Conceptualising *Tadbīr* as a Constituent of Governance in Islām[1]

Mohd Zaidi Ismail*

Abstract:
The present-day Muslims, in addressing the con-temporary issue of governance, may not necessa-rily have to object to the way, or ways, it has been understood and defined by their Western counter-parts. Yet, they can still offer a more rather refined description of it which, as this article suggests, may come in the form of *tadbīr* being an essential constituent of governance. By elaborating on the concept projected by the term through a detailed

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* Senior Fellow / Director, Centre for Science and Environment Studies, IKIM. E-mail: zaidi@ikim.gov.my

1 This article was originally a working paper entitled "Understanding *Tadbīr* as Governance," presented by the author at the "One-Day Workshop on Good Governance" organised by the Centre for Consultancy and Training (PPLI), the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (IKIM), on the 2nd of February, 2010, at its Main Hall. It had been further developed from the author's two earlier articles, namely: "*Tadbīr* and *Adab* as Constitutive Elements of Management: A Framework for an Islamic Theory of Management," *Al-Shajarah: Journal of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)* 5, no. 2 (2000): 305-335; and "Pentadbiran Menurut Perspektif Islam," in *Modal Insan dan Pembangunan Masa Kini, Siri Fokus Minda 3*, pp. 67-82 (Kuala Terengganu: Fakulti Pengurusan dan Ekonomi, KUSTEM, December 2006). Certain points which are touched upon cursorily in this article will be discussed more elaborately in the author's forthcoming book, entitled *Good Governance:* Adab-*Oriented* Tadbīr *in Islām*, in collaboration with Mohd Sani bin Badron (to be published by IKIM).

explanation of its basic and derived meanings, both lexically and within the context of the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions, as well as their various ethico-teleological implications, the article basically demonstrates that *tadbīr* in the religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām is *both thinking and act which are organically aimed at obtaining good outcomes* and, when specifically applied to man, means *the intellectual deliberation over the outcome of an affair, followed either by its implementation if the outcome is praiseworthy or its rejection if the result is estimated to be blameworthy.*

Some preliminary notes

It is to be duly noted that one of the distinctive features of the religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām is the utmost care given to the correct and precise connotation and denotation of terminologies,[2] a feature rendered possible

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2   This has been sufficiently explained by Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in some of his writings, especially *Islām and Secularism* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM], 1978); *The Concept of Education in Islam: A Framework for an Islamic Philosophy of Education* (Kuala Lumpur: Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia [ABIM], 1980); *The Positive Aspects of* Taṣawwuf: *Preliminary Thoughts on an Islamic Philosophy of Science* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Academy of Science [ASASI], 1981); *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islām* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization [ISTAC], 1995; second ed., 2001); *Risalah untuk Kaum Muslimin* (A Treatise with Important Reminders for the Muslims) (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization [ISTAC], 2001); and *Tinjauan Ringkas Peri Ilmu dan Pandangan Alam* (A Brief Survey on Knowledge and Worldview) (Penang: Universiti Sains Malaysia [USM], 2007). Relevant also in this respect are some of Toshihiko Izutsu's works on the semantics of several Islamic key terms, particularly his *God and Man in the Qur'ān: Semantics of the Qur'ānic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: Keio University, 1964; republished, Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust, 2002) and *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ān* (Montreal: McGill University

by the root system of the Arabic language and the emphasis placed on language and naming, in relation to thought and knowledge, in the Holy Qur'ān[3] and the Prophetic Traditions.[4]

Governance, being a topic of great relevance as much as a concept that points to a particular activity or process, cannot therefore be an exception to the aforementioned rule on terminological precision. Whereas the notion of governance is not new—in fact, as claimed by some, it is as ancient as human society—we cannot deny that in the contemporary context, governance has been much discussed in Western academic circles. As is widely perceived, the West through its many representatives and agencies, has been championing its cause. Hence, Muslims who are interested to address the foregoing cannot avoid attending to the way, or ways, it has been understood and defined by their Western counterparts.

For the purpose of our present discussion, we shall glance at some of the mainstream views of governance, adopted by a number of Western representatives and agencies. From the viewpoint of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), for instance, "governance" is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels, comprising the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups

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Press, 1966), 3-41.

3   For instance, *al-Baqarah* (2): 31; *al-Nisā'* (4): 46; and *al-Mā'idah* (5): 13 and 41.

4   For instance, the famous saying of the Prophet, "*Min ḥusn Islām al-mar' tarkuh mā lā ya'nīh*," which emphasises *inter alia* precision in language and, as such, is well encapsulated in the maxim *jawāmi' al-kalim*. For some scholarly commentaries on the above saying, see al-Imām Muḥy al-Dīn Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā al-Nawawī (d. 676 A.H.), *Sharḥ al-Arba'īn Ḥadīthan al-Nawawiyyah*, together with his *al-Ishārāt ilā Ḍabṭ al-Alfāẓ al-Mushkilāt*, ed. 'Abd al-'Azīz 'Izz al-Dīn al-Sayrawān (Damascus: Dār Qutaybah, 1990), tradition no. 12, pp. 120-122; and al-Imām ibn Daqīq al-'Īd (d. 702 A.H.), *Sharḥ al-Arba'īn al-Nawawiyyah fī al-Aḥādīth al-Ṣaḥīḥah al-Nabawiyyah* (Beirut: Dār ibn Ḥazm, 1997), tradition no. 12, pp. 64-65. See also our article "Verbosity a Vice and Burden" in *The Star* (2 March 2010).

articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences.[5] The Asian Development Bank (ADB) however, while admitting that the term "governance" means different things to different people, prefers to understand it as "the manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development."[6]

It is clear that the aforementioned two ways of describing governance very much reflect the objectives, concerns and orientations of the two organisations involved. Yet, one may want to find a more basic and general way to depict it, which is able to incorporate but is by no means limited to the foregoing two ways. In this regard, one may find agreeable the manner the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has introduced it: "The term *governance*, as generally used, encompasses all aspects of the way a country, corporation, or other entity is governed."[7] Alternatively and somewhat more precisely, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) chooses to describe it as "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)."[8]

Although we may surmise that any enlightened Muslim will not have fundamental objections to the aforementioned

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5   See *Governance for Sustainable Human Development: A UNDP Policy Document* at http://mirror.undp.org/magnet/policy/chapter1.htm#b (accessed 24 February 2009).

6   See the ADB Web-page entitled *Good Governance Defined* at http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Governance/gov200.asp?p=policies (accessed 24 February 2009).

7   See the IMF Web-page entitled *The IMF's Approach to Promoting Good Governance and Combating Corruption—A Guide* at http://www.imf.org/external/np/gov/guide/eng/index.htm, (accessed 24 February 2009).

8   See the article entitled "What is Good Governance?" in the official website of The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp (accessed 23 February 2009). The PDF version of the same article can also be downloaded at http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf.

descriptions of governance—particularly that of UNESCAP, what can still be done is to offer a more rather refined description of it and, as we shall discuss further hereinafter, one such refinement may come in the form of *tadbīr*, both as *theoria* and as *praxis*, being an essential constituent of governance. In the following paragraphs, we shall elaborate on the concept projected by this Arabic term by explaining its basic and derived meanings, both lexically and within the context of the Qurʾān and the Prophetic Traditions, as well as their various ethico-teleological implications. Such an explanation, instead of being regarded as being exclusivist in nature, should rather be taken as an integral dimension of an in-depth discussion and analysis of the issue of leadership and governance in Islām via a profound understanding of the semantic field and mental map projected by a network of such key terms as *imāmah, sulṭān, mulk, imārah, riʿāyah, khilāfah, tadbīr, siyāsah, ḥukūmah, wilāyah, wizārah,* and *idārah,* terms whose variant forms have been used in the Qurʾān and the various sayings of the Prophet Muḥammad, as well as by the authoritative figures throughout the long religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām.

Tadbīr as outcome-oriented thinking and act

As has been duly recognised by a number of studies carried out in modern times, *tadbīr* is clearly an important Arabic term, with clear basic and derived meanings, to refer to the act and process which may be generally referred to in English as "administration," "management," or "governance."[9] The term actually has its origins in the triliteral root word *dubur,*

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9 See Muhammad al-Buraey, *Administrative Development: an Islamic Perspective* (London: KPI, 1985), 234; Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *Penjelasan Budaya Ilmu* (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka [DBP], 1991), 78; and Scott Kugle in his Introduction to *The Book of Illumination,* his translation of *Kitāb al-Tanwir fi Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr* (a work by Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh al-Iskandarī) (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005).

a noun that conveys the idea of "back," "end," or "result." The Arabic expression "*dubur kull shay*," for instance, means "the outcome, or end, of every thing." When *tadbīr*, which is a *maṣdar* (verbal noun) of the verb "*dabbara*," is used with the Arabic word *amr*, it produces the phrase *tadbīr al-amr*, (literally: one's governance or management of an affair), signifying thus "one's act of relating an affair to its end or result." And insofar as human logic grants, such an act of relating can be either mental or extramental, intellectual or practical.[10]

In fact, one simply has to peruse numerous books in the religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām to find unanimity among scholars concerning the above meaning. A few examples here will suffice:

a. *Tadbīr* on a matter is *"to mentally observe what its outcome is to be."* (Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, a famous lexicologist, d. 666 A.H.);[11]

b. *Tadbīr* is *"the mental act of looking into the consequences of the affairs so that a praiseworthy result will be obtained."* (al-Qāḍī Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī, a well-known exegete of the Holy Qurʾān, theologian, and jurist, d. 791 A.H.);[12]

c. *Tadbīr* is *"the act of examining the outcomes by means of knowing what is good,"* as well as *"the act of putting matters into effect in accordance with the knowledge of what will follow in the end."* (al-Sayyid al-Sharīf ʿAlī al-Jurjānī, d. 816 A.H.);[13]

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10 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, 18 vols. (Beirut: Dār Iḥyāʾ al-Turāth al-ʿArabī, 1992), s.v. "d-b-r"; and Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Fīrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), s.v. "d-b-r."

11 The original description reads as: "*al-tadbīr fī al-amr al-naẓar ilā mā taʾūlu ilayhi ʿāqibatuhu.*" Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Abū Bakr al-Rāzī, *Mukhtār al-Ṣiḥāḥ* (Beirut: Muʾassasat al-Risālah, 2001), s.v. "d-b-r."

12 Al-Qāḍī Nāṣir al-Dīn Abū Saʿīd ʿAbd Allāh al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl wa Asrār al-Taʾwīl*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Dersaadet, n.d.), 1: 428.

13 Al-Sayyid Sharīf ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-Taʿrīfāt*, ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1998), s.v. "al-tadbīr."

d.   *Tadbīr* is *"one's disposing of, or reflection, pertaining to the outcome of an affair."* (al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ʿAlī b. ʿAlī al-Tahānawī, d. 1158 A.H.).[14]

The aforementioned definitions at the very least highlight that *tadbīr*, whether as a mode of thinking or a kind of human action, is outcome-oriented. Two fundamental points regarding the act or process which may correctly be referred to as *tadbīr* are worth emphasising. Firstly, purpose or end is both integral and central to such an act or process. Secondly, in line with the paramount role of *tawḥīd* (unity as well as unifying) in Islām, the act or process not only encompasses two different operational modes—that is, knowledge and practice—but also integrates both the foregoing into an organic single. At the level of knowledge or thinking, it comprises one's act of deliberating the possible outcomes with every intention of knowing what is good and, thus, can somewhat be translated into English as "purposive reflection," "foresight," "prudence," "sagacity," or "farsightedness." At the practical stage, it involves the act of executing something in order to obtain good results. Furthermore, both knowledge and practice involved in the process of *tadbīr* do not thus simply aim for any goal, but only at goals which are praiseworthy. In this respect, *tadbīr* is an extension and the embodiment of the freedom of choice in Islām which, as argued by Syed Muḥammad Naquib al-Attas, is termed *ikhtiyār* (*ikhtiar* in Malay) and ought to be based solely on what is good (*khayr*).[15] In short, such definitions demonstrate that governance is not simply about the *process* of decision-making and the *process* by which decisions are implemented but also about the *substance* of the decision-making, namely: *noble ends, desirable outcomes,*

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14   Al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ʿAlī Tahānawī, [*Mawsūʿat*] *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn wa al-ʿUlūm*, ed. ʿAlī al-Dahrūj, 2 vols. (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1996), s.v. "al-tadbīr."

15   Al-Attas, *Prolegomena*, 33-34 and 93-94.

praiseworthy results, and *good consequences*.

It is also pertinent here that one be cognisant of the fact that eminent Muslim lexicologists, such as ibn al-Manẓūr (d. 711 A.H.) in his *Lisān al-ʿArab* and al-Fīrūzabādī (d. 817 A.H.) in his *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, have recorded that *tadabbur*—which is a verbal noun of another cognate word, *tadabbara*—is synonymous with the meaning of *tadbīr* at the epistemic or theoretical level. The expression *tadabbara al-amr*, being the fifth derivative of the triliteral root verb *da-ba-ra*, connotes one's search for *the end*, or *outcome*, of an affair. In the above sense, therefore, *tadabbur* is synonymous with *tadbīr* which, as previously explained, consists of one's mentally looking into the outcome of an affair, and depending on the occasion, may be rendered into English as "purposive reflection," "foresight," "prudence," "farsightedness," or "sagacity."[16]

In fact, al-Jurjānī in his famous *Kitāb al-Taʿrīfāt* succinctly explained the subtle difference between the two modes or types of thinking, one being termed *tafakkur* and the other, *tadabbur*, respectively. According to him, although both are mental acts or dispositions, the former consists of one's directing one's mental observation and scrutiny towards proof or evidence, whereas the latter involves one's directing attention towards the end or outcome.[17]

It is therefore clear that *tadbīr* at the epistemic level, or *tadabbur* as its synonym, denotes a particular mode of thinking, namely, thinking which is being specifically directed towards an outcome or result with the intention of knowing what is good, praiseworthy and noble. Hence, any act of governance, management or administration deserved of being referred to as *tadbīr* needs not only involve that mode of thinking but also needs to nurture and nourish it. Otherwise, one is simply

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16 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. "tadabbara"; and al-Fīrūzabādī, *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ*, s.v. "tadabbara."

17 Al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, s.v. "al-tadbīr."

misappropriating the term.

Tadbīr in the Qur'ān

Although the term *tadbīr* itself is not used in the Qur'ān, the present tense of its verbal form, *yudabbir*, is repeated four times.[18] In all of such occasions, the verb is accompanied by the term *al-amr* and refers to a particular type of Divine Act. One therefore reads *yudabbir al-amr* whose meaning, for want of an exact English equivalent, is "He (that is, Allāh) governs the affairs." The word *amr* in Arabic, apart from connoting "a command or a decree," may also mean "an affair, an entity, an event, or a state." Both meanings, though apparently distinct, are indeed closely related, at least insofar as the Islamic cosmological scheme is concerned. For God commands, and at His creative Behest, things come into being and events take place.

The expression *yudabbir al-amr* in the aforementioned cases is also mentioned alongside the facts of creation, whether celestial or terrestrial. Among the Arabic terms used for the act of creating in those instances is *khalaqa* whose infinitive, *khalq*, may mean either "to create something in a form which has no precedence" or "to predetermine, to ordain, or to give measure (*al-taqdīr*)."[19] One may therefore infer, on justified grounds, that not only does Allāh bring all the creatures and events into existence according to a comprehensive design predetermined in His Perfect Knowledge, but He also generously sustains and governs all of them. The erudite theologian, jurist and commentator of the Qur'ān, Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 604 A.H.), in commenting on one of those four Qur'ānic verses, said: "*Yudabbir al-amr* (literally "Allāh governs the affairs") means that Allāh decrees and foreordains according to the

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18   See *Yūnus* (10): 3 and 31; *al-Ra'd* (13): 2; and *al-Sajadah* (32): 5.
19   Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. "a-m-r," and "kh-l-q."

requirement of wisdom and He also does that which is done by one whose act is always appropriate and who attends to the ends and outcomes of affairs such that nothing unbecoming would ever come into existence."[20]

Similarly, the traditionist-theologian Imām al-Bayhaqī (d. 458 A.H.), in his *Kitāb al-Iʿtiqād wa al-Hidāyah ilā Sabīl al-Rashād*, explains that Allāh as The Governor is both omniscient—including His knowing the end and outcome of each and every thing—and omnipotent, involving His deciding in accordance with His Knowledge and His acting just as He decides.[21] In fact, Shāh Waliyullāh (d. 1176 A.H.), the well-known Muslim scholar of Delhi, in his famous work, *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, argued that with regard to the bringing into being of the world, *tadbīr* is the last in the order of the three intimately-related Divine Attributes; the other two Attributes being *ibdāʿ* followed by *khalq*.[22] Such being the case, one quite often comes across renowned luminaries—like the famous Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh al-Iskandarī (d. 709 A.H.) in his *Kitāb al-Ḥikam* as well as *Kitāb al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr*—admonishing people to be confident in, as well as preferring, Divine Governance in all matters, and to not be deluded by the apparent sufficiency of one's own governance.[23]

The Divine Governance of the entire cosmos is indeed His Pattern of Recurrent Acts (*SunnatuʾLlāh*), which is all-inclusive,

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20 See his *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, 32 vols. in 16 books (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyyah, 1990), 17: 13. His commentary on the other verses can be found in ibid., 17: 70-71, 18: 187, and 25: 150-151.

21 Edited by Kamāl Yūsuf al-Ḥūt (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1985), 39.

22 Al-ʿAllāmah Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥīm (known as Shāh Walī Allāh al-Dihlawī), *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bālighah*, ed. Maḥmūd Ṭaʿmah Ḥalabī, 2 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1997), 1: 33-35; Marcia K. Hermansen, trans., *The Conclusive Argument from God* (Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi's Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligha) (Leiden, New York, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1996), 33-36.

23 See especially Ibn ʿAṭāʾillāh al-Iskandarī's *Kitāb al-Tanwīr fī Isqāṭ al-Tadbīr* (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Ṣūfiyyah and Maktabat al-Thaqāfah al-Dīniyyah, 2005); English trans. Scott Kugle, *The Book of Illumination* (Louisville: Fons Vitae, 2005).

appearing partly in the modes of Cause-Effect correlation and of the rise and decline of nations and civilisations in the theatre of history, holding sway not only over the physical domain but also over the ethico-spiritual realm, regulating not only socio-political life but also individual and family lives.[24]

Tadbīr in the Prophetic Traditions

It has been made very clear in the preceding paragraphs that *tadbīr*, as well as its cognate term *tadabbur*, signifies, among others, the mental act of probing into the consequence(s) of an affair so that a praiseworthy result may be worked out and thus obtained. We have also mentioned earlier that *tadbīr* is an extension and the embodiment of the freedom of choice in Islām, referred to as *ikhtiyār*, and ought to be based solely on what is good (*khayr*). In this context, one is well reminded about an occasion when a man went to meet the Prophet Muḥammad for a lasting piece of advice to whom the Prophet said: "If you happen to want something, reflect (*tadabbar*) then upon its consequence (*'aqībatahu*); if its outcome is good (*khayr*), perform it. Otherwise, stop doing it."[25]

It has also been reported that the Second Caliph of Islām, 'Umar al-Farūq, had declared: "An intelligent person (*al-'āqil*) is not merely one who is able to distinguish what is

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24 For an explanation on *Sunnatu'Llāh*, see our two related articles: "The Cosmos as the Created Book and its Implications for the Orientation of Science," *Islam & Science: Journal of Islamic Perspectives on Science* 6, no. 1 (Summer 2008): 40-41; and "Kosmos dalam Pandangan Hidup Islam dan Orientasi Sains Masyarakat Muslim," *Islamia: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Peradaban Islam* III, no. 4 (2008): 18.

25 A mursal *ḥadīth* narrated by 'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit as found in al-Sayyid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī (well-known as Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī), *Ithāf al-Sādah al-Muttaqīn bi Sharḥ Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, 14 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, n.d.), 13: 176. This tradition was also incorporated by Shaykh Al-Amin Ali Mazrui in his collection of the Prophetic traditions, translated with an introduction by Hamza Yusuf, *The Content of Character: Ethical Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad* (Sandala, 2005), the 10th saying, 16-17.

good (*khayr*) from what is bad (*sharr*) but one who is able to recognize the better (i.e., the lesser) of two evils (*khayr min al-sharrayn*)."[26] The need for such intelligence is as pertinent in the evaluation of one's goals and action plans as it is in assessing any current state of affairs.

Such being the essential meaning of *tadbīr*, ethics and morality is therefore rendered inherent. It is indeed expected of a person truly possessed of reason to base his acts on a close examination into the possible outcomes of his actions, carefully discriminating between good and bad, right and wrong, true and false, and then wholeheartedly choosing the good while avoiding the bad. The act of trying to attain praiseworthy results by abstaining from what is blameworthy truly constitutes the practical side of *tadbīr* which, as cited before, also means "the act of putting matters into effect in accordance with the knowledge of what will follow in the end."[27]

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26   Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn Munajjid, *al-Islām wa al-'Aql 'alā daw' al-Qur'ān al-Karīm wa al-Ḥadīth al Nabawi* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Jadīd, 1974), 54, cited in Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas and Wan Mohd Nor Wan Daud, *The ICLIF Leadership Competency Model* (LCM): *An Islamic Alternative* (Kuala Lumpur: International Centre for Leadership in Finance [ICLIF], 2007), 140.

27   A purposive reflection must also consist of serious endeavours to sort out qualities and virtues, measures, methods, ways, tactics, strategies and plans—incorporating but by no means limited to the attempts to identify qualified manpower and necessary resources—which could guarantee the attainment of the praiseworthy ends. Such purposive intellectual process, which should be dynamic and far from being static, ought to also involve one's awareness of and guard against any type of obstacles that can jeopardise the plan, and subsequently hinder—or in the least delay—one from securing the desired results. It is in this regard that one should deal not only with such virtues as integrity and accountability which are commonly considered to be integral constituents of good governance but also with other contentious elements and principles espoused by the various agencies and institutions in the West as characteristics of such governance, provided that they be critically assessed and reinterpreted wherever relevant. For examples of characteristics advocated by such agencies and institutions, see the article entitled "What is Good Governance?" in the official website of The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp, and to download the

In addition, one's act of abstaining from that which is prohibited and that which is evil is part and parcel of piety. If a man perseveres in correct behaviour by abstaining from that which is forbidden, such a tendency will eventually be natural to him such that it becomes his habit or character—his *second*, or *acquired, nature*, as the scholars of ethics would say. This, in truth, goes to the making of good character which commands respect and is what nobility really is.

In *Sunan ibn Mājah*, an established collection of the Prophetic Traditions, the Prophet was reported to have declared: "There is no equivalent of reason (*ʿaql*) as purposive reflection (*al-tadbīr*), no piety (*waraʿ*) as abstinence (*al-kaff*), and no nobility (*ḥasaba*) like good character (*ḥusn al-khuluq*)."[28] That he combines all those three elements—namely, reason, piety and nobility—in a single saying is already good grounds for us to hold that purposive reflection, abstinence, and good character are mutually related, and each functions to shed more light on the others. In fact, Imām al-Ghazzālī (d. 505 A.H) in a special book dedicated to explicating knowledge and intellect in his famous *Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn*, considered human intelligence which has arrived at such a mental station, as being couched in the aforementioned Prophetic Tradition, to be one which has attained intellectual maturity.[29]

PDF version of the same article, visit http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.pdf; refer also to Policy Brief No. 15: "Principles for Good Governance in the 21st Century," by John Graham, Bruce Amos and Tim Plumptre (August, 2003), a PDF copy of which is downloadable at http://www.iog.ca/publications/policybrief15.pdf.

28   See "Bāb al-Waraʿ wa al-Taqwā" of "Abwāb al-Zuhd" in Ibn Mājah's *Kitāb al-Sunan*, containing in its margin ʿAbd al-Ghānī al-Dihlāwī's *Injāḥ al-Ḥājah* and al-Suyūṭī's *Miṣbāḥ al-Zujājah* (Delhi: Al-Maṭbaʿ al-Fārūqī, 1282 A.H.), 321. In al-Nawawī's *Sharḥ al-Arbaʿīn Ḥadīthan al-Nawawiyyah* (p. 122), it was related that the aforementioned saying of the Prophet is part of his long advice to Abū Dharr, one of his famous companions. A full translation of this advice is available in pdf form from http://marifah.net/articles/Increase%20me.pdf.

29   See our work, *The Sources of Knowledge in al-Ghazālī's Thought: A*

Some ethico-teleological implications

The Qur'ān in its four verses above is explicit about Allāh being the one who governs the entire universe(s). *Al-Mudabbir* (The Governor), as such, is a Divine Name and Attribute. In fact, a number of renowned scholars of Islām, such as al-Bayhaqī and al-Ghazzālī, were unequivocal about it.[30] As previously explained, Allāh's governance of the entire cosmos is indeed His Pattern of Recurrent Acts, the one referred to as the all-inclusive *Sunnatu'Llāh*. It has also been an established moral teaching in Islām, grounded in a number of Qur'ānic verses and numerous sayings of the Prophet and aptly summarised in the well-known adage "*takhallaqū bi akhlāq Allāh*," that man has to emulate such Divine Names and Attributes as befit man according to his real ability. For in truth, the Names and Attributes of Allāh constitute the standard of manners and praiseworthy deeds for Muslims. A Muslim, hence, must try his level best to be a governor or administrator in its comprehensive sense, covering as many spectrums and layers of existence as possible.[31]

Psychological Framework of Epistemology (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization [ISTAC], 2002), 23.

30 For the positions of al-Bayhaqī on this, see his *Kitāb Al-Asmā' wa al-Sifāt*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Umayrah (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1997), 26; and *Kitāb al-I'tiqād wa al-Hidāyah ilā Sabīl al-Rashād*, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūt (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), 39. As for al-Ghazzālī's conviction regarding this, see his *Al-Maqsad al-Asnā fī Sharh Ma'ānī Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā*, ed. Bassām 'Abd al-Wahhāb al-Jābī (Limassol: Al-Jaffān wa al-Jābī, 1987), English translation by David B. Burrell and Nazih Daher, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1992; reprinted 1995), 167.

31 See al-Imām Abū Bakr Ahmad al-Bayhaqī, *Su'ab al-Īmān*, ed. Muhammad al-Sa'īd Basyūnī Zaghlūl, 9 vols. (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1990), the prophetic traditions no. 8547 and 8549, vol. 6, pp. 365-367; al-Imām Muhammad b. Ismā'īl al-San'ānī, *Subul al-Salām Sharh Bulūgh al-Marām*, containing as well ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī's *Nukhbat al-Fikr fī Mustalah Ahl al-Athār*, 4 vols. in 1 book. (Bandung, Indonesia: Maktabah Dahlān, n.d.), 4:108-110; and ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. "h-s-y." Such understanding also finds its ground in a few variant Traditions of the Prophet (pbuh) concerning Adam's

The religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām in fact does not lack writings that reflect such an all-embracing understanding of governance. For instance, a mere glance at the use of the term *tadbīr* in the titles of various books, each of them dealing with a different field of discussion, already shows to what extent the term applies. Such books, to mention but a few, are: Ibn al-Jazzār al-Qayrawānī's *Kitāb Siyāsat al-Ṣibyān wa Tadbīruhum* and Aḥmad al-Baldī's *Kitāb Tadbīr al-Ḥabālā wa al-Aṭfāl wa al-Ṣibyān*, both having to do with child management; Jābir ibn Ḥayyān's *Tadbīr al-Iksīr al-Aʿẓam* regarding chemistry; Ibn Bājjah's *Tadbīr al-Mutawaḥḥid* (the Conduct of the Solitary), on philosophical issues and individual ethics; Ibn ʿArabī's *al-Tadbīrāt al-Ilāhiyyah fī Iṣlāḥ al-Mamlakah al-Insāniyyah* pertaining to ontologico-cosmological topics, and Ibn Abū al-Rabīʿ's *Sulūk al-Mālik fī Tadbīr al-Mamālik* on political and governmental issues. In ethics, for example, there is a division called *Tadbīr al-Manzil* (the governance of household).

Since Allāh is the Real Governor and man is merely His servant and vicegerent, the latter is governor only in the derivative and relative sense. As such, he has to govern and manage according to the laws set by the Real Governor, which are no other than His customary way of acting—the

creation. See, for example, the tradition no. 6227 in the 79th Book: "*Kitāb al-Istiʾdhān*," 1st. Chapter: "*Bāb Badʾ al-Salām*" by ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 15 vols. (Al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Salām, 1997), 11: 6; al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf*, 12: 44ff. and 576-577; and Shaykh Muḥammad Saʿīd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, "Man and his Reality" (especially p. 6), translation by Mahdi Lock of several paragraphs (pp. 245-252) of the former's work entitled *Kubrā al-Yaqīniyat al-Kawniyyah*, a pdf copy of which is downloadable from http://marifah.net/articles/Buti_The%20 Creation%20of%20Man%20_Part%201.pdf. For further clarification on how a Muslim should assume the Character Traits of God, see al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Maqṣad al-Asnā*, trans. Burrell and Daher, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names*; Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Lawāmiʿ al-Bayyināt Sharḥ Asmāʾ Allāh Taʿālā wa al-Ṣifāt*, ed. Ṭāhā ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Saʿd (Kaherah: Maktabat al-Kulliyyāt al-Azhariyyah, 1976); and ʿIzz al-Dīn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd al-Salām, *Shajarat al-Maʿārif wa al-Aḥwāl wa Ṣāliḥ al-Aqwāl wa al-Aʿmāl*, ed. Iyād Khālid al-Ṭabbāʾ (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Muʿāṣir, 1991; reprint, 1996).

Sunnatu'Llah—within which is subsumed the Divine Pattern of Recurrent Acts in governing the affairs of His entire creation.

Moreover, if one is to reflect seriously on the nature of outcomes in relation to aims and objectives, one will surely come to at least two important findings. Firstly, that goals or objectives, despite their being related in many respects to ends or outcomes, are not really synonymous. For not every aim will result in an outcome and, likewise, not every outcome achieves the intended aim. As such, there are some elements of unknowability about goals as something yet to be realised in the future, whereas outcomes, when referring to past events that are well documented, are more factual. Secondly, there are indeed varieties of goals and outcomes. Not only are they not always the same but they are also subject to a certain order of priority and posteriority. Some aims are good and noble, some are bad and evil. Yet among the good ones, some are better. Similarly, there are also amidst the bad ones those which are worse. Some ends are more permanent and certain while the rest are ever changing and indefinite. Among them also, there are those which are more ultimate whereas the others only serve as means or intermediaries to the former. Hence, there is a hierarchical system of aims and objectives, having in turn a certain order of methods and ways conducive for living such a system.

The main question then is: how can one intellectually determine not only one's *right goals*—as future matters that are unknown and uncertain, in relation to the outcomes as something clear and established—but also *the possible correct ways leading thereto*? It is in answering such a question that an important epistemic principle applies, which requires that one begin with what is clear, definite and certain in exploring unknown and uncharted territories.[32] In this respect, what is

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32   For some explanation on this epistemic principle, see our articles in "IKIM Views," as published in the daily *The Star* of 29 January, 22 July

generally clear and certain to the Muslims is that Allāh being The Governor has made manifest not only His wills, rules and regulations but also His signs and symbols (singular: *āyat Allāh*; plural: *āyāt Allāh*) in His Two Books. One of the books has been referred to in the religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām as His Revealed Book (*al-kitāb al-tanzīlī*)—i.e. the Qur'ān—exemplified then in the Life of the Prophet Muḥammad (transmitted to the later generations as his *ḥadīth, sunnah* and *sīrah*). The other book, in turn, is known in this tradition as the Created Book (*al-kitāb al-takwīnī*), i.e. the Cosmic Entirety.[33]

From the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions, Muslims can expect to derive guidance, be it general or specific, including in the form of reliable yardsticks, criteria and guidelines. Since past Muslim luminaries derived most of their insights from these two sources, of very much help also in this respect are the vast legacy of their scholarly writings, including the invaluable legal corpora that contain voluminous writings on legal

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and 23 September 2008, as well as 28 July 2009. See also our "Faham Ilmu dalam Islam: Pengamatan terhadap Tiga Takrifan Utama Ilmu," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 10 (1430H/2009): 39–59.

33 It is pertinent here that one fully realises the fact that the various entities and events which constitute the Cosmos are considered in the Qur'ān (for instance, *Fuṣṣilat* [41]: 53) and the Prophetic Traditions to be God's signs and symbols. Such signs and symbols taken as a whole—that is, the World of Nature, the Universe—are indeed referred to in the Islamic religious, intellectual and scientific tradition as *al-ʿālam*, a term which is originally used to point to anything instrumental and indicative in the obtainment of the knowledge of something else. The Cosmos is thus conceived of as an open, grand, created Book, consisting of Divine Signs and Symbols, and has been defined theologically as "everything other than God which points to Him." For an explanation on this, see the author's four related articles: "The Cosmos as the Created Book," 31-53; "Kosmos dalam Pandangan Hidup Islam," 12-31; "Perihal Alam Semesta sebagai Kitab Kejadian dan Kesan Ilmiahnya pada Hala-Tuju Sains Tabii: Satu Liputan Ringkas Menurut Rencana Pemikiran al-Attas," *Afkar: Jurnal Akidah & Pemikiran Islam* 8, (1428H/2007): 83-109; and "The Nature of the Cosmos and its Implications on Science Education," *Educational Awakening: Journal of the Educational Sciences* (Institute of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia [IIUM]) 5, no. 1 (2008): 103-130.

sources and methodology (*uṣūl al-fiqh*), detailed legal rulings (*al-fiqh*), legal objectives and aims (*al-maqāṣid al-sharʿiyyah*), and regulating legal maxims (*al-qawāʿid al-sharʿiyyah*).[34] It is also in this regard that one should differentiate between the natural desires and the acquired desires, between human needs and human wants,[35] and more specifically, between what falls in the category of *al-ḍarūriyyāt* (the necessities), *al-ḥājiyyāt* (the requisites) and *al-taḥsīniyyāt* (the complements), respectively.[36]

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34 Some contemporary texts on these subjects are Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr, *Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah al-Islāmiyyah*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir al-Mīsāwī (n.p.: Al-Baṣāʾir, 1998), English translation by Mohamed el-Tahir el-Mesawi, *Treatise on Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah* (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust [IBT], 2006); Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence*, 2nd. rev. ed. (Kuala Lumpur: Ilmiah Publishers Sdn. Bhd., 1998); S. Mahmassani, *Falsafat al-Tashrīʿ fī al-Islām* (*The Philosophy of Jurisprudence in Islam*), trans. Farhat J. Ziadeh (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1961; reprint, Shah Alam: Hizbi, 1987); Imran Ahsan Khan Nyazee's two books: *Theories of Islamic Law: The Methodology of Ijtihād* (Islamabad: IIIT and Islamic Research Institute, 1994) as well as *Islamic Jurisprudence (Usul al-Fiqh)* (Petaling Jaya: The Other Press [TOP], 2003); Ahmad al-Raysuni, *Imam al-Shatibi's Theory of the Higher Objectives and Intents of Islamic Law*, trans. Nancy Roberts (Petaling Jaya: Islamic Book Trust [IBT], 2006); Wan Azhar Wan Ahmad, *Public Interests* (al-Maṣāliḥ al-Mursalah) *in Islamic Jurisprudence: An Analysis of the Concept in the Shāfiʿī School* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 2003); Umar Faruq Abd-Allah, "Living Islam with Purpose," A Nawawi Foundation Paper, ©2007, in 41 pages, downloaded in pdf form from http://www.nawawi.org/downloads/article6.pdf; and Sherman A. Jackson, "Literalism, Empiricism, and Induction: Apprehending and Concretizing Islamic Law's Maqāsid al-Sharīʿah in the Modern World," *Michigan State Law Review* (2006): 1469-1486, available for downloading in the pdf form at http://www.manrilla.net/shermanjackson/media/pdfs/literalism_empiricism_induction.pdf. In addition, there are also a number of relevant papers pertaining to these subjects in the *Proceedings of the International Conference on Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah and Its Realization in Contemporary Societies* (Kuala Lumpur: IIUM, 2006).

35 For a contemporary Western formulation of human needs and human wants that is developed mainly along the Aristotelian-Thomistic line of thinking, see Mortimer J. Adler, *Ten Philosophical Mistakes* (1st. ed., Collier Books, New York: Macmillan, 1987), 108-127.

36 For an attempt at discussing all these three categories in the economic context, see M. Nejatullah Siddiqi, *Role of the State in the Economy: An Islamic Perspective* (Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, 1996), particularly chapters One and Two, pp. 5-75.

Two of such matters which are clear and certain in the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions are: Firstly, one's goal has to pertain to the Ultimate Outcome, the Last Day (*al-Ākhirah*). For Muslims, without any doubt, the goals one should aim at ultimately have to do with what is already established and certain—that is to say, with the afterlife the doorway to which is death, as well as with the state of happiness (*al-saʿādah*) in the life-to-come the culmination of which is the gift of the Vision of God (*ruʾyat Allāh*). For this reason, no pursuit of goals can be irreligious, being driven merely by pragmatic and utilitarian considerations. In Islām, governance is as much a teleological science as it is the art of deployment. Secondly, the objective has to ultimately relate to Allāh, whose name among others is THE END (*al-Ākhir*). The spirit of *tawḥīd* (that is, unity and unifying) which is so inherent in Islām demands that one's end comprise not only goods of this world (*al-dunyā*) but also those of the hereafter (*al-ākhirah*), especially when man finally returns to his Almighty Creator. Since God is also The First and The Last (*al-Awwal wa al-Ākhir*), the origin and the end (*al-mabdaʾ wa al-maʿād*) in Islām ultimately point to the very same Being who not only out of His Mercy bestows upon His creatures the gift of existence but also assigns them their specific significance and places in the vast hierarchies of being. In fact, as man comes from Allāh unto Him also will he return, and no one, if he really knows, will wish for a bad return. Hence, Allāh is, for the true believers, their sole focus of attention and concern.[37]

As to His Created Book—i.e. the Cosmos as a whole— the Divine Governance of the entire cosmos is indeed His Pattern of Recurrent Acts (*the SunnatuʾLlāh*). Granted the regularity of this Pattern of Recurrent Acts, which Allāh Himself has promised us in the Qurʾān and which Muslims

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37   See *al-Baqarah* (2): 46; *al-Māʾidah* (5): 105; *Yūnus* (10): 4; *al-Ḥajj* (22): 41; *al-Muʾminūn* (23): 60; *al-Qaṣaṣ* (28): 70; *Luqmān* (31): 22; *al-Najm* (53): 25; *al-Ḥadīd* (57): 3; and *al-Layl* (92): 13.

believe in, it is partly to the past outcomes that one's noetic observations should be directed in order to not only derive some meaningful lessons and useful insights with regard to the future, but to also avoid repeating similar mistakes, facing much the same pitfalls, and being trapped in essentially the same quagmire.[38]

In other words, as Muslims believe that Allāh is the Real Governor of the entire universe(s), they have to govern and manage according to the laws set by Him, which are no other than His customary way of acting—the *Sunnatu'Llāh*—within which is subsumed the Divine Pattern of Recurrent Acts in governing the affairs of His entire creation. Only those bestowed with the knowledge of His customary way of acting are in a much better position to manage their affairs properly such that real ends and good results shall be obtained. Such knowledge basically involves one's understanding of Allāh's Legislative Commands (*al-amr al-taklīfī*), which act as one's primary guidance, as well as one's knowing the Divine Pattern of executing His Creative Command (*al-amr al-takwīnī*).[39] And to know both the Legislative Commands of God and the Divine Pattern of executing His Creative Command, not only must one sincerely and seriously attend to His Revelation—the Holy Qur'ān and its embodiment in the Personality and Life of the Prophet Muḥammad—but one also has to continuously

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38 Such is actually the meaning of the Prophet's reminder, which was related by Abū Hurayrah: "A believer is not stung twice in the same hole," meaning that he is not to be deceived twice. See Imām Abū Zakariyyā Yaḥyā ibn Sharaf al-Nawawī, *Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, trans. S. M. Madni Abbas, 2 vols. (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, n. d.), tradition no. 1834, vol. 2, p. 886. See also its commentary in al-ʿAllāmah Muḥammad ibn ʿAllān al-Ṣiddīqī al-Shāfiʿī's *Dalāl al-Fāliḥīn li-Ṭuruq Riyāḍ al-Ṣāliḥīn*, ed. al-Shaykh Khalīl Maʾmūn Shīḥā, 8 vols. in 4 books (Beirut: Dār al-Maʿrifah, 1994), traditions no. 1832, vol. 8, p. 657.

39 For an explanation on the difference as well as the relation between these two types of Divine Command (*al-amr al-ilāhī*), see Suʿād al-Ḥakīm, *Al-Muʿjam al-Ṣūfī: Al-Ḥikmah fī Ḥudūd al-Kalimah* (Beirut: Dandarah, 1981), s.v. "al-amr."

observe and contemplate His signs and symbols in the Cosmos.

Conclusion

It should have been clear and established by now that *tadbīr* is meaning-wise clear and definite. It has not undergone much semantic change, thus signifying basically the same thing to different people at different times. As clarified earlier, *tadbīr* in the religious, intellectual and scientific tradition of Islām is *both thinking and act which are organically aimed at obtaining good outcomes*. When regarded as an essential constituent of governance, it renders governance an organic unity of both theory and practice, the unifying focal factor in governance being the praiseworthy end to be aimed at and accordingly realised. Governance as such presupposes order or system, implied by the term *khalq*, and does not have to be confined only to inter-personnel relations and public affairs, nor is it meant merely for macro perspectives. It is therefore extensive as well as intensive and, in its absolute sense, only Allāh is the real Governor (*al-mudabbir*), while man is so only in a relative and derivative sense. With reference to man, *tadbīr* so conceptualised can be described as the *intellectual deliberation over the outcome of an affair, followed either by its implementation if the outcome is praiseworthy or its rejection if the result is estimated to be blameworthy.*