

Islamic Ethics and Good Governance: A Normative Blueprint for Lagos State, Nigeria

Saheed Olurotimi Timehin, PhD¹, Arimiyau, Sekinat Olanike, PhD.²

Department of Foreign Languages Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.1015EC00036>

Received: 05 February 2026; Accepted: 11 February 2026; Published: 28 April 2026

ABSTRACT

The governance crisis in Nigeria, and in Lagos State particularly, is frequently diagnosed in institutional, economic, and administrative terms. However, such analyses often overlook the ethical substratum upon which political systems ultimately rest. This paper argues that persistent deficits of corruption, leadership failure, civic disengagement, and public distrust are symptoms of deeper moral dislocation. Drawing on Islamic ethical philosophy (‘ilm al- akhlāq), Qur’anic governance principles, Prophetic political practice, and contemporary governance theory, the paper constructs a normative and operational framework for ethical leadership and responsible citizenship. It proposes a practical blueprint for Muslim political participation that moves beyond identity-based representation toward ethical transformation of governance culture. The study concludes that integrating Islamic ethical imperatives with modern governance mechanisms offers viable pathways for justice-centered, accountable, and participatory governance in contemporary Lagos.

Keywords: Islamic ethics, governance, accountability, Lagos, political participation, leadership, citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

Lagos State stands at the intersection of opportunity and crisis. As Nigeria’s economic nerve center and Africa’s fastest-growing megacity, Lagos embodies innovation, diversity, and commercial vitality. Yet it also faces acute governance pressures: infrastructural stress, environmental degradation, unemployment, rising insecurity, corruption scandals, and deepening inequality. These conditions have produced widespread citizen disillusionment and a shrinking trust horizon between government and the governed.

The Muslim Community of Lagos State has therefore convened this general assembly not simply to expand Muslim representation in political spaces but to articulate a value-driven vision of governance reform. The underlying assumption of this paper is that political participation without ethical direction risks reproducing the very pathologies it seeks to overcome. Hence, Islamic ethics must function not as decorative religious rhetoric but as an organizing moral grammar for public life.

The ethical dimension of governance has long preoccupied moral philosophers across civilizations. Confucius taught that “to govern means to rectify; if you lead on the basis of virtue, the people will follow like the North Star.”¹ Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi insisted that “power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than power derived from fear of punishment.”² These insights echo the Islamic insistence that legitimate authority rests not merely on coercive power, but on moral credibility. Thus, the Lagos governance challenge is not only administrative; it is fundamentally ethical.

Understanding Lagos

Though some influential observers once described Lagos as chaotic, dysfunctional, and effectively ungovernable, and a city where disorder appeared permanent and state authority irrelevant, since the return of Nigeria to democracy, it has moved from the so-called ungovernable space to an enviable governance model, not only in Nigeria, but across Africa. Central to this shift has been a dramatic overhaul of the state’s tax system, which increased compliance and accountability. Internally generated revenue rose from under \$200 million in

1999 to over \$1 billion by 2011, funding improvements in infrastructure, sanitation, security, and public transportation.

Much of the credit has been attributed to its visionary leaders who prioritized governance over political theatrics. Many foundational reforms began under Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu, an astute political actor whose administration laid the institutional groundwork for later progress by his successors. Lagos's governance improvements thus emerged from the interaction of political ambition, institutional continuity, and societal engagement. The state as a result of this became positioned as a modern commercial megacity. These efforts often aligned but sometimes conflicted with entrenched patronage networks. It was observed that where the reform efforts benefited both political interests and public services such as taxation and waste management, progress was steady; and where they threatened powerful constituencies, such as transport unions and youth gangs, implementation was slower and required negotiated compromises.

Sustained reform in Lagos was driven by an unusually strong political will, shaped by intense pressures on political elites. Without access to oil revenues, Lagos depended on internal revenue generation. Lagos's leaders therefore sought not only electoral survival but national relevance and long-term institutional dominance. Over time, growing political stability and party control created space for deeper reforms and durable institution-building. Ultimately, Lagos's experience demonstrates that effective governance reform in developing contexts arises not from technocratic idealism alone, but from the alignment of political incentives, elite pressures, and institutional capacity. Lagos did not become governable by chance; it became governable because disorder became politically and economically unsustainable.³

Lagos politics is loud, transactional, and very complex, but that is precisely why it works. Lagos is not a typical Nigerian state; it is a city-state and Africa's fastest-growing megacity economy. Governing it requires competence, strategy, and realism, not sentiment. Unlike many places where politics thrives on pity and emotional appeals, Lagos rewards capacity. Leaders are judged by their ability to manage the system and control urban complexity. This is why the state consistently produces technocrats and administrators rather than populists.

Though historically Yoruba, Lagos functions as a politically inclusive space, though this inherent accommodation is often abused. Non-indigenes have held powerful political and economic positions. Politics here is not ethnic- it is structured. Those who organize and build systems belong; those who do not, complain. Lagos politics is also institution-driven, not messianic. Power rests in strong political structures that outlive individuals. Governors change, but policies, reforms, and institutions endure - a rare phenomenon in Nigeria.

Economics is central in Lagos. Its leaders understand that power is sustained by revenue, not slogans. Through efficient taxation, diversified income, business-friendly laws, and strategic infrastructure financing, Lagos expands wealth instead of managing poverty. Its politics is unapologetically realist. Interests are negotiated, alliances shift, and survival depends on adaptability. This realism has enabled Lagos to withstand federal pressure, opposition, population growth, and economic shocks. Above all, Lagos sets the national agenda. Tax reforms, public-private partnerships, transport innovation, and digital governance were pioneered there before spreading nationwide. Lagos politics is often disliked because it exposes incompetence, punishes laziness, rejects entitlement, and demands discipline. It is not perfect, but it is functional. And in a country weighed down by sentiment, functionality is revolutionary.⁴

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Ethical Foundations of Governance in Islam

Governance, according to Islam, is premised upon the higher objectives of Divine legislation (*maqāsid al-Shari'ah*) that is, the goals towards which the legal and extra-judicial provisions of the shari'ah gravitate. According to Al-Ghazali {d. 1111}, these objectives are the promotion of the wellbeing of mankind as a whole through safeguarding of their faith, their self or soul, their intellect, their posterity and their wealth. Several authorities throughout the ages have attempted to rearrange the sequence of the '*maqāsid*', but the majority seem to have endorsed Al-Ghazali's list and sequence.⁵

Any system of administration therefore must acknowledge that man is a moral being in whom the Divine has programmed the ability to discern between what is good and what is not. This ethical dimension of man is managed and coordinated by faith in Allah because moral values tend to fall within the caveat of relativism. What is therefore needed is ethical absolutism which is only possible with faith in a divine authority. It is faith that provides the worldview which shapes the human personality and provides the moral filter that injects meaning and purpose into man's relationship with fellow men. When faith is safeguarded, the other focal points of the 'maqāsid' namely, the human self, intellect, posterity, and wealth are given proper direction. The Sharia thus embraces all aspects of human life in its provisions. Good governance according to Islam therefore guarantees an all-round felicity for man by protecting his moral and spiritual wellbeing through his faith in Allah, his individuality and identity by nurturing his selfhood, his intellectual growth by illuminating and enriching his thoughts, his posterity through adequate provisions for his progeny, and his material possessions by functional fiscal legislation to safeguard his wealth.

It is perhaps necessary to re-assert that Islam gives us no particular form of government. Two extreme schools exist on this issue. One claims that Allah has given us total freedom to construct our system of government based on our intellect and the socio-political realities and peculiarities of our land and time. The second school, on the other hand, insists that Islam provides a comprehensive, highly detailed and particularized system of government. The truth in reality lies somewhere between these two extremes. While Islam gives a certain amount of freedom to men to decide how they are to be governed, it does not leave them at the mercy of their whims and caprices. Neither does it impose a particular political system on men in obvious recognition of the cosmopolitan complexity of their nature. It rather gives a set of rules and principles which constitute the Islamic ideal. This ideal can be adapted to any system of governance. Its core essence is Divine sovereignty and its goal is to create a state where men are able to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. Maudūdi opines:

The state of Islam is not intended for political administration only nor for the fulfillment through it of the collective will of any particular set of people; rather, Islam places a high ideal before the state for the advancement of which it must use all the means at its disposal. And this purpose is that the qualities of purity, beauty, goodness, virtue, success and prosperity which God wants to flourish in the life of His People should be engendered and developed and that all kinds of exploitation, injustice and disorder which, in the sight of God, are ruinous for the world and detrimental to the life of His creatures, are suppressed and prevented.⁷ Good governance is thus seen in Islam as any system based on God-consciousness, moral probity, respect for the rule of law, social justice, mutual consultation and collective responsibility.

In Islamic intellectual tradition, *akhlāq* denotes the cultivated disposition that orients human conduct toward justice, moderation, and responsibility. Al-Ghazālī describes ethical refinement as the cornerstone of both personal salvation and social harmony.⁸ Ethics is therefore not peripheral to governance; it is its internal logic.

The Qur'an frames the Prophet Muhammad (saw) as the archetype of moral-political excellence: "Indeed, you are upon an exalted standard of character" (68:4). Governance in Islam thus derives legitimacy not only from procedural authority but from moral credibility.

Good Governance in Contemporary Discourse

Modern governance theory emphasizes transparency, accountability, participation, rule of law, responsiveness, and equity.⁹ These principles mirror the objectives of Islamic governance encapsulated in the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*: protection of dignity, justice, welfare, and rights.¹⁰ This convergence allows Islamic ethics to dialogue constructively with global governance frameworks rather than oppose them.

In modern political discourse, attention has shifted from efficient government to good and ethical government. The focus is now about being good, and about maintaining and achieving societal standards of trust, respect, integrity, civility, compassion, and benevolence, and this is not restricted to political functions alone but also economic policies.¹¹ In light of this, it is obvious that in Nigeria, a new sociopolitical and economic ideology is needed to meet the challenges facing the Nation. This ideology does not have to be entirely new in its contents. It may be a modification of the Western concept of democracy plus piety, in line with our worldview, vision of society, value-framework and moral ethos. This means that the most appropriate governance model- governance

with piety and moral conscience must replace the most applauded, but the least properly applied system popularly known as democracy because our quest for sociopolitical and economic justice is a continuum, and our failure to achieve it has proved to be the most tragic theme of the contemporary Nigerian history.

Nigeria is not alone in this. The quest for good governance is a global phenomenon. Authorities such as Wilfried Beckerman in his 'Crisis in Economy or Economics'; Amitai Etzioni in his 'The Moral Dimension: Towards a New Economics'; Cristovam Buarque in his, 'The End Of Economics: Ethics and the Disorder of Progress', have all argued in favour of morality- driven socio-economic and political systems in the post-industrial societies. The link between moral values and socio-economic behaviour both at individual and governmental levels has been torn asunder during the ascendance of secular capitalistic systems. Political analysts, economists and social theorists are all trying today to re-discover the missing ethical link. James Robertson in his monumental work, 'Future Wealth: A New Economics for the 21st Century', writes:

Unlike both the capitalist and socialist versions of conventional economics, the 21st century economy must be based on recognition that people are moral beings whose freedom as such should not be narrowly bound by impersonal parameters laid down by market and state. The 21st century economy must accept, as an aspect of self-reliance, that people need space in which to exercise moral responsibility and choice in their economic lives. Measures designed to allow this free space to people as individuals, and also to groupings of people in local economies and national economies {especially in the Third World}, must be part of the new economic order... The new economics must thus transcend the materialist assumptions of a conventional economics: that economic life is reducible to production and consumption; that wealth is a kind of product that has to be created before it can be consumed; and that wealth production and wealth consumption are successive stages in a linear process which converts resources into waste. It must re-interpret the manipulative concern of conventional economics with the production and distribution of wealth and the allocation of resources into a developmental concern with how to enable people to meet their needs, develop themselves, and enhance the resources and qualities of the natural world. It must recognize that because human beings are moral beings the basic questions about economics are moral questions.¹²

Consequently, political office holders, public officials, and public institutions are strategically positioned to significantly wellbeing of our societies. They are therefore expected to be ethically above board because in a democracy, officials and institutions are supposed to act in the name of the people and on the authority of the people only. Their actions must therefore conform to the moral principles known and shared by all.¹³

Ethical Foundations of Governance in Islam

Amānah (Trust)

Public authority in Islam is a trust, not an entitlement. The Qur'an commands:

"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people, judge with justice." (4:58)

Al-Māwardī identifies *Amānah* as the primary qualification for political office, preceding even technical competence.¹⁴ This principle delegitimizes corruption, nepotism, and patrimonial rule. It emphasizes God-consciousness and accountability. It is anchored on the belief in the trans-worldly reference of human actions. It encompasses far more than the simple notion of "trust." It connotes a comprehensive moral responsibility that drives all human actions in both private and public spheres. In the context of governance, it includes accountability, equitability, honesty, and the ethical conduct in the position of authority. The Qur'an asserts in many areas that positions of authority do not translate into privilege but duty, and that those who are entrusted with them shall account before Allah. Throughout Islamic history, especially in the era of the Prophet (saw) and the rightly- guided *Khulafā*, it was the understanding of *Amanah* that shaped governance models that prioritized public welfare, protected the weak, and ensured fairness in policy-making.¹⁵

In the modern age, where many nations, particularly the third world countries, face challenges such as social injustice, corruption, political instability, and institutional distrust and mistrust, embracing the Islamic concept of *Amanah* offers a timeless and universal framework for rebuilding ethical governance. The era of the Rashidun

Caliphate (632–661 CE) is widely regarded as the golden embodiment of Amanah-based governance. Each of the four rightly guided caliphs upheld high moral standards, accountability, humility, and service to the public, ensuring that leadership remained a trust rather than a privilege.

The rightly-guided Khulafa proved to be excellent models of an Amanah-driven governance model. Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (ra) operationalized the principle that rulers are servants of the people, not masters, and his transparent handling of public funds, to the extent of refusing a high stipend from the state treasury, was a model for trustworthy governance. Umar ibn al-Khattab (ra) institutionalized accountability through public consultations, and firm action against corruption. He insisted that his appointed representatives in the nations and town under Muslim rule declare their assets before taking office reflects a strong commitment to preventing the misuse of authority. While Uthman ibn Affan (ra) implemented administrative reforms, ensuring meticulous financial management and record keeping. Ali bn Abi Talib, despite the crisis that dominated his times was known for moral leadership, justice, equal treatment of all citizens. Their records, despite the meagre resources at their disposal, show that the revival of *Amanah*-centered governance has the potential to restore public confidence and promote sustainable development.¹⁶

‘Adl (Justice)

Justice constitutes the axis of Islamic political legitimacy:

“O you who believe, stand firmly for justice, even against yourselves.” (4:135)

Ibn Taymiyyah argued that a just non-Muslim government is preferable to an unjust Muslim one, establishing justice - not religious identity - as the measure of political validity.¹⁷

The universality of justice as the foundation of political legitimacy transcends religious boundaries. Martin Luther King Jr. warned that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”¹⁸ This moral interdependence parallels the Qur’anic demand to uphold justice even against oneself. Hence, justice in Islamic governance is neither sectarian nor parochial; it is a universal ethical imperative.

Shūrā (Consultation)

The Qur’an praises communities “whose affairs are conducted by mutual consultation.” (42:38). Shūrā institutionalizes participatory governance, aligning Islamic political theory with democratic deliberation.¹⁹ It delegitimizes authoritarian decision-making and elite monopolization of power.

Muḥāsabah (Accountability)

The Prophet (saw) declared: “Each of you is a shepherd and each of you will be questioned about his flock.” This extends accountability beyond law into conscience and divine audit.

Ethical accountability in governance also finds resonance in secular moral philosophy. Immanuel Kant argued that a just society requires leaders who act according to principles they would will as universal law.²⁰ This aligns closely with the Prophetic declaration that every leader will be questioned concerning their trust. Islamic *muḥāsabah* thus converges with global ethical rationalism.

Maṣlaḥah (Public Welfare)

Al-Shāṭibī defines public welfare as the ultimate objective of Islamic law and policy.²¹ Governance policies must therefore prioritize collective benefit over factional or personal interests.

Diagnosing Governance Challenges in Contemporary Lagos

Africa’s governance crisis has been described as a fusion of institutional fragility and moral erosion.²² Lagos exemplifies this condition through:

- Corruption and weak oversight institutions

- Patronage-based political recruitment
- Youth political alienation
- Urban inequality and informal settlement neglect
- Public distrust in political authority

These problems are as ethical as they are structural.

Corruption, the Lucifer Effect, and Islamic Political Ethics: A Nigerian Perspective

Philip Zimbardo's 'The Lucifer Effect: How Good People Turn Evil' offers a powerful framework for understanding how ordinary individuals become capable of unethical and corrupt behaviour -not primarily because they are inherently immoral, but because of the situations and systems in which they operate. This perspective shifts the analysis of corruption away from purely personal moral failure to the powerful influence of social structures, institutional cultures, and environmental pressures.

It argues that corruption thrives less on evil intentions and more on moral blindness cultivated by flawed systems. By diagnosing corruption as a situational and structural problem, it opens the door to deeper, more sustainable reforms, ones that transform environments, not just individuals.

It explains how situational forces and defective systems can transform ordinary individuals into perpetrators of injustice. Islamic political ethics, however, offers a more morally complete framework- one that acknowledges situational pressure without dissolving moral responsibility. When applied to Nigeria, Islamic ethics provides both a corrective and a completion of Zimbardo's insights.

Situational Evil and the Islamic Concept of Fitnah

Zimbardo's "corrupting situation" corresponds closely with the Qur'ānic notion of *fitnah* - a trial that tests moral integrity under pressure. Power, wealth, and authority are explicitly described in Islam as tests, not privileges:

"Indeed, your wealth and your children are but a trial (*fitnah*)."
(Qur'ān 64:15)

Thus, while Zimbardo describes how situations corrupt, Islamic ethics frames such situations as moral examinations, where failure is possible, but not excusable. The presence of *fitnah* intensifies accountability rather than diminishing it.

Rejecting Moral Determinism: *Nafs*, Choice, and Accountability

Unlike the deterministic tone sometimes inferred from the Lucifer Effect, Islam insists on moral agency or choice (*ikhhtiyār*). Even under systemic pressure, the human being retains choice. Corruption, therefore, is not merely situational drift but a consequence of:

- Unchecked Ego
- Weakened *Taqwā* (moral consciousness)
- Absence of internalized accountability

The Qur'ān explicitly rejects the defense of situational inevitability:

"Every soul is held in pledge for what it earns."
(Qur'ān 74:38)

Power, Role Morality, and *Amānah*

Zimbardo shows how role-based authority enables moral disengagement. Islamic political ethics counters this through the concept of *amānah* (trust). Authority in Islam is not ownership but custodianship:

“Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts (*amānāt*) to whom they are due.” (Qur’ān 4:58)

In the Nigerian context, public office holders who rationalize corruption as “systemic” commit *khiyānah* (betrayal of trust or treachery). Islamic ethics thus re-moralizes roles that Zimbardo shows are often de-moralized by institutions.

Systemic Reform and the Principle of *Hisbah*

Where Zimbardo diagnoses “bad barrels,” Islamic political ethics offers a robust institutional solution through *hisbah* - structured public accountability aimed at preventing harm and promoting good. Applied to Nigeria:

- *Hisbah* translates into independent oversight bodies, not politically controlled agencies.
- It legitimizes whistleblowing as moral intervention, not disloyalty.
- It demands proactive prevention, not reactive punishment.

Thus, Islam aligns with Zimbardo’s systemic critique while supplying a normative backbone that his model lacks.

Corruption as Spiritual Disease, Not Just Social Pathology

Zimbardo locates corruption in social psychology; Islam locates it also in spiritual pathology: hardness of the heart, shamelessness, and normalization of illicit wealth.

This explains why structural reforms in Nigeria often fail when not accompanied by moral cum spiritual renewal. Without *Tazkiyah* (ethical purification), new systems simply create new avenues for old vices.

Reclaiming Ethical Resistance:

The Islamic Model of Moral Courage

Zimbardo’s later idea of the “heroic imagination” finds a strong parallel in Islamic ethics, which celebrates resistance to injustice. This is captured by ‘enjoining what is good and forbidding what is evil’ (*Al-Amr bi al Ma’ruf wa al-Nahy ‘an al Munkar*). This goes beyond mere preaching. It is the ethical vigilance of someone who sees the establishment of good and the abolition of evil as a lifelong vocation. It is the phenomenon of resisting all negativities and supporting all positivities. It is carried out with speech, conduct, and attitudes. It is in this light that Islamic history valorizes those who spoke truth to power, even under threat.

For Nigeria, this means:

- training public officials to recognize ethical danger zones,
- morally legitimizing refusal of illicit orders,
- protecting dissent grounded in conscience and law.

Toward an Integrated Anti-Corruption Framework for Nigeria

The challenge of corruption is endemic in the Nigerian superstructure and Lagos is not an exception. A genuinely Islamic response to corruption in Lagos and Nigeria as a whole must combine:

Zimbardo’s situational awareness (systems can corrupt).

It must be understood that in truth, systems and situation can influence people to commit crimes. It is the responsibility of the government to try as much as possible to minimize this phenomenon. Crime-inducing factors should be reduced to the barest minimum.

Islamic moral agency (humans remain accountable)

Despite the impact of systems, situations, and environment, man must remain responsible for his actions. People should be orientated to the fact that they must claim ownership of whatever they do and its consequences. However strong the negative stimuli are, there are individuals in the system who still resist the temptations to involve in crime.

Institutional hisbah (checks and balances)

Corruption exists everywhere in the world but strong nations have developed the institutional capacity to combat it effectively. The crime-fighting architecture must be strengthened, and non-governmental whistleblowing mechanisms must not only be recognized and supported, but also protected by law.

Ethical formation (Taqwā, Amānah, Murāqabah).

Individuals must strive to be more God-conscious. The natural appurtenances of God-consciousness such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, patience, perseverance, and contentment will naturally grow stronger as Taqwah becomes firm-rooted in the heart.

Similarly, a multisectoral approach is required. The family, school, and places of worship all have roles to play in instilling positive ethics in the children who will later grow up to inherit the system.

Zimbardo explains how good people fall. Islamic political ethics explains why they must not, and how they can resist failure. Nigeria's anti-corruption struggle will remain incomplete until it treats corruption not only as a systemic failure but as a breach of trust before Allah, society, and history.

Blueprint for Ethical Leadership

Leadership Ethical Formation

Muslim elites should establish leadership academies integrating Islamic ethical theory, public administration, financial accountability, and conflict management.

Meritocratic Political Recruitment

The Qur'anic injunction that "the best person to employ is the strong and trustworthy" (28:26) mandates competence-driven candidate selection.

Institutional Transparency

Advocacy for open budgeting, procurement monitoring, and independent auditing aligns with Islamic principles of public trust protection.

Social Justice Advocacy

Policies promoting equitable education, youth entrepreneurship, and inclusive urban planning operationalize justice in concrete governance practice.

Consultation Mechanisms

Community consultative forums serve as contemporary expressions of shūrā, strengthening participatory legitimacy.

Blueprint for Responsible Citizenship

Political Participation as Moral Duty

Civic engagement fulfills the Qur'anic command to enjoin good and prevent wrongdoing (3:104).

Citizen Oversight

Civil society monitoring of public projects embodies muḥāsabah in modern institutional form.

Anti-Corruption Culture

Mosques and Islamic organizations must cultivate public stigma against bribery and vote-buying.

Youth Civic Education

Integrating governance consciousness into youth religious programs ensures generational continuity of ethical citizenship.

Policy Proposals for Lagos State

1. Ethics and Integrity Units in ministries
2. Digital citizen feedback and complaint platforms
3. Public asset declaration verification systems
4. Faith-based welfare partnerships
5. Urban justice initiatives for informal settlements

These reforms bridge ethical vision and governance pragmatics.

Role of Muslim Elites

Muslim elites must function as moral exemplars, policy innovators, sponsors of ethical political actors, mentors for emerging leaders, and bridges between mosque, market, and state.

Nelson Mandela reminded political leaders that “a good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination.”²² For Muslim elites, this means pairing intellectual competence with moral integrity. Without ethical hearts, skilled governance becomes technocratic domination; without competent minds, moral zeal becomes ineffective idealism. Islamic ethics demands both.

CONCLUSION

The governance crisis in Lagos is ultimately a crisis of values. Islamic ethics offers a comprehensive moral grammar capable of reorienting leadership conduct, citizen participation, and institutional design toward justice, accountability, and public welfare. Muslim political participation must therefore transcend identity politics and embody ethical transformation. If pursued sincerely, Lagos can emerge as a model of value-driven governance in Nigeria's democratic experiment.

The moral urgency of ethical governance was eloquently captured by Václav Havel, who observed that “the real test of a society's moral culture is what it does for its weakest members.”²³ Islamic ethics similarly places protection of the vulnerable at the center of public policy. Lagos can therefore become a model city where governance is measured not by skyscrapers alone, but by justice, compassion, and dignity for all.

NOTES

1. Confucius, *The Analects*, trans. D. C. Lau (London: Penguin Classics, 1979), 2.1.
2. Mahatma Gandhi, *Young India* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1925), 34.
3. Diane de Gramont, *Governing Lagos: Unlocking the Politics of Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015), 1–5.
4. Ugoji Maximillian, “Lagos Politics: Why It Is Loud and Beautiful—and Why It Works,” Facebook post, accessed January 2026.
5. Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2004), 1:12–15.
6. Umer Chapra, *The Future of Economics* (Leicester: Islamic Foundation, 2000), 118–19.
7. Abul A‘lā al-Mawdūdī, *Islamic Law and Constitution* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1960), 45–46.
8. Al-Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 3:5.
9. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Governance for Sustainable Human Development* (New York: UNDP, 1997), 2–4.
10. Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ‘Āshūr, *Treatise on Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*, trans. Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi (London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006), 87–90.
11. Christoph Demmke and Timo Moilanen, *Effectiveness of Good Governance and Ethics in Central Administration* (Maastricht: European Institute of Public Administration, 2011), 15.
12. James Robertson, *Future Wealth: A New Economics for the 21st Century* (London: Cassell, 1990), 10–12.
13. Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Ethics and Politics* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006), x.
14. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996), 75.
15. Shoaib Arif, “Amānah as the Foundation of Islamic Governance,” *Alaijaz Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 9, no. 4 (2025): 1–5.
16. *Ibid.*, 6–8.
17. Aḥmad Ibn Taymiyyah, *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1998), 28.
18. Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” 1963.
19. John L. Esposito and John O. Voll, *Makers of Contemporary Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 67–69.
20. Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper, 1964), 88.
21. Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī, *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī‘ah* (Riyadh: Dār Ibn ‘Affān, 2005), 2:8.
22. Claude Ake, *Democracy and Development in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), 3.
23. Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (London: Abacus, 1994), 622.
24. Václav Havel, *Disturbing the Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 181.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Ake, Claude. *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996.
2. Al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid. *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifah, 2004.
3. Al-Māwardī, Abū al-Ḥasan. *Al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyyah*. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1996.
4. Al-Shāṭibī, Abū Ishāq. *Al-Muwāfaqāt fī Uṣūl al-Sharī‘ah*. Riyadh: Dār Ibn ‘Affān, 2005.
5. Arif, Shoaib. “Amānah as the Foundation of Islamic Governance: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives.” *Alaijaz Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities* 9, no. 4 (2025): 1–10.
6. Confucius. *The Analects*. Translated by D. C. Lau. London: Penguin Classics, 1979.
7. Demmke, Christoph, and Timo Moilanen. *Effectiveness of Good Governance and Ethics in Central Administration*. Maastricht: European Institute of Public Administration, 2011.
8. Esposito, John L., and John O. Voll. *Makers of Contemporary Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
9. Gandhi, Mahatma. *Young India*. Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 1925.
10. Gramont, Diane de. *Governing Lagos: Unlocking the Politics of Reform*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.
11. Gutmann, Amy, and Dennis Thompson. *Ethics and Politics*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2006.
12. Havel, Václav. *Disturbing the Peace*. New York: Knopf, 1991.

13. Ibn ‘Ashūr, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir. *Treatise on Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah*. Translated by Mohamed El-Tahir El-Mesawi. London: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2006.
14. Ibn Taymiyyah, Aḥmad. *Al-Siyāsah al-Shar‘iyyah*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1998.
15. Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by H. J. Paton. New York: Harper, 1964.
16. King Jr., Martin Luther. “Letter from Birmingham Jail.” 1963.
17. Mandela, Nelson. *Long Walk to Freedom*. London: Abacus, 1994.
18. Robertson, James. *Future Wealth: A New Economics for the 21st Century*. London: Cassell, 1990.
19. United Nations Development Programme. *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*. New York: UNDP, 1997.