

Integrating Spirituality and Politics: Insights from Islam and Christianity on Religiosity and Governance in Contemporary Society


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The purpose of this paper is to explore the relationship between the spiritual and the political in contemporary times through an analysis of two contrasting approaches linking the spiritual and political spheres. This is achieved through an examination of religious values, spiritual beliefs, political objectives, and an exploration of Sufism's interconnectedness between the spiritual and political realms. The study also examines the religious foundations of the Moroccan model of religiosity characterized by the institution of the Commandery of the Faithful and its principles in modern governance, with a focus on integrating spiritual values into leadership for societal harmony. The findings of this research, based on an analytical study of literary theories and a comparative study of governance and spirituality in Islam and Christianity, underscore the crucial importance of balancing spirituality and politics to address modern socio-economic and environmental challenges. The study also emphasizes the significance of balanced governance that respects religious diversity spiritual insights, and value-driven leadership for societal well-being.

Key Words: leadership, politics, spiritual, Sufism, Commandery of the Faithful, Vatican

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INTRODUCTION

This scientific paper addresses the relationship between the spiritual and the political in our contemporary era through two distinct approaches: linking the spiritual and the political spheres and examining religious values, spiritual beliefs, and political objectives. Additionally, it explores Sufism's interconnectedness between the spiritual and the political.

[236] The study explores the spread of Sufi culture through a distinctive logic grounded in timeless principles. This cultural framework evolves by adapting to the shifting spiritual needs of different eras. Historically, Sufism has served as a remedy for clan conflicts and a catalyst for the progressive development of individuals and societies, embodying a fundamental aspect of what is known as Muslim civilization.

To deepen this examination, the study includes a comparative analysis with the Vatican system. In this context, the research aims to delve into the core principles of the Moroccan model of religiosity, epitomized by the Commandery of the Faithful, and its application in modern governance. The focus is on how spiritual values are integrated into leadership to foster societal harmony and cohesion.

The question is particularly pressing: Should we politicize the spiritual or spiritualize the political? Which path offers the necessary wisdom to guide our contemporary societies? In this context, infused with spirituality and deep reflection, we are called to carefully examine the implications of this question for our contemporary society based on an analytical study of literary theories, emphasizing the crucial importance of balancing spirituality and politics in addressing modern socioeconomic and environmental challenges.

The first approach, politicizing the spiritual, involves using religious values and spiritual beliefs for political purposes. This can take various forms, from using religious rhetoric to justify political actions to exploiting religious sentiments to mobilize voters. However, this politicization can lead to situations where spiritual principles are distorted or manipulated to serve partisan interests, risking division rather than unity (Mubarak 2009).

In contrast, the path of spiritualizing politics proposes an approach where spiritual and ethical values guide political decision-making. This involves integrating principles such as justice, compassion, solidarity, and respect for human dignity into public policies. It means placing human beings and societal well-being at the heart of political actions, based on deep ethical foundations.

Spiritual governance aims to promote spiritual stability, a crucial aspect of societal well-being due to its deep connection to the nations' beliefs and convictions. Spiritual stability is fundamental because it not only shapes but also represents the identity and character of societies. Any shortcomings in spiritual stability can lead to behavioral and social deficiencies, which may subsequently manifest as acts of violence



and extremism. This underscores the profound impact of spiritual governance on maintaining societal harmony and stability.

To deepen the theoretical exploration of spiritual governance and ethical leadership, this research adopts an interdisciplinary framework, incorporating perspectives from sociology, political science, and philosophy. From a sociological perspective, spiritual values are critical in shaping social cohesion and impacting organizational behavior. Political science offers the structural context within which political values are legitimized, reinforcing the legitimacy of governance systems. In parallel, philosophical analysis of morality provides the foundation for the moral principles that guide leadership practices (Kim 2018).

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The research uses both theoretical frameworks and empirical case studies to illustrate how modern governance models, such as the Moroccan model, can be practically applied through the integration of spiritual values. This study concludes with a comparative analysis between the Commandery of the Faithful in Morocco and the Vatican's system to illustrate how spiritual leadership can significantly impact political governance and societal progress.

By combining spirituality with political theory, this study offers a forward-looking perspective on spiritual governance, highlighting its essential role in peacebuilding and fostering the development of contemporary societies.

SPIRITUAL GOVERNANCE AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The intersection of spirituality, governance, ethics and leadership suggests that specific values and mindsets can significantly impact how a leader interacts with and guides their followers. Within this scope, we can mention values of tolerance, solidarity, respect, coexistence and forgiveness. The concept of spiritual leadership theory provides insights into how an individual's inner life and personal beliefs shape their effectiveness in leading others (Samul 2020).

This theory plays a crucial role for leaders who aim to guide people and foster a sustainable work environment within a community or an organization. In an era marked by constant fluctuation, leaders must cultivate stability and security to navigate external challenges effectively. Therefore, spiritual Governance is essential to cultivate a strong sense of identity among followers, understand the deeper significance of events and situations, and align the community's values with a coherent and purposeful vision (Samul 2020).

[238] The social values distinguishing right from wrong form the core of organizational behavior and establish the basis upon which leaders guide employees toward achieving organizational goals. Ethical leadership involves influencing employees through a framework of values, principles, and beliefs that align with the established norms of organizational conduct. These elements collectively define the essence of ethical leadership (Alshammari, Almutairi, and Thuwaini 2015).

Ethical leadership has emerged from the confluence of complex and extensive challenges that have shaped leadership research. The development of leadership concepts and the impact of globalization have significantly influenced the evolution of ethical leadership, moving beyond traditional leadership models. Thus, the normative inquiry into what defines a good leader highlights the importance of value-based leadership in enhancing contemporary organizational performance. Consequently, the theoretical exploration of ethics and leadership has become a foundational principle for various organizations and fields. This emphasis on ethical considerations has led to a focus on charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership as essential elements of effective leadership within ethical frameworks (Alshammari, Almutairi, and Thuwaini 2015).

Throughout history, many scholars and philosophers have reflected on the complex relationship between the political and the spiritual. Their teachings and writings have enriched our understanding of these two spheres of human life and their interaction. Among these thinkers, several figures stand out for their significant contributions to this multidimensional reflection.

Paul Thibaud, the French philosopher and writer, addressed the relationship between the political and the spiritual by emphasizing their complementary roles in the shared pursuit of hope. For him, the political and the spiritual should not be opposed or separated but rather interconnected and cooperative in striving for the ideal of a more just and humane society (Thibaud 2014, 3).

Thibaud posits that politics addresses practical and material aspects of societal life, such as political, economic, and social organization, resource management, and conflict resolution. The spiritual, on the other hand, concerns questions of meaning, values, transcendence, and human destiny. Both dimensions are essential as they address fundamental human needs that are both material and spiritual (Thibaud 2014, 3).

Thibaud insists that politics should be driven by spiritual values such



as justice, solidarity, compassion, and respect for human dignity. Similarly, spirituality should not remain abstract; it must be actualized in concrete actions to transform society and improve human conditions. He considers the political and the spiritual to be interdependent and advocates for their collaboration to promote hope by building a better world where the material and spiritual dimensions of human existence are balanced and harmonious (Thibaud 1978). [239]

Plato, a prominent figure in ancient Greek philosophy, profoundly reflected on the relationship between the political and the spiritual in his dialogues. His work, notably in dialogues such as *The Republic* and *The Laws*, explores the ethical and spiritual foundations of political governance to guide the establishment of a just and balanced society. For Plato, harmony between spiritual wisdom and political governance is essential for creating an ideal society. He believes that political leaders should be philosophers or wise individuals imbued with moral and spiritual values, capable of guiding society toward the common good. In *The Republic*, he describes the philosopher as one who has access to truth and knowledge of the ideal forms, enabling him to have an enlightened vision for governance (Lane 2023).

Plato also highlights the importance of education in shaping leaders and citizens. For him, education should aim to cultivate virtue, wisdom, and justice, values that transcend the political domain, and are rooted in the spiritual realm. He proposes an educational system in which philosophy plays a central role, allowing individuals to develop their reasoning and moral sense (Plato 1998).

In his dialogues, Plato warns against the excesses of unenlightened political power, emphasizing the risks of corruption and injustice when governance is not guided by ethical and spiritual principles. He invites deep reflection on the nature of justice, virtue, and the concept of good, each of which has both political and spiritual dimensions (Plato 1998).

Aristotle, as Plato's disciple, further explored these reflections by examining the ethical and political virtues necessary for just governance while recognizing the importance of spiritual values in shaping the character of individuals and leaders (Maurya 2021).

Ibn Khaldun, the renowned 14th-century Arab historian, sociologist, and philosopher, made a significant contribution to the discussion on the relationship between political power and religion in his works, notably in his monumental work *Al-Muqaddima*, where he explored the complex dynamics that emerge when political power and religion in-

teract within a society. He points out that these two spheres are closely linked and can exert reciprocal influence, but notes that this relationship can also be a source of tension and conflict if not managed in a balanced way (Marouani 2017).

[240] Ibn Khaldun observes that when political power is closely tied to religious authority, it can gain increased legitimacy from the population by relying on spiritual and moral principles to justify its actions. However, he warns against the potential abuses of this relationship, emphasizing that the mixture of political and religious power can lead to authoritarianism and fanaticism that are detrimental to society (Pišev 2019).

Furthermore, Ibn Khaldun acknowledges the importance of religion in social and political life as a source of values, norms, and social cohesion. He notes that societies often need an ethical and moral framework provided by religion to maintain order and stability (Garisson 2012).

However, Ibn Khaldun also cautions against the risk of political manipulation of religion, where leaders may exploit religious beliefs for power and control. He calls for a clear separation between spiritual and political institutions while recognizing the importance of a constructive dialogue between these two spheres to promote societal well-being. Ibn Khaldun highlights the nuances and challenges of the relationship between political power and religion, emphasizing both the potential benefits of a balanced collaboration and the dangers of the abusive instrumentalization of religion for political purposes. His analyses continue to inspire reflection on these crucial questions in the contemporary world (Pišev 2019).

Saint Augustine, in the Christian tradition, developed a theory of the relationship between the City of God and the earthly city, offering a profound perspective on the relationship between the political and the spiritual. He emphasized that just and enlightened governance must be rooted in moral and spiritual values to address humanity's deepest needs and aspirations (Tornau 2024).

These thinkers share a common concern for the importance of spiritual and ethical values in political governance. They all recognize that religion can play a crucial role in social and political life, providing a moral and ethical framework for society. However, their perspectives differ on the modalities and practical implications of this relationship.

While Plato insists on the idea of an ideal harmony between the political and the spiritual, Saint Augustine underscores the necessity of



aligning political governance with spiritual values. Ibn Khaldun, for his part, warns against the potential abuses of this relationship and advocates for a clear separation between religious and political institutions while recognizing their interdependence.

Although these thinkers share common concerns about the relationship between the political and the spiritual, their perspectives vary according to their specific historical and philosophical contexts, offering a diversity of analyses and approaches to understanding this complex issue (Peccoud 2004).

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INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUAL VALUES INTO POLITICAL LEADERSHIP

Spirituality can be effectively integrated into the workplace without resorting to proselytism or pressure. True leadership often reflects spiritual principles through actions rather than mere rhetoric, emphasizing qualities like integrity and behaviors that convey authentic empathy and support. Core spiritual values, including integrity, honesty, and humility, are consistently identified as crucial factors that contribute to successful leadership (Reave 2005).

In the context of politics, spiritual values have a significant impact when they shape individuals' worldviews, influence their assessment of conditions, and guide their actions. When individuals view democratic processes positively, recognize their effectiveness, and engage actively to support their institutions, these spiritual values enhance their support for the fundamentals of democracy (Kim 2008).

Religious beliefs can significantly benefit individuals by offering clarity in an unpredictable world, enhancing social cohesion, and shielding them from perceived threats. However, if devout practitioners of mosques, churches, or other religious institutions interpret difficulties as divine punishment, rely on exclusive religious affiliations, and adopt defensive stances towards marginalized groups, their commitment to democratic values may weaken. Although spiritual values can provide personal meaning and a sense of solidarity, they might have a reduced impact on nurturing democratic attitudes, especially in more industrialized societies (Kim 2008).

From a religious perspective, the monotheistic religions – Islam, Christianity, and Judaism – have addressed various aspects of the relationship between the political and the spiritual, each providing its own teachings and perspectives (Firestone 2005).

[242] In Islam, the Quran and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad emphasize justice, equality, compassion, and respect for human rights. Muslim leaders are called to govern with fairness and to protect the rights of citizens, following the principles of Sharia (Ebrahimi and Yusof 2017).

In Christianity, Jesus Christ taught principles such as love for one's neighbor, forgiveness, and the importance of justice and peace. Christians are called to be witnesses to these values in society, including in the political domain (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2005).

In Judaism, the Torah and its teachings offer guidelines for just and ethical governance. Concepts such as social justice, the protection of the vulnerable, and the responsibility of leaders before God are recurring themes in Jewish texts (Rosen 2022).

These religions share common values such as justice, compassion, and moral responsibility, which are fundamental to political governance. They also emphasize the importance of ethical governance that respects human dignity and the rights of all individuals (Gilabert 2018).

The values and teachings of monotheistic religions provide a crucial source of inspiration that guides political choices and promotes the overall well-being of society. They highlight fundamental principles such as justice, equity, compassion, and solidarity, which are essential for ensuring just and inclusive governance (Niazi 2023).

Even in secular countries, where there is a strict separation between religious institutions and the state, promoting religious neutrality in public affairs, it is still valuable to examine the individual and spiritual dimension through the experiences of everyone (Martínez-Torrón and Durham 2014).

These values can guide political decisions by encouraging equitable resource distribution, protecting the rights of all citizens, and implementing social policies that foster inclusion and support marginalized populations. Additionally, they promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts, interfaith dialogue, and cooperation between different religious communities to enhance mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and the construction of more harmonious and resilient societies (United Nations 2008).

By emphasizing these values in our political actions, we can create environments where everyone feels valued, where diversity is celebrated as a richness, and where decisions are made with a spirit of goodwill and collaboration for the common good.



SUFI'S INTERCONNECTEDNESS BETWEEN
THE SPIRITUAL AND THE POLITICAL

Sufism, a mystical tradition of Islam, addresses the relationship between the political and the spiritual in a unique way by teaching that the essence of all existence is a divine unity, where the spiritual and the political are merely different aspects of a broader reality. Thus, in the Sufi vision, there is no absolute separation between these two spheres, but rather a complementarity in the pursuit of truth and perfection (Bilqies 2014). [243]

Sufism emphasizes teaching ethical values such as compassion, tolerance, and kindness towards all human beings. This ethical approach guides the conduct of Sufis in all spheres of life, including the political realm, aiming to promote balance and harmony between the inner and outer aspects of human existence. This means that the spiritual quest should not be separated from responsibilities and commitments in the material world, including political, economic, and social domains (Thibdeau 2021). It also encourages the pursuit of inner truth and self-knowledge. Applied to the political realm, this means an awareness of the deep motivations behind political actions, fostering more authentic governance aligned with spiritual values.

In this perspective, we can mention Ibn Arabi, one of the most influential Sufi thinkers in history. He delved deeply into the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of existence, and his writings often carry an implicit political scope by emphasizing the importance of ethics and wisdom in managing human affairs. His teachings inspired a holistic approach where spirituality and ethical conduct are closely linked, offering valuable perspectives for governance and social life (Thibdeau 2021).

Al-Ghazali, a prominent Sufi of the 11th century, profoundly reflected on the relationship between religious faith, morality, and political governance. His writings highlight the paramount importance of just and ethical governance founded on spiritual principles. For Al-Ghazali, public affairs should be guided by the pursuit of justice, compassion, and integrity – essential values that emanate from the spiritual dimension of human life (Alavi 2010).

Jalal ad-Din Rumi, although primarily known for his mystical poetry, also addressed political and social themes in his writings. He promoted compassion, universal love, and the quest for truth as fundamental values to guide human relations, including those in the political

domain. For Rumi, public affairs should be conducted with compassion and tolerance, enabling peaceful and harmonious coexistence among individuals and communities, regardless of religious, cultural, or political differences (Cihan-Artun 2016).

[244] After exploring the teachings of religions and thinkers on the relationship between the political and the spiritual, let us now consider how these ideas resonate in our present time.

In our era, marked by the complexity of social, economic, and environmental challenges, the path of spiritualizing politics seems to offer valuable wisdom. By integrating spiritual values into our decision-making processes, we can aspire to governance that is more just, equitable, and respectful of human diversity.

Historically, it is known that all Sufi orders in Western Africa, and more broadly in the Islamic world, originated from Morocco. Since the 15th century, Africa has been a major hub for Sufi orders. The impact of Sufi orders on African countries is significant, starting with the spread of Islam and the establishment of numerous educational institutions. Furthermore, these Sufi orders have had a profound influence on the political and economic management of certain African countries, even before European colonialism (Davis 2020).

Despite colonial interventions that led to Christianization and Westernization in many African regions, and the ideological influence of various political systems, Sufi orders have maintained a strong influence on the political and economic spheres of Muslim-majority African countries, and even those with smaller Muslim communities (Clarke 2005).

Sufism is founded on the principles of loyalty and obedience to the 'Sheikh,' who serves as the spiritual leader. Given that many of these 'Sheikhs' hail from Morocco, this allegiance extends to their country of origin as well. As a result, Morocco has developed strong cultural and economic connections with African nations where Sufi traditions are influential. This relationship fosters a sense of interconnectedness and mutual support between Morocco and these countries (Abdul Jalil 2019).

In Sufism, the focus is on collective spiritual development rather than individual self-improvement. Followers, or 'Al-Murids,' are nurtured and educated under the guidance of a 'Sufi Sheikh,' preparing them to become imams and reformers. This approach contrasts with solitary practices and emphasizes community, spiritual brotherhood,



‘Dhikr’ (remembrance of God), and worship. This collective spiritual education has led to the formation of mausoleums, which are centers of spiritual, educational, social, and political reform. These centers definitely play a crucial role in shaping and guiding the Sufi community (Abdul Jalil 2019).

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Sufis have consistently respected the legitimacy of existing political authorities, which, in turn, have not sought to hinder their religious practices. Moroccan Sufi teachings have even spread to other regions, mainly sub-Saharan Africa and other countries in North Africa. Today, Sufism continues to invigorate traditions of mercy, love, and openness in Morocco, particularly towards Mediterranean countries, with which Moroccans have historically maintained bonds of friendship, mutual respect, and cooperation (Sbai El Idrissi 2005).

The Sufi influence is evident in Morocco’s social relations, explaining the country’s enduring traditions of openness, moderation, and tolerance. These traditions prevent the exploitation of religion for purposes other than its intended spiritual role and reject the use of violence to impose ideas or doctrines foreign to Moroccan society. Since the Berbers, or Amazighs, appointed Moulay Driss, a descendant of the Prophet, as their leader twelve centuries ago, Sufi teachings have helped integrate the spiritual and temporal aspects of life in Morocco. This integration has made Morocco a notable example of how spirituality and governance can coexist harmoniously (Sbai El Idrissi 2005).

The enduring influence of Sufi orders like the Tijani, Qadiri, and Mourids has profoundly shaped the relationship between Morocco and other African countries. Presently, any interaction – whether political, economic, cultural, or religious – between Morocco and those nations, mainly in West Africa, is framed by a common narrative: their centuries-old religious connections have established a bond so deep that they consider each other not merely as ‘friends’ but as ‘brothers’ (Lanza 2015).

THE COMMANDERY OF THE FAITHFUL:
THE MOROCCAN MODEL OF RELIGIOSITY
AND HARMONIOUS GOVERNANCE

The experience of the Commandery of the Faithful ‘Imarat Al Mouminine’ in the Kingdom of Morocco, embodied by ‘Amir Al Mouminine’ who is also the King of the country, offers an insightful perspective on this issue. By safeguarding spiritual values while maintaining a

clear separation between the spiritual and the political, this approach demonstrates that it is possible to harmonize these two spheres in a balanced and beneficial way for society (Mbaye 2021).

[246] The vision of the Commandery of the Faithful, embodied by King Mohammed VI of Morocco, offers an enlightening perspective on this issue. Amir Al Mouminine, meaning ‘Commander of the Faithful,’ is a historical title in Islam that acknowledges the spiritual and moral responsibility of the leader towards the Muslim community (Triantaphyllidu and Magazzini 2021).

As Commander of the Faithful, the King of Morocco enjoys both religious and political legitimacy, as specified by the 2011 Constitution. This dual legitimacy allows him to serve as a link between the spiritual and the political, thus contributing to stable governance that respects religious values (Toufiq 2022).

The Commandery of the Faithful ensures the protection of spiritual values by integrating the ethical and moral principles of Islam into political governance. This ensures that political decisions and public policies are aligned with spiritual values and the precepts of theology ‘Sharia’ (Abdul Jalil 2019).

Furthermore, the Commandery of the Faithful fosters dialogue and harmony between the different components of Moroccan society, including religious and political institutions, while ensuring the protection and respect for religious institutions in Morocco, allowing them to fulfill their role in society while maintaining a clear separation between religious and political domains. This constructive dialogue creates a harmonious collaboration for the well-being of society as a whole (Toufiq 2022).

By harmoniously integrating the spiritual and the political, the Commandery of the Faithful contributes to social and political stability in Morocco. This approach fosters trust in institutions and strengthens the social fabric of the nation. Given its roles and missions, the institution of the Commandery of the Faithful is the most solid guarantee of freedom of religion, since the King of Morocco, in his capacity as the Commander of the Faithful, is commander of all believers – Muslims, Christians, and Jews. He is therefore the guarantor who ensures that all followers of the three monotheistic religions have the right to practice their religious rituals freely. This is, therefore, one of the most important and distinctive features of Morocco’s Islamic identity, which combines divine right and true human rights (Toufiq 2022).

Moreover, the Commandery of the Faithful guarantees all people



the opportunity to exercise their religious rights and fully live their faith in African communities, their hearts brimming with spiritual peace and tranquility (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation and Moroccan Expatriates 2023).

To promote stability and counteract extremist threats, the Commandery of the Faithful can assume various roles. It can function as a political entity, enabling the King, in his capacity of religious leader and head of state, to make political and strategic decisions. Additionally, the system can serve as a religious framework for social purposes or as a religious role engaged within specific religious contexts depending on the global vision of the state (Rachik 2016).

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These are immutable religious values commonly embraced by Morocco and the rest of Africa. They can be consolidated only through the achievement of spiritual security in African societies, by transforming human behavior, adhering to divine prescriptions, and upholding the everlasting Message of the revealed religions, under the auspices of the institution of the of the Commandery of the Faithful (Hminmat 2024). These incontrovertible values are based on the behavioral principles fostered by the theology of Sufi orders and religious prescriptions.

The Commandery of the Faithful allows the King to reference the sacred beyond legal norms to structure the political realm. This institution acts as a lever for peacebuilding and addressing other sacred concepts. The King's preeminence is not merely about referring to the sacred, as seen in some Western monarchies (Rachik 2016).

This spiritual system also includes the freedom to reference the sacred at will, invoke tradition at any time, and interpret it for political purposes. Through the Commandery of the Faithful, the King can enforce political and social order while asserting himself as a supreme normative authority and an agent of constraint (Rachik 2016).

The vision of the Commandery of the Faithful insists on the necessity of not politicizing the spiritual. This involves respecting religious freedom and spiritual diversity, refraining from using religion for partisan political purposes, and maintaining spirituality as a source of inspiration and guidance for ethical conduct in all aspects of life.

VATICAN'S AUTHORITY: THE INTERSECTION
OF RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP AND POLITICAL
SOVEREIGNTY

To understand how spiritual values shape governance, it is insightful to examine the Vatican's approach to leadership and Christianity. The

Vatican, as the heart of Christian spirituality, provides a unique perspective on how spiritual beliefs can influence political stability, institutional development, and social harmony (Altmann, Bunta, and Mazimpaka 2012).

[248] This study aims to explore how Christian principles and spiritual leadership impact governance in this theocratic setting. By examining the strengths and challenges of this model, we gain a clearer picture of how spiritual values affect political and social outcomes in different contexts (Altmann, Bunta, and Mazimpaka 2012).

The Vatican captivates both Catholics and non-Catholics with its historical depth and ongoing influence. This storied institution continues to capture public attention as it strives to guide the Catholic Church and shape global events according to its distinct vision (Reese 2003).

Over the past two millennia, the role of Christians in various aspects of life has undergone significant transformation. One notable dimension of this involvement is their participation in political activities. The Church celebrates numerous saints who devoted their lives to active roles in politics and governance. Among these figures is Saint Thomas More, recognized as the Patron Saint of Statesmen and Politicians (Ratzinger and Bertone 2002).

His martyrdom underscored the 'inalienable dignity of the human conscience.' Despite facing severe psychological pressure, Saint Thomas More remained resolute, demonstrating unwavering commitment to legitimate authority and institutions. His life and death illustrate the inseparable link between faith and morality (Ratzinger and Bertone 2002).

In modern democratic societies, it is commendable that individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs, have the opportunity to engage in shaping political life. These democratic settings require varied and enriched forms of participation from both Christian and non-Christian citizens. Every person can contribute to the formulation of policies and legislative decisions that, in their view, promote the common good. The health of a democracy relies on the active, responsible, and generous involvement of all its members, encompassing a diverse range of roles, levels of responsibility, tasks, and duties (Ratzinger and Bertone 2002).

Leadership doesn't follow a one-size-fits-all model, but a notable difference often emerges between leaders driven by personal ambition and those guided by a deeper sense of purpose. Leaders motivated by personal gain tend to view their wealth, positions, and relationships as



their own possessions. In contrast, those who lead with a sense of calling see everything they have as a gift from God. They recognize God as the Creator and understand that all things are under His will (Marek 2015).

For Catholic leaders, God plays a central role in their lives, shaping their work, decisions, and actions. They see their efforts not just as a path to personal or worldly success but as part of a larger mission to advance God's Kingdom. This mindset leads them to approach their responsibilities with a spirit of stewardship, viewing their resources and roles as something entrusted to them temporarily. Like the Biblical parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14, they are expected to manage these gifts wisely and return them with added value (Marek 2015). [249]

In the realm of papal leadership, the Vatican adheres to the principle of papal primacy, which underscores the pope's superior role within the Church. This principle means that the pope, as the bishop of Rome, is considered the universal shepherd and the ultimate authority in the Catholic Church. He possesses comprehensive, supreme, immediate, and global authority to direct the Church (Trigilio 2013).

Christian leaders across the globe increasingly agree on the crucial role of the pope, and there are three main reasons for this. First, looking at history, Christianity was originally organized with major apostolic sees, with the see of Rome occupying the top of the hierarchy. Second, from an ecclesiological perspective, discussions have highlighted the need for both primacy and synodality at every level of the Church's structure – local, regional, and global (De Senneville 2024).

In Catholic social teaching, the common good stands as a central value. Consequently, Catholic leaders are expected to prioritize the well-being of all in their organization over personal benefits. Their goal should be to bring their team together in pursuit of the organization's mission, thereby supporting the growth and prosperity of the Christian community. By focusing on these collective efforts, leaders help advance broader societal progress and contribute to global development (Marek 2015).

FINDINGS

It is undeniable that religion profoundly impacts the development of individuals, societies, and nations. Max Weber highlighted the role of cultural influences rooted in religion as a key factor in the emergence of capitalism. Today, it is noteworthy that many secular organizations

and governments engaged in humanitarian and development work increasingly acknowledge the crucial role of spirituality (Hitzler 2015).

[250] Religion shapes not only individual and societal values but also guides social attitudes, economic activities, and political engagement. In many ancient cultures, religion was not merely a distinct aspect of life but, in fact, served as the central organizing principle. Unlike the contemporary understanding of religion as something separate from daily life, in these societies, it was intertwined with every aspect of existence. The belief in god was integral to the framework through which reality was understood and navigated (Hitzler 2015).

A fundamental distinction between these two approaches lies in their treatment of spirituality and politics. In the religious framework, authority is anchored in divine laws that are considered immutable and not subject to human modification. In contrast, the pragmatic political approach advocates for societal evolution, encouraging adaptation and change in response to emerging challenges and circumstances (Mubarak 2009).

Indeed, it must be said that the wisdom for our time lies in balancing the political and the spiritual, aiming to spiritualize governance through ethical values while respecting religious diversity and avoiding conflicts motivated by religion. This requires a commitment to interfaith dialogue, the promotion of universal values, and the pursuit of inclusive and equitable solutions for all (Schoenberger 2024).

It is essential to spiritualize the political sphere while preserving the integrity of the spiritual domain, thereby avoiding any instrumentalization for political or self-serving ends. This approach emphasizes that the spiritual dimension should illuminate and enrich political conduct rather than be exploited for partisan interests. It thus underscores the importance of maintaining a clear distinction between the practical aspects of social affairs, which belong to politics, and the values, morals, and quest for meaning inherent in the spiritual domain.

By infusing the political with a spiritual dimension, we seek to incorporate ethical principles, moral values, and spiritual teachings into the decisions and actions of political leaders and citizens. This implies a governance approach founded on justice, compassion, solidarity, and respect for human dignity, inspired by religious or philosophical teachings.

The Commandery of the Faithful is an element seen as instrumental in fostering progress and prosperity and in nurturing African societies



that are capable of rising to future challenges, with a forward-looking vision that considers development needs.

The dissemination of Sufi culture follows a distinctive logic grounded in timeless principles. This cultural framework evolves to meet the changing spiritual needs of different periods. Historically, Sufism has acted as a remedy for clan conflicts and a catalyst for the positive and progressive development of individuals and societies, serving as a crucial component of what is recognized as Islamic civilization. [251]

In Morocco, the Commandery of the Faithful represents a distinctive blend of spiritual and political authority. The King, who holds the titles of Commander of the Faithful and Head of State, combines religious and political roles into a unified form of legitimacy (Triantaphyllidu and Magazzini 2021). This fusion ensures that governance is closely aligned with Islamic principles and spiritual values, creating a stable and cohesive political environment. By integrating these roles, Morocco aims to harmonize spiritual security and political governance, and to foster social stability and coherence (Abdul Jalil 2019).

The Moroccan system emphasizes the importance of dialogue between religious and political institutions to enhance social harmony. The King's dual role acts as a conduit between spiritual and political spheres, promoting collaboration for the common good. This approach helps manage societal diversity and maintains stability by aligning various aspects of Moroccan society (Toufiq 2022).

The Commandery of the Faithful integrates Islamic ethical and moral principles into its governance framework. This integration influences public policies and societal norms, ensuring they are consistent with spiritual values. Such alignment of governance with spiritual and ethical principles contributes to a stable and cohesive political system (Abdul Jalil 2019).

The Vatican similarly merges spiritual and political authority through the role of the Pope. As the supreme leader of the Catholic Church, the Pope holds significant influence both within the Church and in global affairs. This integration of spiritual and political dimensions allows the Pope to shape Church doctrine and influence international relations, demonstrating how spiritual leadership can affect political and social spheres (Trigilio 2013).

The Vatican prioritizes social harmony through its moral teachings and social doctrines, aiming to promote peace, justice, and communal welfare on a global scale. By advocating for social justice and ethical gov-

ernance, the Vatican's influence extends to shaping societal development and fostering global cohesion (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2005).

[252] Similarly, the Vatican's impact on governance is significant, though it operates through a different mechanism. Papal teachings and social doctrines guide both Church and secular leaders in making ethical decisions and shaping governance. The Vatican's authority extends into ethical governance, influencing policies and societal development through its moral and doctrinal teachings (Seidler 1986).

Based on our comparative study, it is evident that the Commandery of the Faithful and the Vatican system exemplify how spiritual authority can shape political governance and societal development. Both demonstrate similarities in combining political and spiritual authority, promoting social cohesion, and guiding leadership with ethical and moral principles. However, their methodologies and contexts differ, highlighting the unique integration of spirituality and politics (Fry 2005).

The Moroccan model centers around the King's dual role within an Islamic framework, primarily influencing a predominantly Islamic population. In contrast, the Vatican's approach is rooted in the global tradition of the Pope's influence over the Catholic Church. Understanding these differences and similarities offers valuable insights into how spiritual and political roles can be effectively integrated in contemporary societies (Nejjar 2018).

It becomes evident that the mission of both models is to spread values of peace and coexistence. This commitment drives religious leaders, both Muslims and Christians, to ardently stand up for the world's spiritual security, preserving and protecting it from any flaw or weakness that may lead to vulnerability, division, strife, confusion, or dispute over immutable religious values or doctrinal choices.

The study of spirituality and politics explores how religious perspectives shape development processes. Its unique contribution lies in its focus not just on religious institutions and organizations, but on the ideas and beliefs within religions. Religion plays a crucial role in fostering social trust and cohesion, which are essential for development. In communities where religious belief is deeply ingrained in daily life, religion serves as a significant asset. It can be harnessed for various purposes, whether by those seeking to dismantle societal structures or by those aiming to construct and improve them (Haar 2011).



Spirituality naturally invokes feelings of goodness, kindness, love, and peace – toward oneself, others, and the divine. It serves as a powerful tool for cultivating integrity within society. In contrast, politics encompasses the activities of gaining and exercising power in public life, including the ability to influence decisions that affect the community. The connection between politics and religion is profound, as there is often an intersection where they converge (Olumide 2021).

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Integrity is central to this study; it is highlighted when both spirituality and politics exemplify it as they support and advance democratic principles. This is done by promoting and upholding values such as tolerance, coexistence, justice, and freedom. Despite various development strategies and efforts by religious and political leaders to foster integrity, many initiatives aimed at achieving significant development and integrity have often proven ineffective (Olumide 2021).

Religious beliefs and political leadership are deeply interconnected. Achieving political success is often seen as a sign of divine favor or spiritual blessing. Many religious traditions hold that a leader's effectiveness and legitimacy are reflected in how well their actions align with spiritual principles. This perception suggests that political achievements can be interpreted as endorsements of one's adherence to religious values (Serrano 2023).

However, focusing solely on religious aspects without considering political realities can undermine effective governance. Leaders who concentrate only on religious practices may find it challenging to address practical political and social needs, which can affect their effectiveness. To govern successfully, leaders must balance their spiritual values with the practical demands of politics (McKay and Whitehouse 2015).

Belonging to a religion can encourage leaders to integrate sacred principles into their political decision-making. This integration can significantly influence how public affairs are managed. Effective political leadership involves not only tangible achievements but also alignment with ethical and spiritual values. In other words, successful governance should reflect a harmony between spiritual values and political decisions, fostering a cycle where spiritual principles guide policy-making, and political outcomes, in turn, support religious practices (Fernando and Jackson 2006).

From a social standpoint, religion and faith continue to serve as vital sources of inspiration and motivation, particularly in the context of

[254] welfare and humanitarian efforts. Many religious communities leverage their beliefs as a foundation for advocating justice and equitable living. Religion remains a potent tool for mobilizing people against cultural abuses and excesses that marginalize and oppress others. Thus, it is evident that religious ideas, institutions, and practices play a crucial role in achieving the comprehensive and meaningful life that individuals and societies strive for (Mtata 2015).

Policymakers must implement principles that encompass universal social and human values, particularly equality, tolerance, and ethics, ensuring their integration across all sectors of governance. These policies should be carefully tailored to meet the diverse needs of society, allowing for the expression of individual identities and beliefs while safeguarding against the misuse of spirituality for political ends.

In conclusion, the spiritual and political realms share a common vision for society, one that prioritizes human well-being, collective prosperity, and social harmony. This convergence is rooted in the belief that moral, political, social, and economic dimensions should be integrated into a cohesive system, where each aspect supports the others to promote sustainable development and a high quality of life for all.

The creation of clear and focused policies that uphold universal values, such as equality, tolerance, and ethics, is essential for their effective application in governance. These policies must be responsive to the specific needs of society, respecting diverse identities and beliefs, and preventing the exploitation of spirituality for political purposes.

The adoption of a multidimensional approach that covers social, economic, political and spiritual aspects serves contemporary society in accordance with the values of a national governance system that prioritizes citizens' well-being, social cohesion, and harmony.

The results of this study ought to be a wellspring of inspiration and motivation for regional and international organizations, governments, policymakers and religious leaders, anthropologists, and cultural experts to deepen their analysis, collaborate, and consider the correlation between the political and the spiritual in contemporary society within their projects and decisions, while balancing their values in governance and considering religious values. Dialogue, in this case, will be the only facilitator of preserving respect and promoting communication through the involvement of both political and spiritual actors.

Within the scope of this study, it should be noted that the ideas expressed in this paper result from well-supported opinions based on thorough reflections and research. It is essential to continue exploring



and debating these questions with an open mind and mutual respect in order to promote inclusive societies that respect the spiritual diversity of everyone.

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