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Obedience to the Head of State: Comparative Political Thought of Ibn Taymiyyah and John Knox

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Abstract. This article explored the views of two influential reformist thinkers on obedience to the head of state within their respective religious traditions. For this reason, Ibn Taymiyyah and John Knox have been studied individually, but a direct comparison between them remains largely unexplored. Using a qualitative approach based on library research, the study applied classification, inductive and deductive reasoning, historical study and comparative analysis to examine their perspectives. The findings showed that both Ibn Taymiyyah and John Knox agreed that citizens had a moral duty to be loyal to their leaders. Three key similarities and one notable difference emerged in their interpretations. These were explained through theological, historical and contextual factors. Despite the doctrinal differences between Christianity and Islam, especially in their monotheistic frameworks, both thinkers underscored the religious significance of political obedience. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how Islamic thought on political loyalty, as shaped by Ibn Taymiyyah, can be utilised in forming contemporary Islamic political theory.

Keywords and phrases: Ibn Taymiyyah, John Knox, obedience, the people, the head of state

Introduction

Leadership is a cornerstone of national stability and progress. The head of state bears the responsibility for governance and their leadership style directly influences the success or failure of a nation (Noraini 2021; Watt 1968). Asmad and Norulkamar (2018, 170) believe that "good and bad leadership styles are important to followers because they will indicate both positive and negative outcomes for the followers". Within Islamic political discourse, leadership

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remains a central theme. Scholars, such as Maszlee (2017), Mohamed Zacky, Moniruzzaman and Mohamed (2024), Faizah and Zulkiple (2023), Sukor et al. (2023) and Hamda and Mohammed Abdullais (2020), emphasise its continued relevance in light of evolving political dynamics. A key concept in leadership discussions is obedience, particularly in religious contexts. Accordingly, this study explored political obedience through a comparative lens, focusing on two influential religious thinkers: John Knox from the Christian tradition and Ibn Taymiyyah from the Islamic tradition. Their views were examined using Freiberger's comparative method (Freiberger 2019), which treated comparison as a second-order scholarly activity. This method involved selecting a common analytical ground (*tertium comparationis*), developing context-sensitive descriptions, juxtaposing perspectives and refining theoretical insights.

Historical Context

Obedience to leadership has long been a subject of theological and political debate. In Islam, the concept is deeply rooted in early history, where rebellion against leadership led to the assassination of three of the four *khulafā' al-rāsyidūn*, including Caliph 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 661 AD) by the extremist Kharijites (al-Mubārakfūrī 2011). These events highlight the tension between religious conviction and political authority. Meanwhile, Christian history offers parallel examples. For example, William Wallace, a 14th-century Scottish warrior, led violent uprisings against English rule, driven by religious and nationalistic ideals (Mackay 2012; Raupp 2021). In modern times, the assassinations of Anwar Sadat in 1981 (Kassem 2013) and the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 (Douglass 2010) underscore the persistent challenge of violence justified by religion, ideology, or human rights. These incidents have spurred extensive scholarly debate on obedience and rebellion, both in classical and modern literature. Contemporary scholars like El Fadl (2001) and Cox (1984) have contributed significantly, yet a comprehensive historical model of obedience remains elusive, leading to ambiguity across religious traditions.

Relevance of Study

This study addressed a critical gap in comparative religious political thought by examining the views of Ibn Taymiyyah and John Knox on obedience to the head of state. Both figures were recognised as reformers and influential thinkers within their respective traditions. Knox's enduring influence in Christian theology (Mason 2018) and Ibn Taymiyyah's prominence in Islamic jurisprudence (Mohd Farid 2024) made them ideal subjects for comparative

analysis. By exploring their perspectives, the study aimed to provide deeper insights into religiously grounded political ethics and offer potential frameworks for understanding obedience and resistance in contemporary governance.

Leadership is inherently connected to the people and the broader community it serves. Consequently, any meaningful discussion of leadership inevitably raises questions about the leader's legitimacy and the nature of their governance. Within Islamic political thought, this discourse frequently intersects with the concept of *ṭā'ah* (obedience), which is central to understanding Islam's political language. Lewis (1991) underscores the significance of this concept in shaping political relationships. Obedience, in this context, reflects the trust that the people confer on their leader, enabling them to accept and adhere to the leader's directives and prohibitions (Mohamad Zaidi 2008; Mohd Farid 2008). Without this foundational element of obedience, effective leadership becomes unattainable, and the cohesion of the nation is placed at risk.

Methodology

The research adopted a qualitative approach, utilising two primary methods: (1) library research and (2) comparative analysis. Data were collected from journals, theses, books, and digital platforms. The analysis employed classification, inductive and deductive reasoning, and comparative techniques. Guided by Freiberger's comparative method (2019), the study began with the selection of a tertium comparationis – the concept of political obedience within religious discourse. It then developed detailed, context-sensitive descriptions of Knox's Reformation-era resistance theory and Ibn Taymiyyah's medieval Islamic jurisprudential stance. These positions were juxtaposed to identify convergences and divergences in their approaches to the legitimisation of authority and the conditions for resistance. The final stages involved redescription, in which each thinker's position was reinterpreted in light of the other, and rectification, which refined comparative categories and contributed to broader theoretical insights into the intersection of religion and political obedience.

Obedience to the State

Scriptural foundations

The principle of leadership is deeply embedded in the Islamic revealed texts, as articulated in both the Qur'an and the hadith. Mohammad Hashim (2004) refers to these texts as *āyāt al-umarā'*, which emphasise the responsibilities and

ethical obligations of leadership. For instance, the Qur'an states, "And Moses had charged his brother Aaron (before he went up), 'Act for me amongst my people: Do right and follow not the way of those who do mischief'" (7:142). This verse illustrates the delegation of leadership and the moral duty to guide the community toward righteousness (Ibn Kathīr 1998, vol. 3). Similarly, verse 32:24 highlights the qualities of patience and faith as prerequisites for leadership: "And We appointed, from among them, leaders, giving guidance under Our command, so long as they persevered with patience and continued to have faith in Our Signs" (Ibn Kathīr 1998, vol. 6). From these verses, it is evident that a central aspect of Islamic leadership is the obligation to perform *al-amr bī al-ma'rūf* (enjoining good) and *al-nahy 'an al-munkar* (forbidding evil). Leaders are entrusted with ensuring that their communities adhere to the principles of sharia (*syarī'ah*) through just and effective governance (Mohd Nazmi dan Mohd Farid 2024). Mohd Farid (2008) highlights that this duty ultimately aims to guide society toward success in both worldly and spiritual dimensions.

Leadership qualities

The Prophet Muhammad PBUH expanded the concept of leadership by emphasising its universal relevance. He taught that every individual holds a position of responsibility. In well-known hadith narrated by 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, the Prophet said: "Every one of you is a leader and will be held accountable for those under his care." (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 11:18). Another hadith narrated by Abū Sa'īd and Abū Hurayrah stresses the importance of leadership even in small groups: "When three people set out on a journey, they should appoint one of them as a leader" (*Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn* 7:5).

Leadership, therefore, requires not only moral integrity but also knowledge and expertise. Kavanagh (2024) and Shaharir (2017) argue that a head of state should possess a sound understanding of political science to govern effectively. The dangers of appointing unqualified individuals are illustrated in the hadith narrated by Abū Hurayrah: "When trust is squandered, then await the Day of Judgement" (*Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* 27:60). Islamic scholars have long emphasised rigorous criteria for selecting a head of state. Al-Māwardī (1996) outlines seven conditions for a caliph, namely justice (*al-'adālah*), knowledge (*al-'ilm*), physical and mental soundness, bravery, noble lineage and being male. Ibn Taymiyyah (1955) condenses these into two overarching qualities: strength (*al-quwwah*) and trust (*al-amānah*), asserting that these encompass the essential traits of effective leadership. He also highlights the role of *ahl al-shawkah*, a body responsible for vetting candidates, similar to *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* (a decision-making Muslim committee) (Mohd Farid 2011; Khan 1983), reinforcing the importance of institutional accountability.

Reciprocal responsibilities

Islamic leadership is not a one-sided relationship. Instead, it is built on mutual responsibilities between leaders and their people. While leaders are accountable for guiding their communities, the people are equally obligated to demonstrate obedience. This reciprocal framework is foundational to both Islamic and Western political thought, in which governance is seen as a partnership grounded in trust and accountability.

Al-Raysūnī (2012) argues that national well-being depends on the development of the people through effective leadership. The Qur'an supports this view, outlining leadership responsibilities in verses 7:142 and 32:24 and the people's duty to obey in verse 4:59: "O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you". Sayyid Quṭb (1992) interprets *ulūl al-amr* (those in authority) as leaders committed to divine guidance, while Sa'īd Ḥawā (1975) stresses the importance of resolving disputes in accordance with Islamic and constitutional principles. Hamda binti Khalifah Almuheiri and Mohammed Abdullais (2020) further elaborate on the term *ulūl al-amr*, identifying it as encompassing rulers, scholars and leaders who command allegiance. They introduce related terms *khalīfah* (caliph) and *imām* (leader), with *khalīfah* representing the most comprehensive role, integrating both religious and political authority. These roles collectively form a holistic model of leadership in Islam.

Ultimately, Islamic political theory affirms that the stability and prosperity of a state are directly tied to the quality of its leadership. While the head of state plays a central role, they do not embody the state itself. Rather, the nation's condition reflects the competence and integrity of its leadership. As with a ship, the success of its journey depends not on the vessel's design but on the skill and character of the captain.

Leadership accountability in Islamic thought

Accountability is a foundational principle in Islamic leadership, deeply rooted in both the Qur'an and hadith. Leaders are not only entrusted with guiding their communities but are also held answerable to Allah S.W.T. and the people for their actions. The Qur'anic verse (4:59) establishes a hierarchy of obedience: first to Allah S.W.T., then to the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and finally to *ulūl al-amr*, implying that legitimate leadership must align with divine guidance. The Prophet Muhammad PBUH reinforced this principle by declaring that every individual is a leader and will be held accountable for those under their care

(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 11:18). This universal framing of leadership emphasises that accountability is not limited to rulers but extends to all levels of society.

Islamic scholars such as Ibn Taymiyyah (1955) and al-Māwardī (1996) further institutionalised accountability through mechanisms like *ahl al-shawkah* and *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd*, which serve to vet and monitor leadership. These structures reflect a commitment to ensuring that leaders possess both competence and moral integrity and that their authority remains subject to communal oversight. While Islamic thought emphasises divine accountability and communal checks, Christian political theology, particularly in the Reformation era, also grapples with the moral responsibilities of rulers (Cox 1984). Thinkers like Knox advocated resistance against tyrannical leadership, framing accountability in terms of covenantal obligations between rulers and the governed. This comparative lens reveals shared concerns across traditions about the ethical limits of authority and the necessity of holding leaders to account. This convergence sets the stage for a deeper comparative analysis of Knox's and Ibn Taymiyyah's views on obedience and resistance, which is explored in the following section.

John Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah in Modern Scholarship: A Comparative Perspective

Knox's reformist legacy

Knox, a prominent 16th-century reformist thinker from England and Scotland, emerged as a fierce critic of aristocratic excess and oppressive governance. Mason (2018) characterises him as a revolutionary figure who challenged the entrenched status quo maintained by a repressive administration. Knox's efforts to liberate the Scottish church from governmental control frequently brought him into conflict with the ruling elite, resulting in multiple arrests for political conspiracy and dissent. Tyacke (2010) portrays Knox as a man of unwavering conviction, shaped by his encounters with tyranny. His radical stance and fearless advocacy for reform not only galvanised his contemporaries but also established his enduring influence in Christian political thought. Knox's legacy is particularly notable for his emphasis on civic responsibility and the moral accountability of rulers, themes that resonate strongly in modern democratic discourse.

Ibn Taymiyyah's political philosophy

Ibn Taymiyyah, a 13th-century Islamic scholar and reformer, is celebrated for his wide-ranging contributions to Islamic jurisprudence and theology. Mohd

Farid (2011) and Mohd Azrien (2020) credit him with pioneering reformist ideas that continue to shape Islamic political thought. His early life, marked by displacement due to Mongol invasions, instilled in him a resilient and pragmatic worldview (Ibn Kathīr 1966, vol. 3; Mohd Farid 2017). Ibn Taymiyyah emphasised a reciprocal model of leadership, where rulers are owed obedience only insofar as they uphold justice and remain accountable to the people (Michot and Piscatori 2010). His insistence on political stability through mutual responsibility reflects a nuanced understanding of governance rooted in Islamic principles.

Remarkably, despite their distinct historical and cultural contexts, a comparative study of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah's views on obedience to leadership remains underexplored. This sought to fill that gap by analysing the intersections and divergences in their thought. Both thinkers advocated a model of leadership grounded in accountability and civic engagement: Knox through his critique of corrupt authority and Ibn Taymiyyah through his emphasis on balanced governance. Their shared commitment to ethical leadership offered valuable insights for contemporary political theory and practice.

Converging themes in leadership accountability

Previous studies, such as those by Malkawi and Sonn (2011), focus on Ibn Taymiyyah's assertion that obedience to leadership is essential for societal harmony and the prevention of anarchy. Scholars like Mohd Farid Mohd Sharif (2011), Khan (2014), Maihula (2018) and Hoover (2019) emphasise his prioritisation of political stability as a collective good, achieved through the people's compliance with the state. Michot and Piscatori (2010) further highlight Ibn Taymiyyah's pragmatic approach, advocating for a reciprocal dynamic in leadership that balances authority with accountability. Similarly, scholarship on Knox, including Dawson (2015) and Farrow (2004), underscores his profound influence on Puritan thought and his unwavering critique of governmental corruption. Mason (2018) praises Knox's courage in challenging authority, while Tyacke (2010) and White (2012) credit him with mobilising the people to advocate for their rights and hold leaders accountable.

Knox's advocacy for active civic participation parallels Ibn Taymiyyah's insistence on reciprocal leadership, offering a compelling point of comparison. Both thinkers promote a model of governance where rulers and the ruled engage in a mutually reinforcing relationship. Knox, through fearless criticism of authority, and Ibn Taymiyyah, through his emphasis on balancing obedience with accountability. This alignment, despite their disparate contexts, underscores the universality of their insights and their relevance to contemporary leadership discourse across diverse socio-political landscapes. By juxtaposing the thoughts

of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah, this study seeks to illuminate enduring principles of leadership that transcend time and culture, offering critical lessons for navigating the complexities of modern governance.

Obedience to the Head of State: Perspective of Ibn Taymiyyah and John Knox

A detailed analysis of the works and interpretations of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah revealed fascinating insights into their views on the people's obedience to the head of state. Both thinkers delved into political, administrative and religious dimensions of governance, but their approaches to obedience reflect nuanced distinctions shaped by their respective contexts and theological underpinnings.

Ibn Taymiyyah's framework of obedience

Ibn Taymiyyah emphasised the religious obligation of obedience to the head of state, as articulated in his seminal work *al-Siyāsah al-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rā'ī wa al-Ra'iyyah* (1955). Drawing on prophetic traditions, he argued that appointing a leader, even for small groups, highlights the necessity of leadership at a national level. Ibn Taymiyyah explained, "If a leader is considered necessary on a journey of three persons, it becomes more important in a group with a greater number of persons" (Ibn Taymiyyah 1955, 185). Ibn Taymiyyah saw the appointment of a head of state as essential for upholding the religious duties of enjoining good and forbidding evil. He said, "The ruler is there to enjoin good and forbid wrong" (Ibn Taymiyyah 1976; Mohd Farid 2024). Obedience, in this context, becomes a divine imperative, ensuring societal harmony and religious adherence.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah also provided boundaries to this obedience. If a leader commands acts of immorality or undermines religious obligations, disobedience becomes permissible. Ibn Taymiyyah (1955, 186) said:

> Their greatest charge against me is that the orders given by a man were disregarded by me. But if the order given by a human being, whether he be a master or king, contravenes the commandments of God and His Prophet, then that should never be obeyed. The entire Muslim community agrees on the view that no obedience is permissible in anything opposed to an express mandate of God and the Prophet.

Importantly, he urged patience and non-confrontational methods when addressing a ruler's shortcomings, reserving the role of advising or rebuking the ruler to scholars and those vested with political authority:

> An unjust *imām* brings negative effects to the government of a nation due to the corruption of power. However, the act of divesting him of *imāmah* (imamate) is seen as bringing more negative effects to public interest because the process of divesting of power normally happens under a very aggressive uprising, and it causes major public damage. (Ibn Taymiyyah 1963, vol. 10)

Ibn Taymiyyah (1963, vol. 10) said:

> When a *mufti* (jurist), a soldier, or a member of the public articulates a view that differs from that of the ruling authority, whether grounded in *ijtihād* (independent reasoning) or in *taqlīd* (adherence to established precedent) and within the limits of their knowledge in the presence of the ruler or the ruler's representative, with the sole intention of calling the ruler to adherence to the teachings of the Prophet, such individuals should not be subjected to punishment.

This pragmatic approach reflects Ibn Taymiyyah's prioritisation of societal stability over open dissent (Ibn Taymiyyah 1963, vol. 10; Sani 2018; Mohd Farid 2011).

John Knox's radical perspective

In stark contrast, Knox viewed obedience as contingent upon the ruler's moral and religious conduct. He said (in Laing 2003):

> A ruler was placed in a position of immense trust and authority by God himself, but the humblest subject of the ruler had for that very reason the duty as well as the right to be concerned that the ruler's rule was in accordance with God's law.

According to MacGregor (1958), Knox insisted that a head of state must exemplify trust, honesty, fairness and wisdom. A ruler's failure to uphold these virtues not only forfeits their claim to obedience but also justifies their removal, even though force may be necessary. For Knox, governance was a divine mandate intended for the benefit of the people and any dereliction of this duty constituted a betrayal of God's trust (Dawson 2015).

Knox's radical stance extended to all citizens, irrespective of social status. He encouraged the active participation of the populace in holding leaders accountable, fostering a culture of civic engagement and moral vigilance. He said (in Laing 2003):

> I am not unaware of how difficult and dangerous it is to speak against a common error, especially when the ambitious minds of men and women are called to obey God's simple commandment. For most people, whatever has been accepted by tradition appears lawful and godly. Secondly, I expect my opponents to come not only from the ignorant multitude but also from the wise, politically minded, and peace-seeking people of this world. Thus, even those who ought to uphold the truth and word of God may become my enemies in this matter, as will princes and ambitious rulers who always seek to suppress the truth in order to maintain their unjust tyranny.

This contrasts sharply with Ibn Taymiyyah's more hierarchical approach, which restricted criticism of rulers to specific and qualified individuals.

Points of convergence and divergence

Both thinkers converge on the significance of obedience as a cornerstone of governance. For Ibn Taymiyyah, disobedience disrupts societal and spiritual harmony, while Knox regarded it as an affront to religious sanctity. Both emphasised the moral and ethical responsibilities of leadership, underscoring the reciprocal nature of governance. The divergence lies in their response to leadership failure. Ibn Taymiyyah advocated for patience and indirect correction, driven by a concern for political stability. In contrast, Knox endorsed direct action, including rebellion, to rectify injustices and safeguard the collective welfare of the people.

Consider a contemporary scenario in which citizens face a corrupt regime. Ibn Taymiyyah's framework would counsel measured, non-disruptive approaches, empowering scholars and leaders to negotiate reform while preserving societal order. Knox's model, however, would inspire grassroots movements, rallying citizens to demand accountability and, if necessary, overthrow the regime. Both approaches offer valuable lessons for navigating the delicate balance between obedience and resistance in governance.

The perspectives of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah illuminate enduring debates on the ethics of obedience and leadership. Their ideas challenge us to consider the boundaries of loyalty and the conditions under which resistance is justified. By juxtaposing their thoughts, a richer understanding of leadership's moral imperatives and the delicate interplay between authority and accountability in shaping just and stable societies can be gained.

Implications for contemporary governance

The contrasting perspectives of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah offer valuable insights for addressing contemporary political challenges. In contexts marked by corruption, authoritarianism, or eroding public trust, their frameworks present two distinct yet complementary approaches to leadership and governance.

Ibn Taymiyyah advocates for patience, gradual reform and the guiding role of scholars, emphasising the importance of institutional mechanisms, legal processes and moral integrity in preserving societal order. His caution against impulsive rebellion is particularly relevant in fragile states, where abrupt upheaval may exacerbate instability rather than resolve it. In contrast, Knox underscores the necessity of civic responsibility, transparency and active public engagement. His endorsement of resistance against unjust rulers aligns with democratic principles that empower citizens to challenge corruption and demand accountability (in Laing 2003):

> The faithfulness, courage, and perseverance of those who came before us should inspire us to follow their example, unless we are looking for a different kingdom from the one Christ has promised to those who remain faithful to his name until the end. If anyone thinks that the rule of women is not important enough to justify risking one's life to oppose it, I will answer that bringing it to an end is in God's hands alone. However, I believe that exposing its wickedness and wrongdoing is the duty of every true messenger of God who has been given knowledge of the truth in this matter. The special duty of God's messengers is to preach repentance, warn people of their sins, and tell the wicked that they will face death unless they repent. I trust that no one would deny that it is the proper duty of all God's messengers to preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

Knox's model encourages a proactive stance in governance, where the people serve as a check on authority. Together, these perspectives suggest a balanced framework for modern governance, one that values stability and continuity while affirming the people's right to hold leaders accountable. Their shared emphasis on ethical leadership, responsible obedience and principled resistance underscores the enduring relevance of their thought. This synthesis offers a compelling foundation for building just and resilient societies in diverse political landscapes. Table 1 elucidates the areas of convergence and divergence between Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah in a more comprehensive manner.

Table 1. The areas of convergence and divergence between John Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah

Name	Aspect 1: The duty of the people to obey the head of state	Aspect 2: Leadership is a trust granted by God	Aspect 3: The head of state can be reprimanded by the people	Aspect 4: The head of state can be replaced by force
John Knox	Agree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Ibn Taymiyyah	Agree	Agree	Agree	Disagree

Both thinkers shared three key ideas:

1. The people are obligated to obey the head of state.
2. Leadership is a trust granted by God.
3. The people have the right to address the wrongdoing of their leaders.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah limited this right to specific groups, such as scholars and members of the governing class. These shared perspectives likely stem from their strong religious backgrounds, leading both to frame obedience to the head of state as a religious duty. They emphasised that governance is divinely ordained and that the people's loyalty to their leaders aligns with religious principles (Ibn Taymiyyah 1955; MacGregor 1958; Khan 1983; Laing 2007).

The main difference lies in their stance on replacing a leader. Knox supported the idea of removing a head of state, even by force, if necessary. In contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah rejected the use of violence to depose a leader, warning that such actions could escalate conflicts and cause greater harm to society. Knox believed that tolerating a corrupt or incompetent ruler would lead to systemic failures, oppression and the erosion of respect for religious institutions. These differing views reflect their distinct approaches to balancing political stability with the moral obligations of leadership.

Conclusion

This study successfully achieved its two primary objectives, shedding light on the intricate perspectives of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah regarding the concept of the people's obedience to the head of state. The first objective was realised through an in-depth analysis of their writings. Knox's political ideas, particularly his views on leadership and governance, are preserved in *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, later compiled by Laing (2007). Complementary insights were drawn from Mason (2018) and Tyacke (2010), which contextualise Knox's

thought. Knox employed his role as a reformist and cleric to boldly advise and critique the ruling class, leveraging his influence to mobilise public resistance against immoral leadership. Similarly, Ibn Taymiyyah emphasised the religious obligation of obedience to the head of state, a view thoroughly articulated in his seminal work, *al-Siyāsah al-Shar'iyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Rā'ī wa al-Ra'iyyah* (1955). Modern scholars such as Khan (1983) and Hassan (2010) have provided valuable analyses of Ibn Taymiyyah's political philosophy, elucidating his belief in the interplay between religious duty and governance.

Achieving the first objective naturally led to the realisation of the second: identifying the similarities and differences in their views. The findings revealed three shared principles:

1. The obligation of the people to obey the head of state is rooted in religious teachings.

2. Leadership is a divine trust bestowed by God.

3. The people have a duty to advise or admonish leaders when they err.

However, Ibn Taymiyyah restricted this advisory role to scholars and socially prominent individuals, reflecting a cautious approach to governance. The comparative insights of Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah offer valuable contributions to modern debates on political and religious leadership. Knox's call for accountability resonates strongly with democratic ideals that prioritise transparency, civic engagement and the right to challenge unjust authority. His emphasis on active resistance against corrupt rulers reflects a commitment to empowering citizens as agents of reform. In contrast, Ibn Taymiyyah's framework highlights the importance of patience, moral guidance and institutional stability, particularly in fragile societies where abrupt rebellion may lead to greater disorder. His reliance on scholarly counsel and legal mechanisms underscores a preference for gradual reform rooted in ethical and theological principles. Together, these perspectives suggest a balanced model of governance that integrates ethical authority with social responsibility. They remind both leaders and citizens of the moral obligations inherent in power and obedience, offering a framework that values both stability and accountability.

Looking ahead, future research could explore how Knox and Ibn Taymiyyah's principles of obedience and resistance might be adapted to pluralistic and secular contexts. Investigating advisory mechanisms within interfaith or multicultural societies may reveal practical pathways for ethical governance today. Moreover, comparative studies involving other political theologians

or philosophers could enrich the discourse, offering broader frameworks for understanding the tension between authority, accountability and societal harmony in diverse modern settings.

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