaasah on the basis of Islamic teachings] as follows: [It means] to lead the people in accordance with shar'i guidelines, in a manner that serves their interests in the hereafter as well as in this world, for their interests in this world are connected to and may serve their interests in the hereafter, because the Islamic guidelines concerning the life of this world are connected to what serves people's interests in the hereafter. Thus as-siyaasah ash-shar'iyyah, in reality, means acting in the stead of the Messenger in guarding religious affairs and taking care of worldly affairs. End quote from Muqaddimat Ibn Khaldoon (p. 97)

Based on that, siyaasah is an indivisible part of Islam, and there is no separation between siyaasah (politics) and deen (religion).

Based on the above and on modern usage of the word siyaasah, we may say that the Prophet (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) used to conduct the people's affairs and run the affairs of state on the basis of wise politics (siyaasah), because he brought a set of laws that were aimed at achieving what is in people's best interests and warding off what is harmful and bad.

This is also how the Rightly Guided Caliphs and leaders of guidance after him ran the affairs of the ummah.

See also: at-Turuq al-Hukmiyyah by Ibn al-Qayyim (p. 17-20).

And Allah knows best.