

Editorial

Islam promotes a comprehensive development of human potential in all its stratifications and ramifications to enable Muslims to better perform their role as *khalīfat Allāh* (Allah's vicegerent) on earth. Good governance, economic prosperity, intellectual and spiritual enrichment, social and psychological welfares, and sustainable development of human and natural resources, among others, are an integral part of the duty of *khalīfat Allāh*. No single Muslim state today is capable of providing all these requirements without cooperating with other states. The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) was primarily established to promote cooperation among the member states and to serve the common economic, political, social, cultural, spiritual, and scientific interests of Muslims as guaranteed by Islamic *Sharī'ah*. The basic challenge to Muslim scholars today is how to re-articulate Islamic principles and values promulgated in the *Sharī'ah* in a way workable in contemporary contexts.

The Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunnah are unquestionably the primary sources of reference in the *Sharī'ah*. Early Muslim jurists used a variety of means to reach their legal precepts and adapt to unfolding issues in their socio-historical contexts. Besides basic reliance on the Qur'ān and the Prophetic Sunnah, they adopted other secondary sources of legislations which they found to be in tune with the purpose of Islamic *Sharī'ah*. This includes *ijmā'* (consensus), *qiyās* (analogical reasoning), *istiḥsān* (juristic preference and consideration of the common good), *istiḥāb* (presumption of continuity), *maṣāliḥ mursalah* (unrestricted interests), *'urf* (customary practice) and the like. These secondary sources incorporate techniques of discovering and prioritising the laws and values embodied in the primary sources and then contextualising them in the socio-historical situations of the subsequent generations. Furthermore, they facilitate the extension of Islamic rulings to issues which were not explicitly addressed in the Qur'ān or Prophetic Sunnah.

Operationalisation of these codes of conduct within the contemporary technology-based, service-driven outlook is of utmost concern. For example, in the economic sector, Islam endorses certain forms of economic activity in which all parties get their fair share, but bans other forms due to their exploitative practices or malpractices. In particular, it forbids *ribā* (usury), *maysir* (gambling), excessive *gharar* (ambiguity/uncertainty), and engaging in *ḥarām* (religiously forbidden) products. Interpreting and contextualising these economic codes of conduct and activity has formed the basis of the contemporary multidisciplinary approach to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) by Muslim jurists, economists, and legal practitioners. As a result, the classical forms of *muḍārabah* (trustee finance contract), *mushārah* (joint venture or equity participation contract), *murābahah* (profit-sharing), *ijārah* (lease or lease-purchase agreement), and *bay' salam* (deferred delivery purchase), among others, are now being reinvigorated within the contemporary financial apparatus.

The recent global financial crisis, which wreaked havoc on financial institutions in many parts of the world, has led, in part, to search for alternatives beyond Western secular conventions. With this, a good number of Islamic banking and finance institutions started to attract global attention. Many Western financial markets introduced Islamic windows or subsidiaries within their conventional banking or offered Islamic financial products to their customers. Though criticised, perhaps justifiably, for not being sufficiently Islamic, Islamic banking is gaining increased acceptance in many parts of the world, especially in high-growth emerging economies.

What needs to be reiterated here is that the fundamentals of Islam are firmly enshrined in the Qur'ān and Prophetic Sunnah. Qur'ān 5:3 declares that Islam was already finalised in the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad: "Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My blessing upon you, and chosen for you Islam as your religion". Yet the interpretation of these fundamentals as well as their implications and applications transcend their immediate space and time. In this respect, Islam could be likened to a tree alluded to in Qur'ān 14:24 whose roots are firmly fixed but branches are reaching out skyward. To demonstrate the originality and flexibility of Islamic teachings, there should be a serious and sustained multidisciplinary *ijtihad* to understand the primary and secondary objectives of the *Shari'ah* and

adapt to the contemporary conditions within the framework of Islamic principles and values. Thus, *Shari'ah*-compliant banking and finance should not be seen as an end in itself, but as part of a broader project of showcasing the “living Islam” and strengthening Islamic values in a world suffering from increasingly disenfranchised religious values. Muslims need to show by word and action the dynamics of Islamic teachings in an attempt to demonstrate the viability of religious solutions to our contemporary problems.

This issue of *Intellectual Discourse* begins with an article on active Muslim participation in international economic projects. Samiul Hasan relates principles of the UN Global Compact to the Islamic principles of business ethics and social responsibility. According to the author, the basic human rights and economic codes of conduct contained in the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact, promote sustainable business practices through social responsibility and are perfectly in line with the fundamental Islamic principles of business and economic activities. Yet, the participation of Muslim majority countries (MMCs) in the Global Compact is very low compared to other countries. Regime types, economic structures, and civil society conditions are the factors which the author considers to have contributed to the low participation of MMCs. He urges Muslims to implement the Compact in their own sphere of economic activities for business sustainability based on the Islamic provision of “public interest”.

The second and third articles deal with media and politics in Malaysia and Sudan respectively. Aini Maznina A. Manaf and Nerawi Sedu examine how the Malaysian government framed Islam-related issues through the four Malaysian mainstream newspapers in order to gain the Malay votes during the 13th Malaysian General Election in 2013. The most frequently reported Islam-related issues were the controversy over the application of *hudud* (prescribed punishments), the debate over the status of Malaysia as an Islamic state, and the dispute over the use of the word *Allah* to describe the Christian god. In the context of a multi-religious Malaysian society, Islam-related issues play a major role in the voting decisions among the Malay Muslims, and these issues, according to the authors, were portrayed in a way that favoured the ruling coalition. Next, Syed Arabi Idid and Saifeldin Hassan Elawad investigate the influence of new media agenda on traditional news

media agenda by analysing intermedia agenda-setting during the 2010 Sudanese presidential election. Based on the intermedia agenda-setting theory, the authors examine the relationship between socio-political blogs and the newspapers.

The fourth and fifth articles address issues related the status of women in Islam. Zakyi Ibrahim provides a critical assessment of Ibn Hazm's theory of the prophecy of women by analysing the four premises of Ibn Ḥazm's argument. Ibn Ḥazm recognised the prophecy of women and indeed considered the mothers of the prophets Iṣḥāq, Mūsā, and 'Īsā, as well as the wife of Fir'aawn mentioned in the Qur'ān as God's prophets. The author considers the verses testifying to the communication between God and these women, upon which Ibn Hazm relied, insufficient to establish their prophecy and thus advances an argument against Ibn Hazm's conclusion. In contrast to Zakyi's conclusion, Huda Hilal advances an argument in support of female leadership by matching leadership qualities of prominent male and female leaders based on the Qur'ānic narratives. The author identifies the leadership qualities of Prophet Muhammad, Dhū al-Qarnayn, Ṭālūt, and Prophet Sulaymān and compares these qualities with those of Queen Āsiyah, Queen Balqīs, and Maryam, the mother of Prophet 'Īsā. Drawing on the success story of these women, she calls for greater female involvement in high-level positions in their societies.

In the Review Article section, Elfatih A. Abdel Salam analyses a thread of literature published in the last three years which have looked at a series of events surrounding the Arab Spring from different perspectives. He reviews the factors leading to the revolts, their impacts, the role of social media, and the international reactions. Contrary to general expectations suggesting that the Spring signalled the birth of democracy in the region, the author considers it a process with an incomplete uprising and uncertain results. He cautions that the Spring may turn into a long and cruel winter as each Arab nation is moving in different and sometimes opposing directions.

Finally, this issue features a new section on *Interview* with prominent scholars and experts to discuss key issues within the scope of the journal. Our goal is to let the selected interviewees share their experience and the course they have taken to realise their accomplishments. To

start this off, Rahmattullah Khan Abdul Wahab Khan interviewed the prominent Muslim psychologist, Malik Badri, on his contributions to the Islamisation of psychology over the last five decades.

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