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Editorial

This June 2020 issue of *IIUM Journal of Religion and Civilisational Studies* extends our commitment to engage with a wide range of topics related to civilisational studies with a distinct orientation towards religions and morality as principal catalysts in civilisational and human development.

Civilisation denotes both moral and material values. "It is all that humanity has achieved," declared Marcel Mauss, while for Eugene Cavignac it was "a minimum of science, art, order and virtue" (Braudel, 1995, p. 4). Nevertheless, civilisation is mainly seen as a manifestation of material progress and enhancing the quality of life. Richard Greaves, in *The Civilisations of the World*, for instance, described the term civilisation as "a culture characterised by the building of cities, the development of a complex social and political structure through stratification and the evolution of a formal economic structure through the division of labour" (Greaves, 1993, pp. 1-2).

The journal of *Religion and Civilisational Studies* contributes to this discourse by highlighting the significance of religion and ethics in building civilisations. In that sense, it completely differs from the 'Clash of Civilisations' narration of the role of religions in contemporary world, which was introduced in 1996 by Samuel Huntington's book, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order.* The Clash of Civilisations theory is devised within the frame of Huntington's quest for a substitution paradigm to the dual ideological conflict that regulated international relations during the Cold War period. The main argument in his paradigm is that future conflicts will be due to religious and cultural differences, and as a result, they will be longer, bloodier, and more destructive.

In line with our journal's dedication to emphasise on the harmonious and interactive nature of the various religions and cultures, the first article, "The Orientalist Legacy in Huntington's Clash of Civilisations Theory and Its De-Mythization," authored by Mawloud Mohadi and

Elmira Akhmetova engages in a critical analysis of Huntington's thesis. Indeed, the authors tackle Samuel Huntington's approach towards the nature of civilisation and its origins, as well as the Orientalist elements within his theory of Clash of Civilisations in particular and thoughts in general. Huntington's theory is viewed by the authors as a continuation of prior theories that have explained world order as a conflicting interaction between ideological poles. Thus, Huntington's book could be classified as the US policy-makers' attempt to trigger rivalry to create potential foes in the post-Cold War era. In contrast to the portrayal of religious and cultural diversity as a potential source of destruction and bloodshed, this article highlights the significance of religions in providing universal peace and progress, and suggests establishing a dialogue among different civilisations and cultures so as to contribute to the common human civilisation.

The following articles in the issue uphold the same orientation by highlighting the constructive function of religions in societal wellbeing and state-building. Fatmir Shehu and Bukuri Zejno, for instance, explore the methodology of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in dealing with other religions based on several historical incidents that happened during the period of revelation. The authors highlight that the essence of the Prophetic methodology in dealing with the followers of different faiths and cultures was built on the tawhidic paradigm based on practice of wisdom, compassion, fairness, respect and good advice. By his actions and attitude, the Prophet (PBUH) created a friendly environment in the inter-religious discourse, and showed the best historical example of religious tolerance and dialogue. As the article demonstrates, the Prophet (PBUH) mostly utilised six methods (descriptive, objective, altruistic, analytical, dialogical and pacific) in responding to the behaviours and claims of other religions' adherents. As the incidents discussed in this paper demonstrate, he consequently achieved (1) changing non-Muslims' hostile feelings towards him, (2) respecting him and his Prophetic mission, (3) embracing Islam by others, and (4) establishing a friendly relationship and peaceful coexistence between Muslims and other religious communities. Hence, according to the authors, Islam encourages the establishment of good relations with the followers of other religions and thus, there is a need to study, analyse and understand the Prophet's methodologies and apply them to the relevant discourses and realities.

The third article entitled "Muslim Specula Principum: The Art of Islamic Governance" written by Asilatul Hanaa Abdullah aims at analysing the impact of the pre-Islamic Arab and Persian cultures on the Indian Muslim civilisation, which subsequently influenced the Malay world. To display the pattern of intercivilisational interactions and dialogue of traditions, the article focuses on a particular genre of the art of governance, mirrors for princes, which derived from Islamic civilisation's interaction with the Sassanids. This fusion of Hellenistic, Sassanid and Islamic traditions took a proper form in the 10th century, setting down the tenets of good governance in Islam. The article summarises that Islamic culture is based on the concepts of universality, openness and flexibility, which exist not in isolated chambers, but, rather, within a continuum of expanding culture. Thus, instead of having clashes and bloody conflicts, civilisations are mostly evolving, exchanging ideas and legacy, and complementing each other in terms of scientific, technological and moral advancements.

The final article written by Amjad Mohamed-Saleem, entitled "Re-Thinking Muslim Political Identity in Sri Lanka," discusses the concept of Sri Lankan 'Muslim' identity which is politically 'constructed' as a response to colonial influence and nationalistic aspirations of other ethnic communities within the country. Based on the case of Sri Lankan Muslims, the article highlights that ethnic institutionalisation transformed religious consciousness into a political identity in order to survive as a minority group within a nation-state thus leaving the community with a hybrid identity. It also discusses the issues related to political elites of the Muslim community who failed at establishing the status of their communities and at resolving the challenges in a positive way. In this regard, the author highlights the need for behavioural changes among Muslim communities in Sri Lanka, and suggests to start projecting to benefit the whole country and become part of a peaceful solution rather than the cause of potential conflicts.

We are also pleased to carry a review of "Democratic Transitions in the Muslim World," edited by Ali Salman, Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil (published in 2018 by Pelanduk Publications) contributed by Syaza Farhana Binti Mohamad Shukri. The reviewer considers this edited book as an introductory

literature beneficial for those who are beginning to dip their toes into the debate on Islam and democracy.

Finally, on behalf of the Editorial Board, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere gratitude and best wishes to Associate Professor Dr. Hazizan Md. Noon, who contributed greatly to the formation and success of this journal in his capacity as Editor-in-Chief from June 2018 until December 2019. We are indebted to Dr. Hazizan for this memorable experience, and his continual guidance and support throughout various difficulties we have faced during the publication of the initial issues. Finally, let me extend my heart-felt appreciation to all our contributors. Their valuable and enlightened contributions will, I am convinced, be of interest to scholars worldwide. Finally, my thanks and appreciation go to all members of the Editorial Board, our Editor Dr. Alwi Alatas, Book Review Editor Dr. Kaoutar Guediri and Assistant Editor Sr. Norliza Saleh. This issue became reality due to your dedication, efforts and sincerity. May Allah bless you all.

Elmira Akhmetova
Editor-in-Chief
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The Orientalist Legacy in Huntington's Clash of Civilisations Theory and Its De-Mythization

Mawloud Mohadi[1] and Elmira Akhmetova[2]

Abstract: This paper investigates Samuel Huntington's approach towards the nature of civilisation and its origins, as well as the Orientalist elements within the theory of Clash of Civilisations in particular and Huntington's thoughts in general. For this purpose, the paper first reviews the theory's historical background and theoretical basis. Then, it identifies and categorises the nature of the civilisational clash narrative and suggests that it has been used in academic literature since the beginning of the 20th century. This paper also attempts to describe and analyse Huntington's paradigm and the Orientalist influence on his thought, particularly his idea that the future of the post-Cold War world would be dominated by civilisational conflicts triggered in the fault lines between the seven or eight major world civilisations. In addition, the paper makes an attempt at defragmenting the civilisational clash theory and gives an alternative paradigm. It concludes that the concept of the 'Clash of Civilisations' does not fit contemporary historical happenings, but could be considered as an attempt of US policy-makers to trigger rivalry to create potential foes. The article uses qualitative research based on historical, political and analytical methods, through which the authors have collected and interpreted data accordingly.

Keywords: Samuel Huntington, Clash of Civilisations, Orientalist legacy, Political Interests, Post-Cold War, Paradigm.

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Introduction to Huntington's Clash of Civilisations Theory

Huntington's *The Clash of Civilisations* was devised within the frame of his quest to define a new post-Cold War clashes, which in turn was de facto a quest for a 'substitution paradigm' to the dual ideological conflict that took place during the Cold War. The main argument in this new paradigm is that future conflicts will be due to religious and cultural differences, and as a result, they will be longer, bloodier, and more destructive (Huntington, 1997).

Huntington agitatedly relates that global peace is witnessing a serious menace of a so-called 'clash of civilisations', that will predominate international relations and world politics after the end of Cold World War. Huntington's timing is also relevant, for several parts of the world have been marginalised after the Cold War. Eventually, they are supposed to make their voices heard and their existence felt. Western universalism was rejected by those Third World countries which reached some level of self-sufficiency and cooperation. This spirit undoubtedly presents a challenge to the Western supremacy after it had done away with the threat of communism. The paradigm paved the way for the United States to re-establish a new mind-set different from that of the Cold War and present it to a new audience (Sajjad, 2013).

It is worth noting that in order to fully grasp Huntington's theory in context, one must understand the connection established by Huntington between his theoretical analysis of the clash of civilisations and his US policy making strategies. One also should regard the geopolitical interests behind the theory of civilisational clash. According to Professor Ahmet Davutoglu, the search for geopolitical goals and controlling international trade zones are key features of legitimising the civilisational clash theory (Davutoglu, 1997).

In addition to Fukuyama's *The End of History* vision for the post-Cold War world, two authors in 1993 suggested another vision concerning future world politics, Max Singer and Aaron Wildavsky declare the future existence of dual-zone world: peace and conflict zones. They envisioned that in the 21st century, some societies would be endowed with wealth, peace and democracy, while a huge number of people would be cornered in the zone of turmoil where they could be mutilated by wars, violence and terror. Nevertheless,

Huntington (1996) tried to discredit the theory of the End of History, as well as the dual-zone vision. Moreover, Huntington argues against Zbignew Brzezinski's (1993) world in anarchy image. It fails, he says, considering the several existing institutions, governmental and non-governmental associations and organisations that conspicuously provide a remarkable order and could predict future of world systems (even though, it must be admitted, such order is sometimes inadequate, such as the world community's failure to act to prevent genocide in Rwanda or Bosnia) (Bell, 2002).

Alongside the abovementioned perspectives which drew the most attention, other visions are worth mentioning, such as the New World Order initiated by the Bush administration and Paul Kennedy and Robert Kaplan's contributions in future conflicts. Benjamin Barber (1995) also promoted another perspective on the new order. He argues that though global economy is evident, cultural difference still exist, therefore they can cause conflicts. However, these conflicts will remain within states' boundaries and will not reach a global scale (Barber, 2001).

This article accordingly focuses on Huntington's Clash of Civilisations theory, viewing it as a continuation of prior theories that have explained world order as a conflicting interaction between ideological poles. The most important aspect of the Huntington's Clash of Civilisations is explicitly postulated in his works, as he argues that the clash would clearly be between the West and the East or the European/American civilisation and the Islamic civilisation. It is worth noting that the stereotypical ideas of prejudices and ethnocentrism have been embedded in Huntington's views. Edward Said, a robust proponent of Huntington's idea, ironically stated that the representation of massive units called 'the West' and 'Islam' is irresponsibly and unfairly represented, as immensely complex matters such as identity and culture are in the context of an animated domain in which characters cruelly attack each other, with a character represented as always superior and virtuous having the upper hand over his opponent (Said, 2001). Furthermore, Nefeily has expressed similar discontent against Huntington's representation and has urged modern researchers and intellectuals to propagate an anti-clash trend based on constructive dialogue that will create world of togetherness instead of division, segregation and demolition of world cultures. To achieve the concept of

dialogue, Nefeily indicated that a fair representation is required which should be dissociated from biasness and aggression (Nefeily, 2009).

Theoretical Bases of Huntington's Theory

The Cold War theory that was based on the ideological collision of communism and capitalism that was irreconcilable is actually a simplification of the dynamics of happenings. Similar to Kennan's thesis that led to the policy of containment, Huntington searched for a reductive but effective paradigm in his post-Cold War mapping. This paradigm goes hand on hand with the ideas of neo-realist school that characterised US foreign policy.

In his new paradigm, Huntington's scheme of analysis derives heavily from Arnold Toynbee, who drew great attention in the first years of the Cold War (1947-48) with his work on Civilisations taken as a unit of study. Eventually, Huntington's *The Clash of Civilisations* suggested that 'civilisation' or 'civilisations' as terms were central in a study. Also, one can assume that the popularity of both Huntington and Toynbee was due to the sense that they were able to convey, in part through the language they employed, a depth of historical perspective and weightiness of theme (Sajjad, 2013).

In the theory's foundation, concerning the effects of cultures in conflicts among states, Huntington's Clash of Civilisations theory cannot be separated from the arguments that are extracted from world politics paradigms. Morgenthau, for instance, insists that the 19th century world wars and other conflicts were the results of differences on the interpretation of states norms or the inability to cope with them at all (Morgenthau, 2005).

Realistic and idealistic scholars from Morgenthau to Wright have debated the impact of cultural differences in aggravating world conflicts. Nevertheless, these scholars did not attribute conflicts to cultural differences as significantly as Huntington. In addition, Huntington, in terms of the enduring conflict between Islam and Christianity, is considered to base his work on the findings of Bernard Lewis. This leads us to the role of Orientalism in Huntington's formation of staunch attitudes towards Islam, in which Bernard Lewis is accredited to have had the greatest impact (Errol & Tucker, 2001).

The processes of conceptualising Islam and the West in mainstream literature are profoundly problematical. According to Edward Said, they both have been irrationally portrayed as entities that are bolted in an implacable struggle. These complicated and transforming societal entities are often considered monumental and unchanging in their structure. This idea of human grouping is similar to what Benedict Anderson (1983) has referred to as imaginary communities, conceptualised as presented in specific ways and structures by their own constituents and by others. The vague notion that the West is a monolithic civilisation with a cultural correlation to Western Europe's history shows cracks when analysed intently (Karim & Mahmoud, 2012).

Edward Said questions the perception of a stable well-identified area of the world, distinctive from others stating that:

> How can one today speak of "Western civilisation" except as in large measure an ideological fiction, implying a sort of detached superiority for a handful of values and ideas, none of which has much meaning outside the history of conquest, immigration, travel, and the mingling of peoples that gave the Western nations their present identities? (Said, 1994, p. 374).

Aside from any biasness or reductionism, it is fair to say that the West as a civilisational entity must be recognised as having evolving, permeable, corresponding, multi-ethnic, and paradoxical composite characteristics that are also persistent in other world civilisations.

The Clash of Civilisations cites several academic fellows of Huntington who are specialised in political sciences and foreign policy making, He also cites various governmental strategists and statisticians' works to indicate cultural differences relevant to his theory of Clash of Civilisations. Concerning Huntington's basic arguments and his simplification of cultures and civilisations, he heavily utilised past events recorded by authors who observed and discussed cultural differences and civilisations. His thesis dealt with more recent events, such as the Cold War where he commonly quotes some contemporary diplomats, political scientists, and strategists such as Zbigniew Kazimierz and Kissinger. Finally, approaching the pinnacle of his

argument, he utilised his contemporaries' views such as Fukuyama and Lewis.

Although the initial focus in his text accentuates historical authors that have tried to define culture, ethnicity and civilisation from the eyes of social scientists, Huntington primarily singles out those authors from the Nixon era through the end of the Cold War period (essentially, his contemporary colleagues). In Huntington's defence, he does provide citations from Mahbubani and Mahathir, but only to substantiate or advance his arguments in support of his overall thesis since he avoided mentioning any non-Western figures presenting different perspectives which are contradictory to his thesis. He rarely quotes a non-Western academicians or scholars to provide a critical viewpoint that differs from his own, without dismissing it in kind (Said, 2001).

Origins of the Clash Concept

There was but a little time between the show up of the theory of civilisational clash and its ascent to the peak of global political agenda. Many scholars relate the term Clash of Civilisations to Bernard Lewis. However, the intellectual debate about the Clash of Civilisations had started much earlier by Oswald Spengler in his book entitled *The Decline of the West* in 1918. Spengler defined history by civilisations (cultures) and made civilisation a term of reference for historical study.

Some date back the earliest development of the idea of Civilisational Clash to the late 1920s, when Basil Mathews, an Indian missionary, used the term in his book, *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilisations*. Ahmet Davutoglu relates that there is remarkable likeness between Mathews' and Huntington's analyses and approaches to cultures and civilisations. Furthermore, in a special issue of *The Congressional Quarterly* published in 1979 on the US Foreign Policy: Future Directions was an article entitled *Iran between East and West*. The paper discussed that the envisioned clash between the Eastern and the Western civilisations would continue after the Iranian Revolution (Teter, 1979).

There had also been a mention of the term Clash of Civilizations in 1990 by Bernard Lewis in his article entitled *The Roots of Muslim Rage*. In fact, the thesis articulated by Bernard Lewis in this article should be

seen as a turning point in Orientalist approach. Bernard Lewis and his Orientalist peers are by now different from the traditional Orientalists, because they emphasised on the inevitable clash with the Other. For the new Orientalists, their emphasis on the concept of civilisational clash took away the traditional Orientalism that used to view the East as the silent Other that had become more active and less mute. Thereby, Lewis pictured the Muslim civilisation as an active Other when he reductively defined Islam as an anti-Western religion.

The concept of Clash of Civilisations held by the new Orientalist trend can be characterised in three levels. Firstly, they ascribed the term civilisation with wider cultures such as Confucian and Islamic cultures. Secondly, they considered the Muslim civilisation as a more active Other alien from the Western civilisation by using the paradigm of us and them, self and other. Lastly, these authors viewed a civilisation as a one block-piece that could collide with others after the end of the Cold War. Their argument was that civilisations may clash among themselves in the same way that states do (Jiang, 2014).

The three above-mentioned levels of characterisation have become so evident in Western literature, especially after Huntington had published his article entitled *The Clash of Civilisations* in 1993 by *Foreign Affairs*. Several writers started describing global politics of the post-Cold War era referencing to the Clash of Civilisations work and focusing on the Muslim world likely conflict with the West. This idea would dominate world politics and replace the lines of conflict drown in the Cold War. Terms such as 'Islamic fundamentalism', 'Islamic terrorism', 'Islamic extremism' and 'radical Islam' are used to describe the Muslim 'Other' within the civilisational clash context (Balci, 2009).

Operationalising Huntington's Concept of Civilisations, Characteristics and Typology

Scholars who held quantitative analyses on Huntington's theory, found difficulty in the operationalisation of the concept of civilisation, that is the categorisation of each majority and minority groups within

determined civilisations. This difficulty resides in the fact that Huntington divides the world into eight major civilisations based on religion. He seems uncertain about Buddhism; either it makes up an independent civilisation, or it is joined to the Sinic/Confucian one. Also, doubt was incurred by joining Israel to Western Civilisation, despite the disparate nature between Jewish and Christian cultures (Huntington, 1997).

Another problem raised by Huntington's definition and classification of civilisations is the difficulty of putting minority groups (Afro-Americans in the USA and Black Muslims in Africa, for instance) within the frame of any of the eight major civilisations. Indigenous people, in respect to Huntington's division, do not fit into any of his civilisations (Jonathan, 2002).

The Clash of Civilisations thesis claims that religions are the driving forces that would define a civilisation. However, Huntington's argument on religion and its lion-share in civilisation still questionable. According to Huntington, Christianity is the religion of Western, Orthodox and Latin American civilisations. But he puts apart Latin America as it is considerably Catholic neglecting that Spain, Portugal, Belgium, France and Italy are also mostly Catholics. Thus, for the sake of argument, if Huntington prescribes three Christian civilisations, what could have prevented him from dividing Islam into its sects or racial lines (Sunni and Shi'ah; Arab, African and Malay) (Alam, 2002).

Berger and other critics have claimed that the Clash of Civilisations theory failed to attribute West's homogeneous entities (Berger, 2003). In her article entitled *The Modernizing Imperative: Tradition and Change* published in *Foreign Affairs*, Jeane Kirkpatrick criticised Huntington by stating that:

> Huntington's classification of contemporary civilisations is questionable … If civilisation is defined by common objective elements such as language, history, religion, customs and institutions and, subjectively, by identification, and if it is the broadest collectivity with which persons intensely identify, why distinguish "Latin American" from "Western" civilisation? Like North America, Latin America is a continent settled by Europeans who brought with them European languages and a European version of

> Judeo-Christian religion, law, literature, and gender roles (Kirkpatrick, Weeks, & Piel, 1993, pp. 1-2).

In his book, Huntington depicts civilisations as fragmented and internally ununited. He insists that Muslim countries are ethnically fragmented into Arabs, Africans, Malays, Persians, Pakistanis, and they all have distinct religious views. Thus, Huntington's categorisation as well as the delineation are not solid as he believed. For example, one could note that cultural differences between the Chinese and Vietnamese are less important than of the Japanese and Chinese. Nevertheless, Huntington considered China and Vietnam as a part of Sine Civilisation while the Japanese belonged to another separate one. It is also worth noting that Huntington had separated civilisations of the Western and Orthodox based on non-religious exclusion. What is notable too is that differences within Muslim communities are ignored as well.

Former Columbia University Professor Edward Said responded to the Clash of Civilisation thesis in his paper *The Clash of Ignorance*. He argued that the idea to limit the world civilisations to fixed bodies and entities obliterates the dynamism and interaction among world cultures, and noted that Huntington's paradigm could be the source of conflicts and collisions rather than peace or harmony. The idea promoted by Huntington that each culture is enclosed and distinct with special fate and psychology which could be used to determine the civilisation structure and geography may result the legitimacy of some self-serving geopolitical interests (Said, 2001).

The True Nature of Huntington's Civilisational Conflict

Huntington claims that after the Cold War, state conflicts would be based on disparate levels of wealth among countries. He states that poor countries lack the political unity, economic power, and military capability to challenge the rich countries (Huntington, 1997). Ironically, this idea opposes the main objective of his thesis about the most threatening menace to the West coming from Islam and China. He perhaps deliberately ignores the fact that several Muslim countries, even the most populous ones such as Indonesia, are considered among the world's poorest countries. The same could be said about China;

despite two decades of rapid growth, if compared with the West, it still looks quite poor. Additionally, the Muslim world has no unity in terms of politics, and it is divided into more than fifty nation-states. Ironically, to this point Huntington seems to have contrasted his civilisational clash thesis, which argued that most clashes generate from cultural differences when he explained the genesis of conflicts among civilisations (Alam, 2002).

Huntington often justifies his stand by relying on Bernard Lewis' ideas, as he believes that to define self-identity one needs an enemy. In order to assert his views, Huntington states that there could be no real friends without real enemies, and without hating what we are not, we are unable to appreciate what we are. These for him are the traditional truths we are sorely re-experiencing; he continues that people who repudiate such truths they are eventually denying their family, heritage, culture, birth-right and their very selves! (Huntington, 1997).

The author articulates his belief that, the unfortunate truth in these old truths cannot be ignored by statesmen and scholars (Huntington, 1997). While the claim appears ingenuous by academicians, Huntington desires to promote the perception that adversaries and enmity are vital for those who seek identity. In doing so, he echoes Lewis, who firstly suggested that the Western civilisation has always had its probable enemies. In his argument, he claims that after the Cold War, the enemies of the West are Islam and its civilisation as well the Chinese civilisation (Huntington, 1997).

Islam has always been identified as one of the chief religions. In the 20th century, Muslims themselves and the Muslim world were politically unrecognisable. Even though historically, Islam has a very deep and powerful political tenets and guidelines, Muslim countries have failed to embark and effectively participate in the international political grounds. The September 11 terrorist attack in 2001 came to allegedly confirm the theory of Huntington, and in light of that, Huntington repeats himself in his article entitled "The Age of Muslim Wars," claiming that Muslim countries have an excessive sense of hatred, spite and resentment toward the wealth, might, and Western culture (Huntington, 1997).

If we try to examine the nature of civilisational clash, one could clearly see the misconceptions and wrong assumption on several

civilisations. For instance, the lion share of Huntington's clash was between Muslim and Western civilisations, the wrong statements pose a question on the soundness of his arguments. To explicate and expand his theory, Huntington distorted the history of both Muslim and Western civilisations, he claims that even though people of the West argued that they have no problems with Muslims and Islam, except the trend of violent extremists, the long history of Islam reveals the opposite, as Muslims and Christians' relations have been tempestuous and each has been an adversary to the other (Huntington, 1997).

As a large part of Huntington's book was devoted to inner enmity between Islam and the West, the study of the relationship between Muslims and Christians is not an objective of this paper. However, for the sake of argument, some deliberations on history are required to prove that Huntington's claims for both religion and civilisations is no less superstitious. Even someone with a basic knowledge of the Holy Qur'an understands that Islamic teachings never promote enmity between Muslims and Christians. Essentially, Muslims are advised to engage in intellectual and friendly relations with their fellow Christians, as they believe in the existence of the God and consider the coming of prophets throughout history. Perhaps, Huntington does not know that the Christians of Ethiopia immensely contributed in preserving Islam in its cradle.

In brief, the nature of civilisational clash has no sound foundation, particularly when investigating international relations between the Muslim and Western countries. Most recent Islamic fundamentalist incidents were conducted by individuals who had lived or studied in the West. He emphasises that religious or cultural identities are not the cause of conflicts, but rather certain philosophical beliefs or political dogmas (Bell, 2002).

The Orientalist Legacy in Huntington's Idea

Orientalism is the lens through which the Westerners have historically, religiously, and politically observed the East in ongoing process. Orientalism is a paradigm of the West that it utilises to understand Eastern people and their cultures. Such studies frequently alienate

people and turn them into a threat through a well-organised and systematic stereotyping.

It is crucial that one must examine Huntington's definition and representation of the Muslim faith in modern Orientalism for Islam appeared to have been the dominant concern in his Clash of Civilisations thesis. The Orientalist discourse has established an integral relation between foreign policy and Orientalism itself. Therefore, Orientalism became a driving force in the nature of foreign policy practiced by the West. The American Pentagon was largely influenced by Huntington's hypothesis, as is clearly evident in American foreign policy towards the Muslim world.

In a clear Orientalist gesture, Huntington had noticeably borrowed the ideas of Bernard Lewis who he considers the embodiment of new Orientalism. It is worth noting that even the book title of Huntington is simulated from Lewis's article entitled *Roots of Muslim Rage* published in 1990, in his paper, Lewis tellingly related that by then, it was clear that the world was facing a new phenomenon in the arena of politics and states, he insists that Islam is the one rival against Judeo-Christian heritage that could threaten secularism and Western expansion. He continues that it was clash of civilisations. A few years after the *Atlantic Monthly* article written by Lewis, Huntington brought up somewhat different arguments with similar ideas (Sajjad, 2013).

Huntington's thesis seems questionable in several ways. It is erroneous, simplistic and imprecise, due to his desperate attempt to defend the idea of bloody Islam, this is indeed blasphemous, as it is based on inaccurate generalisation. Huntington relates that there is no reason of conflicts and chaos within Muslim nations except because of Islam itself and its nature. Additionally, his ideas establish a wrong picture of a sword-based, barbaric civilisation that its interest is mainly destruction of the West and its civilisational heritage. Such ideas deserve more thorough analysis and immediate refusal (Sajjad, 2013).

The De-Mythization of the Clash Notion and Emergence of an Alternative Paradigm

Considering the current world situations, one can possibly identify a couple of arguments against the allegedly inevitable clash of civilisations. The current conflicts are not based on civilisational

reason but rather on states' interest, argued Ajami and Davutoglu who recognised ideas such as the separation of civilisations into entities.

The other argument is that some scholars have tried to weaken the dichotomy of self/other which have made the clash inevitable by considering the 'Other' as something related to 'Self' while asserting the 'Other' as a corner stone in the making of the 'Self'. Edward Said and some of his peers have supported the idea of a complete refusal of both self-other, us/them as well as the Clash of Civilisations thesis. Said notes, "rather than the manufactured clash of civilisations, we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow" (Said, 2001, p. 2).

Considering a defragmentation of the civilisational clash theory, an alternative paradigm is offered by Seizaburo who basically argued that conflicts are highly to happen not because of human differences within religions and cultures, but due to the levels of development and economic achievements. Seizaburo holds the same views as the Japanese scholar Akihiko Tanaka, who insists that not civilisational differences but socio-economic element that lie the foundation of clash. Well-known Kenyan scholar Ali A. Mazrui considers the theory of Clash of Civilisations as a racist exposition utilised by the West in an attempt to marginalise the East to legitimise Western policies towards it. Mazrui argues that it has been always the racial paradigm that inspired the Westerns in their approaches especially towards Africa and Asia. He asserts that the Western countries have repeatedly been civilisational aggressors against numerous world civilisations for centuries (Adem & Mazrui, 2014).

Notions such as dialogue of civilisations, dialogue between civilisations, and alliance of civilisations did not newly appear in the era of post-civilisational clash thesis. These ideas were rediscovered as an argument against the clash-based thesis, re-invented accordingly and popularised since the 1990s.

There have also been some politically motivated attempts to initiate the notion of dialogue among civilisations in accordance with the scholarly literature. Mohammad Khatami, former president of Iran, proposed the idea of dialogue among civilisations that later in 2001

would be the slogan for the United Nations (UN). During his speech at United Nations General Assembly, Khatami expressed hope that a move towards such dialogue would replace hostility and confrontation with discourse and understanding.

After some notorious incidents, and as an attempt of the UN General Assembly to foster the idea of civilisational dialogue, in November 2001 the UN General Assembly embraced a resolution, entitled *Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilisations*. The programme included a talk invitation to UN systems, organisations and states advocating dialogue of civilisations. This initiative was not the only of its kind, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the European Union (EU) conducted a Joint Forum in Istanbul, February 2002, to promote and nurture the spirit of civilisational harmonisation (Balci, 2009).

Conclusion

The tragedy of 11 September 2001 was a turning point for the success of the clash of civilisations hypothesis, which envisages the cultural and religious identities of people to be the main factor for recent conflicts and bloodshed. However, the weaknesses of Samuel Huntington's explanation of the current world order are quite apparent. The findings of this article could thus be summarised into three main points.

First, the term Clash of Civilisations based on cultural and religious classifications is not an invention of the late 20th century but it has been envisaged by many Orientalist writers and policy-makers prior to the publication of Huntington's *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* in 1996. Yet, these early suggestions did not see any danger emanating from cultural and religious differences to world peace and security. For earlier Orientalists, the 'Other' was weak, silent and obedient. The end of the Cold War produced a huge vacuum for the creation of a new enemy as the contemporary world order is based largely on conflict and severe attention to differences. The Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991 played a vital role in providing such alternative division of the world based on cultural and religious differences. Quite quickly, Islam became an enemy of everything related to progress, well-being, development, peace and security. When the tragedy of September 11 happened, the world was already

primed to accept a direct link between Islam and 'terrorism,' creating a lot of pre-judgement, unfairness and discrimination towards Muslim citizens, both in the West and Muslim world. Thus, this article suggests that the clash of civilisations due to religious identities is an artificial ideology that disturbs world peace, security, well-being, and the human rights of citizens.

Additionally, the Clash of Civilisations theory is well-established and widely used today. However, it seems that this theory is incapable of explaining the existing conflicts or predicting the coming ones. Instead of bringing solutions to problems and providing world security, it directly contributes to spreading of enmity and conflict as one can witness in the parallel rise of racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia and hatred in modern societies. Thus, the world should recognise the weakness caused by seeing humanity as in constant conflict and look for other alternative explanations.

Finally, there are several alternative explanations of civilisational differences and the role of religions in current scholarship. Academic and applied activities to establish a dialogue among different civilisations may be considered one of these. However, such activities have not been made known to the public due to poor coverage by the media, while the mainstream description of the world in constant conflict due to cultural and religious differences is accessible everywhere, from kindergarten textbooks to state policy recommendations.

The abovementioned statements are the main ideas dealt with in this article. It is worth adding that the clash paradigm motivated the 'Other', as well as the 'West' to devise alternative paradigms. The notions of 'dialogue' and 'alliance' among civilisations are only the highlighted examples. Additionally, the analysis and discussion in this research paper on the clash of civilisations has drawn attention to the search for measures to avoid such clashes in order to live in a peaceful world. Thus, the article recommends encouraging alternative ideas and worldviews to be heard in creating a better and more secured world.

Several historical and cultural concepts should be inclusively re-addressed and re-interpreted in an integrative manner. Additionally, certain notions of global communication, sharing, and interaction ought to be brought to light. These measures present a hopeful perception of a clash-exempt world. Their accomplishment requires

political willingness and sincere mobilisation in the East as well as in the West. Unfortunately, pragmatism is becoming the sole determinant of political, geopolitical, economic, ideological measure in the international relations between the states and civilisations of the 21st century.

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Exploring the Prophet's (PBUH) Methodology in Dealing with Other Religions based on Selected Historical Incidents during the Time of Revelation

Fatmir Shehu[1] and Bukuri Zejno[2]

Abstract: This paper seeks to explore the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with other religions based on textual analysis of selected historical incidents that took place during the time of revelation. The goal of this study is to analyse the text related to these incidents in order to extract the methodologies used by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with those involved in these events, especially the non-Muslims. This work is significant as it provides genuine understanding of the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with others, which is relevant to contemporary Muslim scholarship of comparative religion. This research starts with a brief introduction followed by a discussion on: (1) the essence of the Prophetic Methodology; (2) the Prophet (PBUH)'s descriptive and objective methods in the light of *al-Ḥikmah* (Wisdom); (3) the Prophet (PBUH)'s altruistic and analytical methods in the light of *al-Mawʿiẓah al-Ḥasanah* (good advice); and (4) the Prophet (PBUH)'s dialogical and pacific methods in the light of *al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan* (arguing with what is best). The historical, descriptive, and analytical methods are used in the entire study.

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This study concludes that the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with other religions is clearly significant and relevant to contemporary Muslim scholarship in the study of other religions, faiths, traditions, civilisations, customs and ideologies.

Keywords: Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Methodology, *Sunnah*, Religions, Historical incidents.

Introduction

Today's world community is characterised by diversity, where most people find it difficult to coexist peacefully with one another because of their cultural, religious, civilisational, ethnical and ideological differences. Forgetting that diversity is what makes a society stronger, the lack of willingness to accept others, the fear of what is different, and the incompatible methodology in dealing with others, have become obstacles for the establishment of constructive communication and interaction among people. This has led to a situation, where different communities not only do not accept the others, but they attack them and their identities through polemics, provocations and defamations.

In the last two decades Islam and Muslims have been blamed for being the source of terrorism, violence and injustice against others by the then and current political-ideological system in the civilised western world supported by a good number of ruling elites and intellectuals in the Muslim world. As a result, Muslims are witnessing ongoing conflicts among themselves and facing countless challenges in their relationships with people of other religions, civilisations and ideologies. In addition, Muslims are attacked from various directions through different ways and, especially through the media, which is over and over again used by the Western intelligences to provoke their feelings and reactions. In the October 2005 incident, the Danish newspaper - *Jyllands-Posten*, published cartoons of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), which created a very offensive, blasphemous and Islamophobic (Weaver, 2010, p. 676) situation about the Muslims. Similarly, in 2006, the famous French magazine – *Charlie-Hebdo* (Visier, 2015-2016, pp. 13-14), published the Prophet (PBUH)'s cartoons again, which angered the Muslims even more. Such disgracing incidents displeased Muslims, who have expressed their anger through protests in all corners of the world. The

question raised here is whether this was the first time that the Prophet (PBUH) was vilified, belittled and humiliated. Definitely, the answer is no. The Arabs, his own people, did it during the time of revelation, calling him crazy and sorcerer.

These kinds of incidents are repeated again and again in the history of Muslim relationships with others. The most important thing here is to know how to respond to such incidents by using a methodology inspired by the Islamic Sources, *al-Qur'ān* and *al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah* [Prophet (PBUH)'s approvals, statements, articulations, and actions]. The questions that can be raised are: How to develop these methods? Where to get them from? What are the inspiring sources? How and when to use them? In responding to these questions, this paper urges contemporary Muslims to study the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodologies in dealing with people belonging to different belief systems and ideologies during the time of revelation. These different belief systems and ideologies actually created conflicts and posed challenges for the first Muslim community.

The history of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) and his exemplary charisma shown to his own people, the Arabs, and the followers of other religions fourteen centuries ago indicate that an altruistic methodology approved by Allah (SWT)'s revelation is very much required to be used in dealing with others and their belief systems. The Prophet (PBUH)'s genuine methodology employed by him (PBUH) while responding to the questions[3] raised by his people during the time of revelation inspired both the classical and contemporary Muslim scholars to produce immense literature on the Prophet (PBUH)'s life. Two types of literature have been produced. The first type of literature deals with the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Sunnah*, which is compiled by the scholars of *Aḥādīth* (sayings) in voluminous works, i.e., *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim* and other similar classical and contemporary books. They provide data about what has been approved, professed, and practised by the Prophet (PBUH) as recorded and narrated by authentic chains of narrators among the companions and their followers.

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[3] Related to Allah, Islam, Prophethood, life after death, rewards=Paradise, punishments= Hellfire, etc.

The second type of literature includes the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Sīrah* (biography) and *Tārīkh al-Umam* (history of nations) describing: (1) the situation of pre-Islamic Arabian society; (2) the miraculous birth of the Prophet (PBUH); (3) his childhood, youth and married life; (4) his Prophecy; (5) his *Da'wah* activities during the Makkan and Madinan periods; (6) his role in the establishment and management of the first Islamic state; (7) his relationships with Muslims and non-Muslims (Jews, Christians and Arab pagans); and (8) finally his departure from this world to Allah (SWT). *Sīrah Ibn Isḥāq*, *Sīrah Ibn Hishām*, Ṭabarī's *Tārīkh al-Umam wa al-Muluk* (the History of Nations and Kings) and Ibn Kathīr's *Sīrah* are the earliest reliable writings about the Prophet (PBUH) used in this study as main sources for data related to the historical incidents of the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) in dealing with others during the time of revelation. Contemporary literature on the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Sīrah* is used as secondary supportive sources for *Da'wah* purposes reminding Muslims and non-Muslims about Muhammad (PBUH)'s life, the lessons they derive from it, and how to apply them to their everyday lives when they deal with each other's religions. According to the researchers, both types of literature are informative in nature and have not discussed the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with other religions based on historical incidents during the time of revelation, and hence, this study adds new insights to this subject.

The main objectives of this research are: (1) to identify the historical incidents involving the Prophet (PBUH) and the representatives of other religions; (2) to study the texts of these historical incidents; (3) to extract the methods used by the Prophet (PBUH); and (4) to analyse these methods. This study is greatly significant as it provides new insights into Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with other religions and their adherents, which are relevant to contemporary Muslim society and human community at large. Historical, descriptive and analytical methods are used in the entire study. The historical method was used to collect data relating to historical facts and incidents about the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) showing when (time), where (place), and why (the purpose) they happened? The descriptive method has been used here to describe those incidents as mentioned by the original sources in the Arabic language with accurate translations in English. Lastly, the analytical method has been used to analyse the

selected historical incidents in order to explore, and then to extract the methodologies used by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with others based on the context of these incidents.

The researchers of this humble work urge all Muslims, in general, and the young Muslim scholars, in particular, to understand and utilise the Prophetic methodology in all aspects of their lives in order to present, introduce and inform others about Allah (SWT), while studying their religions, worldviews, ideologies, civilisations, traditions, and customs. This should be done in the light of the Islamic Sources, *al-Qur'ān* and the *Sunnah*. Therefore, this research paper discusses the following issues: (1) What is the essence of the Prophetic Methodology? (2) the Prophet (PBUH)'s descriptive and objective methods in the light of *al-Ḥikmah* (Wisdom); (3) the Prophet (PBUH)'s altruistic and analytical methods in the light of *al-Mawʿiẓah al-Ḥasanah* (good advice); and (4) the Prophet (PBUH)'s dialogical and pacific methods in the light of *al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan* (arguing with what is best).

What is the Essence of Prophetic Methodology?

The essence of the Prophetic methodology is *Tawḥīd* [Oneness of Allah (SWT)], and therefore it is important to use accurate methods in dealing with others to inform them about the Ultimate Authority of the Almighty Allah (SWT) in their personal, social, and public affairs, which encompass both the seen and the unseen aspects of their lives. This, then, leads to a qualitative change in their individual and communal day-to-day lives. In order to transmit the Truth to other fellow human beings, it is necessary to have: (1) an accurate, sublime source of inspiration; (2) a sound, unique methodology; and (3) an appropriate use of this methodology. Definitely, Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) followed *al-Qur'ān* as a source of inspiration from which he (PBUH) extracted the best methodologies, and then used them appropriately while dealing with other religions and their adherents.

The *Tawḥīdic* orientation of Muḥammad (PBUH)'s methodology has the divine purpose to communicate the Word of Allah (SWT) – *al-Qur'ān*, to all mankind. To achieve the universality of his Prophetic mission, the Prophet (PBUH) had to start this journey, first with his own community and then, with others (Yusuf, 1993, pp. 35-37). Hence,

the Prophet (PBUH) approached the members of his society by using **direct and indirect** methodologies in the process of conveying *al-Qur'ān* to them secretly and publicly. The Prophet (PBUH)'s successful communication of the Divine Message to his people shows the significance of *Tawḥīdic* essence in his methodology, which he applied to his **face to face persuasive dialogue, presentation of thoughts and ideas**.

Allah (SWT) revealed to the last Prophet (PBUH) the teachings and methodologies of all previous Prophets and Messengers, which served as an example to him (PBUH), to the Muslims and to humanity at large. Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) is mentioned in *al-Qur'ān* with the Messengers of determination, known as *'Ūlū al-ʿAzm*:

– (فَاصْبِرْ كَمَا صَبَرَ أُوْلُوا الْعَزْمِ مِنَ الرُّسُلِ وَلَا تَسْتَعْجِل لَّهُمْ...﴾ الأحقاف: 35

Therefore, patiently persevere, as did (all) messengers of inflexible purpose; and be in no haste about the (Unbelievers)…"[4] (al-Aḥqāf: 35). According to Ibn Kathīr, this verse indicates Allah (SWT)'s command to Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) to observe patience with those who reject his mission among his people, just as Nūḥ (AS), Ibrāhīm (AS), Mūsā (AS), and ʿĪsā (AS) (Ibn Kathīr, 2000, Vol. 9, p. 82), who preserved patience in using appealing and convincing methods and means, while interacting with their people.

Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) used genuine methodologies in dealing with the members of his society consisting of *Ahl al-Kitāb* (the Jews and the Christians) and the Arab pagans and idol worshipers. In all his encounters with them, the Prophet (PBUH) made use of *al-Ḥikmah* (wisdom) with all his spiritual, intellectual and physical qualities. Indeed, *al-Ḥikmah* is an integral part of the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Sīrah* and *Sunnah*. Therefore, to build a good relationship with followers of other religions, Muslims ought to ***study, analyse and understand*** the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Sīrah* and *Sunnah* (Siddiqui, 1996, p. 3, passim p. 25.), then ***apply*** them to their methodologies in dealing with other religions and ***make them relevant*** to their time and space. Nevertheless,

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[4] The reference for all translated Qur'anic verses mentioned in the entire paper is: A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*, (Maryland: Amana Corporation, 1989). The words in bold are done by the researchers.

the *Tawḥīdic* essence of Prophetic methodology in dealing with other fellows is stated by Allah (SWT) in the following Qur'anic verse:

(ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ﴾ النحل: 125

Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: ..." (al-Naḥl: 125). This Qur'anic verse endorses the Prophet (PBUH)'s use of three central principles from the beginning to the end of his Prophetic Mission, which are: (1) *al-Ḥikmah* (Wisdom); (2) *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* (good advice); and (3) *al-Jidāl bil-lati Hiya Aḥsan* (arguing with what is best). In the light of these three Qur'anic cardinal principles, this study **discovers, exposes and explores** other unique **methods** used by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with other religions, while responding to the claims of their adherents. The following discussion focuses on how the Prophet (PBUH) used these three sublimes, unique and interrelated principles of the Qur'an.

The Prophet (PBUH)'s Descriptive and Objective Methods in Light of *al-Ḥikmah* (Wisdom)

Allah (SWT), after granting *al-Ḥikmah* (wisdom) to the Prophet (PBUH), showed to him the way to use it in the light of *al-Qur'ān*, which is the main source of Divine Wisdom. Throughout the life of Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), whatever he said, did and approved were done based on *Qur'anic* wisdom. Hence, the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology is based on the wisdom and guidance of Allah (SWT). The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) used *al-Ḥikmah* to communicate *Dīn al-Islām* in the early stages of his Prophetic Mission to his people, where most of them were pagans and idol worshippers. In the fourth year of his Prophetic Mission, the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded by Allah (SWT) to warn his close relatives: "((وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ)) (الشعراء:214)) - And admonish your close relatives"[5] (al-Shuʿarā': 214."

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[5] Even though the revelation of this verse (al-Shuʿarā': 214) pleased the Prophet (PBUH), he was worried about its implementation. Based on his four-year Prophetic experience, most of his relatives were not happy with his Mission, especially his uncle Abū Lahab. In spite of the tense relationship between the Prophet (PBUH) and his close relatives, the Prophet (PBUH) decided to call them to Islam. In this first public call, the Messenger (PBUH)

In order to carry out this Divine command, the Prophet (PBUH) used various methods in dealing firstly with his close relatives and then, with all his people. In this section, two important methods – **descriptive** and **objective**, are discussed in the light of *al-Ḥikmah* based on the selected historical incidents taken from the books of *al-Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH) and other historical sources. The text of these incidents is mentioned in its original language, Arabic, followed by translation into English, and then, its analysis is done to explore the Prophetic methodology.

Descriptive Method

This method is discussed by referring to selected historical incidents during the time of revelation in Makkah. The Prophet (PBUH) used the **descriptive method** in the light of *al-Ḥikmah* through various steps, as commanded by Allah (SWT), to deal with his close relatives. In the historical incident taken from the book of *Sīrah*, the Prophet (PBUH) called his close relatives on two different occasions.

First Occasion: The Prophet (PBUH) gathered his close relatives among the *Quraysh* at the side of the hill of *aṣ-Ṣafā*. The text of this incident is as follows:

عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ: ﴿وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ﴾ (الشعراء: 214)، خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ حَتَّى صَعَدَ الصَّفَا، فَهَتَفَ: «يَا صَبَاحَاهُ» فَقَالُوا: مَنْ هَذَا الَّذِي يَهْتِفُ؟ فَقَالُوا: مُحَمَّدٌ، فَاجْتَمَعُوا إِلَيْهِ، فَقَالَ [رسول الله]: «يَا بَنِي فُلَانٍ، يَا بَنِي فُلَانٍ، يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ مَنَافٍ»، فَاجْتَمَعُوا إِلَيْهِ، فَقَالَ [رسول الله]: «أَرَأَيْتَكُمْ إِنْ أَخْبَرْتُكُمْ أَنَّ خَيْلًا تَخْرُجُ بِسَفْحِ هَذَا الْجَبَلِ أَكُنْتُمْ مُصَدِّقِيَّ؟» قَالُوا: مَا جَرَّبْنَا عَلَيْكَ كَذِبًا، قَالَ [رسول الله]: «فَإِنِّي نَذِيرٌ لَكُمْ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ»، فَقَالَ أَبُو لَهَبٍ: تَبًّا لَكَ! مَا جَمَعْتَنَا إِلَّا لِهَذَا؟ ثُمَّ قَامَ. فَنَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ السُّورَةُ: ﴿تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَقَدْ تَبَّ﴾(كَذَا قَرَأَ الْأَعْمَشُ)، إِلَى آخِرِ السُّورَةِ.
(al-Ṭabarī, 1407H/1986C.E., Vol. 1, p. 542; al-Ṭabarī, 2001, Vol. 17, p. 659; Ibn Kathīr, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 456; and al-ʿAmrī, 1994, Vol. 1, pp. 141, 342.).

On the authority of Ibn ʿAbbās (RA), who said: When this verse was revealed "and admonish thy nearest kinsmen" (al-Shuʿarā': 214), the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT)

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of Allah (SWT), using *al-Ḥikmah*, first of all, wanted to confirm his relatives' trust in him before describing to them the Islamic Message.

went out, mounted al-Ṣafā, and called out: «Beware this
morning.» So they [some people] said: "Who is that calling
out?" They [Others] said: It is Muḥammad." Then, he [the
Prophet (PBUH)] said: «Yā (O) Banī so and so! Yā Banī
ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib! Yā Banī ʿAbd Manāf!" They gathered
around him, and then, he [the Prophet (PBUH)] said: «If I
were to tell you that horsemen were coming out at the foot of
that mountain, would you believe me?» They replied: "We
have never known you to tell a lie." He [the Prophet (PBUH)]
said: «I am 'a warner to you in the face of a terrible doom.'»
Then, Abū Lahab [Prophet (PBUH)'s uncle] said: "May you
perish! Did you only bring us together for this?" Then he
went away. [Allah (SWT)] revealed this verse: {Perish the
hands of Abū Lahab (the Father of Flame)! Perish he!}, al-
Aʿmashu read it like this, till the end of the *Sūrah* (Fishbein,
1997, Vol. 6, p. 89; and Haykal, 2009, pp. 93-94).

The content of the above text shows how the Prophet (PBUH) used
the descriptive method in the light of *al-Ḥikmah* through **indirect** and
direct descriptive approaches in response to Allah (SWT)'s command
to openly call upon his close relatives to inform them about his Prophetic
Mission.

Firstly, the **indirect descriptive approach** starts with the plan of the
Prophet (PBUH) calling his relatives to listen to his Prophetic Mission.
In this incident, the Prophet (PBUH) did not send messengers to knock
on the doors of his relatives; rather, he extended to them an unexpected
invitation. He caught them by surprise, when he mounted *al-Ṣafā* and
called out: «**Beware this morning**.» This unexpected call made them
eager to know what was happening, and therefore, without any delay,
they responded immediately to his call by asking each other "Who is
that calling out?" Those among them who heard it replied to them: "It is
Muḥammad." They were attracted the most, when the Prophet (PBUH)
called them by their tribes' names: «**Yā (O) Banī so and so! Yā Banī
ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib! Yā Banī ʿAbd Manāf!**» They were more assured
and hence, they responded to his call immediately. When they gathered,
the Prophet (PBUH) described to them the following situation: «**If I
were to tell you that horsemen were coming out at the foot of that
mountain, would you believe me?**» Indeed, this statement was very
appealing as the Prophet (PBUH) used his creative skills to inform his

people about an incident that would affect their material well-being if it happened. The descriptive method used by the Prophet (PBUH) in this statement was meant to test his relatives in advance, in order to know their views on his personality before informing them about his Prophetic Mission. It is remarkable to mention here that the description of such a threatening situation presented by the Prophet (PBUH) to his relatives indicates the Prophet (PBUH)'s unique communication skills and techniques used by the Prophet (PBUH) to attract his pagan and idol worshipper relatives. Therefore, the outcome was very fruitful as all of them responded in a positive manner, knowing, based on their experience with the Prophet (PBUH), that he was fair and just with everyone. They acknowledged this by saying "We have never known you to tell a lie." Here they have shown their fair position and judgement about the personality of the Prophet (PBUH).

Secondly, the Prophet (PBUH), after knowing their views on his personality, used the **direct descriptive approach** to inform them about his Prophetic Mission. The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) decided to inform them saying: «**I am 'a warner to you in the face of a terrible doom.'**» Even though his relatives acknowledged him to be the most trustworthy among them, most of them did not embrace his Prophetic call. Strangely, most of them were silent, waiting for one of his uncles, Abū Lahab, who expressed his dissatisfaction towards him, saying: "May you perish! Did you only bring us together for this?" He not only rejected the Prophet (PBUH)'s mission, but he also cursed the Prophet (PBUH) and then, left immediately. One of the strongest Arab customs was to take care and support close relatives. However, Abū Lahab's ignorance and arrogance made him abandon this custom and did not allow him to see the Truth introduced by his nephew, Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH). The devilish manners shown by Abū Lahab towards the Prophet (PBUH) during the time of revelation caused him to deserve the wrath of Allah (SWT). His and his wife's severe punishment started in this earthly life and continues forever in the Hereafter in Hellfire.

Regardless of the way in which his relatives responded to his call, the Prophet (PBUH) described to them his position as a warner sent by Allah (SWT) to warn them first as being his close relatives. This shows that priority should be given to those who are very close in blood

relationships, regardless of whether they accept or reject what is offered to them. In addition, this signifies how far the relatives care for one another. The Prophet (PBUH) revealed his care for his relatives by telling them that a terrible fate awaited them if they did not embrace his Prophetic Message - *Dīn al-Islām*. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) employed the descriptive method to inform them of what is awaiting them in their near and the far future. The former denotes the terrible fate they could face in their earthly life. The latter shows to them in what terrible situation they should expect to find themselves in their everlasting life after death. Thus, to avoid this, the Prophet (PBUH)'s relatives had to respond to and embrace the Prophetic Call.

Second Occasion: The Prophet (PBUH) invites to his house for meal his close relatives. This incident is as follows:

عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ قَالَ: لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ هَذِهِ الْآيَةُ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ: ﴿وَأَنذِرْ عَشِيرَتَكَ الْأَقْرَبِينَ* وَاخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾ [الشعراء: 214- [...فَدَعَانِي رَسُولُ اللهِ فَقَالَ:«...فَاصْنَعْ لَنَا يَا عَلِي رِجْلَ شَاةٍ عَلَى صَاعٍ مِنْ طَعَامٍ، وَامْلَأْ لَنَا عُسًّا مِنْ لَبَنٍ، ثُمَّ اجْمَعْ لِي بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ حَتَّى أُكَلِّمَهُمْ وَأُبَلِّغَهُمْ مَا أُمِرْتُ بِهِ، فَفَعَلْتُ مَا أَمَرَنِي بِهِ، ثُمَّ دَعَوْتُهُمْ لَهُ، وَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ أَرْبَعُونَ رَجُلًا، يَزِيدُونَ رَجُلًا أَوْ يُنْقِصُونَهُ، فِيهِمْ أَعْمَامُهُ: أَبُو طَالِبٍ، وَحَمْزَةُ، وَالْعَبَّاسُ، وَأَبُو لَهَبٍ؛... ثم قال: قَالَ: «كُلُوا بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ»، فَأَكَلَ الْقَوْمُ ...ثُمَّ قَالَ: «اسْقِ النَّاسَ»، فَجِئْتُهُمْ بِذَلِكَ الْعُسِّ، فَشَرِبُوا حَتَّى رَوُوا مِنْهُ جَمِيعًا،... فَلَمَّا أَرَادَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُكَلِّمَهُمْ، بَدَرَهُ أَبُو لَهَبٍ إِلَى الْكَلَامِ، فَقَالَ: لَهَدَّ، مَا سَحَرَكُمْ بِهِ صَاحِبُكُمْ! فَتَفَرَّقَ الْقَوْمُ وَلَمْ يُكَلِّمْهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، فلما كان الغد قال رسول الله: «الْغَدُ يَا عَلِيُّ، إِنَّ هَذَا الرَّجُلَ قَدْ سَبَقَنِي إِلَى مَا قَدْ سَمِعْتَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ، فَتَفَرَّقَ الْقَوْمُ قَبْلَ أَنْ أُكَلِّمَهُمْ، فَأَعِدَّ لَنَا مِنَ الطَّعَامِ مِثْلَ الَّذِي صَنَعْتَ، ثُمَّ اجْمَعْهُمْ لِي»، فَفَعَلْتُ، ثُمَّ جَمَعْتُهُمْ،...فَفَعَلَ [رسول الله]...فَفَعَلَ كَمَا فَعَلَ بِالْأَمْسِ، فَأَكَلُوا حَتَّى نَهَوُا عَنْهُ...، ثُمَّ تَكَلَّمَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ، فَقَالَ: «يَا بَنِي عَبْدِ الْمُطَّلِبِ، إِنِّي وَاللَّهِ مَا أَعْلَمُ شَابًّا فِي الْعَرَبِ جَاءَ قَوْمَهُ بِأَفْضَلَ مِمَّا جِئْتُكُمْ بِهِ، إِنِّي قَدْ جِئْتُكُمْ بِخَيْرِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ.

(Ibn Isḥāq, n.d., Vol. 1, pp. 46-47; al-Ṭabarī, 1407H/1986C.E., Vol. 1, p. 542; al-Ṭabarī, 2001, Vol. 17, p. 661; Ibn Kathīr, 1971, Vol. 1, p. 458.).

On the authority of ʿAlī ibn Abū Ṭālib (RA), who said: "when this verse was revealed to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) {And admonish thy nearest kinsmen * And lower thy wing to the Believers who follow thee.} (al-Shuʿarā': 214-215) .... the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) called me, and said: «… make ready food, with a leg of mutton, and fill a cup with milk, and assemble together the people of ʿAbdul-Muṭṭalib, that I may tell them that which I have been commanded to say.» I did what he ordered and

summoned them. There were at that time forty men more
or less including his uncles Abū Ṭālib, Ḥamza, al-ʿAbbās,
and Abū Lahab…. Then, the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah
(SWT) said: "Take it [the food] in the Name of Allah."
The men ate, then, the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT)
said to me: "Give them to drink!", So, I brought the cup,
and each drank his fill, though one man alone could have
emptied that cup. But, when the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah
(SWT) was about to talk to them, Abū Lahab forestalled him
and said: "Your host has placed a spell upon you! So they
dispersed and the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) did
not speak to them." The next day the Messenger (PBUH)
of Allah (SWT) said: "O ʿAlī (RA)! Prepare for us exactly
the food and drink as you had done the previous day. This
man spoke before I could, and the people dispersed before
I could address them." So I did it. Then, I summoned them.
The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) did exactly what
he did in the previous day. They ate until they finished it…,
then, the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) spoke to them
saying: "O sons of ʿAbdul-Muṭṭalib, I know of no Arab who
has come to his people with a nobler message than mine. I
brought you the best of this world and the next." (Guillaume,
2004, pp. 117-118; and Fishbein, 1997, Vol. 6, pp. 90-91; and
Haykal, 2009, pp. 93-94)

According to the text of the abovementioned historical incident,
Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) invited the family of ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib,
including Abū Lahab, for a meal in his house twice. The first time, as
it is mentioned in the first part of the text, plenty of food and drink
was prepared by ʿAlī (RA) as instructed by the Prophet (PBUH). It
is noted here that the purpose of the invitation for having a meal in
the Prophet (PBUH)'s house was kept secret by the Prophet (PBUH)
and was not shared with his relatives. The Prophet (PBUH) knew his
relatives well and therefore, he did not tell them in advance about the
purpose of his invitation. Perhaps, they would not respond to his call as
expected by the Prophet (PBUH). Besides, keeping this a secret would
attract his relatives more as they were eager to know what he would
share with them. Even though the Prophet (PBUH) was commanded by
Allah (SWT) to describe the Prophetic Mission to his close relatives,
the way to inform them was left to him to choose. Hence, the Prophet

(PBUH) planned to prepare a meal in his house and then, invite the
sons (people) of ʿAbdul-Muṭṭalib to «…**tell them that which I have
been commanded to say**». The question raised here is, why is the
Prophet (PBUH) commanded by Allah (SWT) to admonish his close
relatives? Certainly, this is done for the following reasons: *firstly*,
to know their views on his personality; *secondly*, to know who will
support him; *thirdly*, to inform them about the Message of Allah (SWT);
and *fourthly*, to show to his relatives Islam's position on peoples' blood
relationships. The Prophet (PBUH)'s relatives gathered in his house as
planned. They ate and drank until they had finished their meal. When
the Prophet (PBUH) was about to speak to his guests, suddenly Abū
Lahab stood up before him and said unpleasant things: "Your host has
placed a spell upon you! So they dispersed and the Messenger (PBUH)
of Allah (SWT) did not speak to them." This shows that the attitude of
Abū Lahab towards the Prophet (PBUH) was very offensive in nature.
He insulted the personality of the Prophet (PBUH) and his Prophetic
Mission, by claiming that he had cast a magical spell upon them. In
other words, he meant to tell them not to listen to the magical trick
of this man, the Prophet (PBUH). Besides, most of his other relatives
(who had not embraced Islam yet) kept silent and did not say anything.
They just dispersed. Nevertheless, the Prophet (PBUH) did not give
any prompt response to what his uncle said. Rather, he used the **silent
approach**, though he was **listening**, **observing**, **studying** the situation,
and **gathering information** about their views on his mission. It is
remarked from this that the Prophet (PBUH) showed at the beginning
of his interaction with his close relatives a **firm endurance** by using
the **silent approach** as his methodology. Such a stand allowed the
Prophet (PBUH) to collect the required information and then plan how
to respond to his relatives' views when he invited them the second time.

The second time which is mentioned in the last part of the above text,
the Prophet (PBUH) invited his relatives again for a meal in his house.
The same food and drink were prepared by ʿAlī (RA) as instructed by the
Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet (PBUH)'s relatives gathered in his house
and ate and drank until they were satisfied. After they had finished their
meal, the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) stood up and started his
speech with an outstanding remark by addressing them as one unique
family «**O sons of ʿAbdul-Muṭṭalib**» including himself. This shows
how much the Prophet (PBUH) cared for his relatives. Regardless of

whether they accept his message or not, the family relationships should be maintained. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH) used the **descriptive method** here in dealing with his relatives in order to show to them the favor Allah (SWT) had shown to them by choosing him as a Messenger among them. According to the Prophet (PBUH), this never happened to the other tribes among the Arabs «**I know of no Arab who has come to his people with a nobler message than mine**». In addition, the Prophet (PBUH) described to them that what he had brought them would benefit them the best in both aspects of their lives, related to this world and the next one «**I brought you the best of this world and the next**.**"** The Prophet (PBUH) made his Prophetic claim very specific for his relatives, when he said, «**I brought you…**». This shows the Prophet (PBUH)'s *al-Ḥikmah* in approaching his relatives by showing to them the privilege they were granted by having him as a Messenger of Allah (SWT) among themselves, who is connected to them through blood relationship. This is a very strong bond of relationship that the Arabs were very keen to maintain, regardless of the consequences.

These two historical incidents reveal: (1) the Prophet (PBUH)'s firm attitude towards his relatives about his Prophetic mission; and (2) the Prophet (PBUH)'s priority in inviting his relatives to *al-Dīn* of Allah (SWT) and then, the rest of the people, which was Allah (SWT)'s command. The **descriptive method** used by the Prophet (PBUH), which was full of *al-Ḥikmah* on both occasions, allowed him to know the real ones among his relatives who were ready to support him regardless of accepting his call.

Besides, the Prophet (PBUH) came to know his real enemies, who opposed his Prophetic mission. It is remarked here that this situation enabled the Prophet (PBUH) to expand his Prophetic mission from his family members to his close relatives, who later became a real supporting force for him. The Prophet (PBUH)'s use of the **silent method** in the first invitation and **descriptive-informative method** in the second one, reveals the appropriate steps to be taken to get to know others, and what they have, before informing them about what they are supposed to get from you. Thus, these Prophetic methods must be used while interacting with others in daily encounters, or when reading and writing about belief system(s) or religion(s) of others.

Objective Method

This method is discussed in light of *al-Ḥikmah* used by the Prophet
(PBUH) in dealing with others on different occasions during the time of
revelation. Indeed, the Prophet (PBUH) has been recorded and known
by the Arabs even before his Prophetic mission for his fairness and
justice while dealing with them. The Prophet (PBUH) used the **objective
method** to implement justice in the investigation of news presented to
him, especially by doubtful reporters or unreliable sources. The text of
the selected historical incident is as follows:

عَنْ قَتَادَةَ، قَوْلَهُ: ﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنْ جَاءَكُمْ فَاسِقٌ بِنَبَإٍ﴾ وَ هُوَ ابْنُ أَبِي مُعَيْطٍ الْوَلِيدُ بْنُ
عُقْبَةَ، بَعَثَهُ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقًا إِلَى بَنِي الْمُصْطَلِقِ، فَلَمَّا أَبْصَرُوهُ أَقْبَلُوا نَحْوَهُ، فَهَابَهُمْ،
فَرَجَعَ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ، فَأَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّهُمْ قَدِ ارْتَدُّوا عَنِ الإِسْلاَمِ، فَبَعَثَ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ خَالِدَ بْنَ
الْوَلِيدِ، وَأَمَرَهُ أَنْ يَتَثَبَّتَ وَلاَ يُعَجِّلَ، فَانْطَلَقَ حَتَّى أَتَاهُمْ لَيْلاً، فَبَعَثَ عُيُونَهُ؛ فَلَمَّا جَاءُوا
أَخْبَرُوا خَالِدًا أَنَّهُمْ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ بِالإِسْلاَمِ، وَسَمِعُوا آذَانَهُمْ وَصَلاَتَهُمْ، فَلَمَّا أَصْبَحُوا
أَتَاهُمْ خَالِدٌ، فَرَأَى الَّذِي يُعْجِبُهُ، فَرَجَعَ إِلَى نَبِيِّ اللَّهِ ، فَأَخْبَرَهُ الْخَبَرَ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ عَزَّ
وَجَلَّ مَا تَسْمَعُونَ، فَكَانَ نَبِيُّ اللَّهِ يَقُولُ: "التَّبَيُّنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ، وَالْعَجَلَةُ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ".
(al-Ṭabarī, n.d., Vol. 21, p. 351; al-Qurṭubī, 1384H./1964C.E.,
Vol. 16, p. 311; and, Ibn Hishām, 1411H./1991C.E., Vol. 4,
pp. 259-260.).

It is reported on the authority of Qatādah, his saying [that
this verse]: "(O ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to
you with any news…." [was revealed concerning] Ibn Abū
Muʿayṭ al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah, whom the Prophet (PBUH) gave
the authority to go to the tribe of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* [to collect
Zakāh (levies) from them and bring it back to Madinah].
When *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* saw him, they turned towards him
[to welcome him]. So, he feared them [thinking they would
kill him] and went back to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah
(SWT) [in Madinah]. He reported to him that the tribe of
Banū al-Muṣṭaliq had turned away from Islam. The Prophet
(PBUH) dispatched Khālid bin al-Walīd [to the tribe of *Banū
al-Muṣṭaliq*], and commanded him to provide evidence and
not to hasten. So, he set out to come to them at night. Then,
he sent his agents [to observe them]; when they came back,
they informed Khalid that they had adhered to *al-Islām*, that
they had heard their *āzān* (calls) and their *ṣalāt* (prayers). In
the morning, Khalid came to them and saw what pleased him.
Hence, he came back to the Prophet (PBUH) and reported to
him the news. Subsequently, Allah (SWT) revealed what you
hear [the abovementioned verse]. The Prophet (PBUH) used

to say: «Certainty is from Allah and haste is from Satan»."
(The translation is done by the researchers)

The content of this incident shows how the **objective method** was used by the Prophet (PBUH) in the midst of the confusion and doubt created by the false news brought by a wicked person called *Ibn Abū Muʿayṭ al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*[6] about *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* to avoid the conflict by providing informed judgement. This incident occurred in Madinah after the Messenger of Allah (SWT) went on an expedition against the *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* [clan of Khuzaʿah] in Shaʿban, in the year 6 of Hijrah or between the 5th and 6th years of Hijrah (Fishbein, 1997, Vol. 8, p. 41; Ramadan, 2007, p. 121; and Lings, n.d., pp. 237-239). The question raised here is how and why did the Prophet (PBUH) decide to use the **objective method** in this incident? An appropriate answer is given in this section through a textual analysis of this historical incident, which is divided in two parts.

The first part starts with the Qur'anic verse revealed by Allah (SWT) to remind the believers about the news brought by wicked persons or hypocrites, who cannot be considered as reliable sources to refer to. In addition, this verse is mentioned at the beginning of this historical incident by the narrator to show the reasons behind its revelation and those involved in it. The person behind this incident is *Ibn Abū Muʿayṭ al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*, who was known as a wicked (al-Qurṭubī, 1384H./1964C.E., Vol. 14, p. 106) person before he became a Muslim and a hypocrite after he embraced Islam.[7] If this was his case, then,

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[6] He was the son of ʿUqbah ibn Abī Muʿayṭ, who was one of the staunch enemies of the Prophet (PBUH). Incidentally during the Battle of Badr, ʿUqbah was killed after being captured in the war. Thus, al-Walīd was one of the branches of this evil tree and was not too far away from the wickedness of his own father. He was a sinful and unclean person, who due to the past hatred he had for the tribe of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*, or due to his own carelessness - wanted the blood of Muslims to be shed (*The Sin of Making up Rumors*, accessed on April 23, 2020).

[7] Ibn ʿAbbās in his *Tafsīr* comments about this incident is as follow: "{O ye who believe! If a wicked person…}… a **hypocrite**, al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah, brings you news about *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*, (ascertain the truth,) check whether the news is true or false, (lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done) regret killing them (Ibn ʿAbbās, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 436).

why did the Prophet (PBUH) entrust him with a duty? Certainly, this is the Divine Plan of Allah (SWT) and a cause for the revelation of the above-mentioned Qur'anic verse. Nevertheless, the Prophet (PBUH) entrusted him with an important duty sending him to *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* (after they became Muslims) to collect *Zakāh* (levies) from them, which must then be brought back to Madinah. *Al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah* accepted this task and headed towards the tribe of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*. When he approached them, they saw him and to honor him as the messenger of the Prophet (PBUH) sent to them, they decided to come out and welcome him. This was not how *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah* understood it. After looking at this situation, without any proof, he thought that they came out to kill him instead of welcoming him. Therefore, this frightened him and made him to return to Madinah without collecting *Zakāh* from them. He came back and told the Prophet (PBUH) that *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* not only did not want to pay *Zakāh*, but they attempted to kill him and they turned away from Islam. This shocking fabricated news brought by *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah* to the Prophet (PBUH) made him doubt the status of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*, who embraced Islam lately and willingly after the war between them and the Muslims. This shows that the Prophet (PBUH) was caught in a very difficult situation. The most important thing here is to know how the Prophet (PBUH) responded to this incident and what kind of methodology he used.

The second part shows how the Prophet (PBUH) responded to this incident and the methods he used to attain his judgement. Hence, he started immediately to investigate this incident as it is mentioned at the beginning of this part, where the Prophet (PBUH) sent a reliable person, Khālid bin al-Walīd (RA), without any delay, to *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*, in order to confirm the news brought to them by *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*. The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) advised Khālid (RA) to go to the tribe and prove whether this news was true or false without hastening in his final decision. Thus, Khālid (RA) went to the tribe and sent out his agents, who brought back to him pleasing information about the people of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* who were found to perform all their obligatory duties according to the teachings of Islam. In the morning of the next day, Khālid (RA), to further prove whether the news his agents brought to him were true or false, decided to visit the tribe, where he saw for himself what pleased him: "**In the morning, Khalid came to them and saw what pleased him**." Then, immediately he returned to the Prophet

(PBUH) in Madinah to inform him about the status of the fake news related to *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*, which were brought before by *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*: "**the tribe of Banū al-Muṣṭaliq had turned away from Islam**." It is observed here that there were two different versions of news about *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq* presented to the Prophet (PBUH) by two different persons. The first version of the news was brought by *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*, which confused the Prophet (PBUH), his Companions and other Muslims about the Islam of *Banū al-Muṣṭaliq*. The second version of the news was presented by Khālid (RA) after the investigation of the first version of the news about *Banī al-Muṣṭaliq*. Of course, the news brought by Khalid (RA) was true compared to the news brought by *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*, even though the latter was entrusted by the Prophet (PBUH). Khalid (RA)'s Islamic personality, views, and decisions were well established and confirmed by the Prophet (PBUH) and Muslims to be true in various incidents before this. Thus, there was no doubt in him being a reliable source for the news he brought about *Banī al-Muṣṭaliq* as a verification of the first version of the news. This is not the same with *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*. His experience as a Muslim showing his Islamic personality, views, and decisions were very doubtful as they were neither established nor proven by the Prophet (PBUH) before this incident. Thus, his status did not allow him to be considered a reliable source; rather, it showed him as a wicked person, as well as a hypocrite, who had a hidden intention to create trouble that would lead to bloodshed among the Muslims. Therefore, to stop the bloodshed, Allah (SWT) showed His mercy to His Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims by revealing this verse commanding them what to do when false news is presented to them by wicked persons and hypocrites, like *al-Walīd bin ʿUqbah*. In addition, the Prophet (PBUH) advised the Muslims not to hasten in their judgments about the news brought to them by wicked people or unreliable sources in his saying: «**Certainty is from Allah (SWT) and hastening is from Satan**.»

The analysis of the abovementioned incident justifies the main purpose behind the use of the **objective method** by the Prophet (PBUH) in the light of *al-Ḥikmah*, which is to investigate with fairness and justice any news in order to make a well-informed judgement. If this Prophetic method is understood and applied appropriately by every matured Muslim, then, its application to their studies of other religions, belief systems, worldviews, civilisations, cultures, traditions,

and ideologies can be done correctly. Hence, the ongoing contemporary conflicts between them can be managed easily and peaceful coexistence can be promoted and established.

The Prophet (PBUH)'s Altruistic and Analytical Methods in Light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* (Good Advice)

The methods utilised by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with his people during the time of revelation, as commanded by Allah (SWT), are in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* (beautiful advice), through which peoples' hearts and emotions are moved. Certainly, *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* creates an environment for discussion or communication ruled by better understanding among the people who are involved in conversation or intellectual discourse (Al-Zamkhasharī, 1417H./1997C.E., Vol. 1, p. 601). In addition, this dimension is related to such manifestations that develop close relationships between Muslims and other fellow human beings (al-Bārūdī, 1987, p. 24). The utilisation of this method by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with the Arabs (Muslims and non-Muslims) throughout his Prophetic Mission depicts his ideal personality. The Prophetic model has served as an inspiration for Muslims to use methods in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* while encountering others, which enables them to repel evil with what is better. Therefore, *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* makes the believing Muslims to stay away from fallacy and to respond to oppressive voices with a call to rationality and thinking instead of quarrelling with his/her audience by using offensive and abusive words. To understand this issue better, this section focuses on the discussion of **altruistic** and **analytical** methods used by the Prophet (PBUH) in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* in dealing with others based on selected historical incidents taken from the books of *al-Aḥādīth* and *al-Sīrah* of the Prophet (PBUH) and other historical sources. The text of these incidents is mentioned in its original language, Arabic, followed by the translation into English, and then its analysis is done to explore the Prophetic methodology.

Altruistic Method

This method is discussed in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* used by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with his people during the time of

revelation in different situations. The Prophet (PBUH) was known to his people before his Prophecy for being polite in his approach towards them, regardless of the circumstances. He always used an **altruistic method** to cast tranquillity and love in the hearts of those involved in the incidents inspiring them to change their views about him and his Prophetic Message. The text of the selected historical incident is as follows:

حَدَّثَنَا يَحْيَى بْنُ بُكَيْرٍ، حَدَّثَنَا مَالِكٌ، عَنْ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ عَبْدِ اللهِ، عَنْ أَنَسِ بْنِ مَالِكٍ، قَالَ: كُنْتُ أَمْشِي مَعَ النَّبِيِّ، وَعَلَيْهِ بُرْدٌ نَجْرَانِيٌّ غَلِيظُ الْحَاشِيَةِ فَأَدْرَكَهُ أَعْرَابِيٌّ فَجَذَبَهُ جَذْبَةً شَدِيدَةً حَتَّى نَظَرْتُ إِلَى صَفْحَةِ عَاتِقِ النَّبِيِّ قَدْ أَثَّرَتْ بِهِ حَاشِيَةُ الرِّدَاءِ مِنْ شِدَّةِ جَذْبَتِهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ مُرْ لِي مِنْ مَالِ اللهِ الَّذِي عِنْدَكَ. «فَالْتَفَتَ إِلَيْهِ، فَضَحِكَ ثُمَّ أَمَرَ لَهُ بِعَطَاءٍ

(Al-Bukhārī, 1987, Vol. 4, p. 115)

It is reported on the authority of Anas bin Mālik (RA), who said: "While I was walking with the Prophet (PBUH), who was wearing a Najrānī outer garment with a thick hem, a desert Arab came upon him and pulled his garment so violently that I could recognise the impress of the hem of the garment on the Prophet (PBUH)'s shoulder, caused by the violence of his pull. Then, he (the Bedouin) said: 'Order for me something from Allah's Fortune, which you have.' «{The Prophet (PBUH)} turned to him and smiled, and ordered that a gift be given to him»"(*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, accessed January 31, 2020).

In this incident the Prophet (PBUH) has utilised the **altruistic method** with a beautiful advice in his response to the demands of the ignorant desert Arab, who behaved in an abusive manner using a violent approach towards the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT). The question raised here is, why did the desert Arab use a violent approach instead of a polite and gentle one? There may be several assumptions about the reasons and the intentions in the mind of the desert Arab while dealing with the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT). Firstly, the Bedouin Arab might have thought that showing harshness and violence towards the Prophet (PBUH) could frighten the Prophet (PBUH), and, therefore, he could get what he intended. Secondly, perhaps the desert Arab hoped that by behaving abusively towards the Prophet (PBUH) he could make him stop conveying his Prophetic Mission. Thirdly, the desert Arab might have wanted to tell the Prophet (PBUH) that the Arabs like him do not need his Prophetic advice or counseling commanding them what they must do. Fourthly, it might have been that the Bedouin Arab intended

to inform the Prophet (PBUH) that the Arabs had already established customs inherited from their great grandfathers, and therefore, they did not need his Prophetic mission. What requires attention here is the Prophet (PBUH)'s response to the violent and abusive approach of the desert Arab.

The situation of this incident required the Prophet (PBUH) to use the **altruistic method** through which he revealed to the Bedouin Arab his Prophetic Message in the light of *al-Mawʿiẓah al-Ḥasanah*. The Prophet (PBUH)'s use of this noble method shows how he kept his patience over the harm caused to him by the Bedouin Arab and how he resisted desertion from this harm (al-Ghazālī, 1327H./ 2005C.E., p. 953). Indeed, this is the way in which the chosen Messengers and Prophets of Allah (SWT) behave, regardless of the hardship faced by them. Therefore, the Prophet (PBUH), neither reacted with anger over the abusive act of the ignorant Arab, nor did he rebuke him. Rather, he endured this hardship by showing compassion and mercy, through which he reflected the very purpose of his Prophetic mission entrusted to him by Allah (SWT).

The application of the altruistic method granted the Prophet (PBUH) the opportunity to reveal to the desert Arab his true characteristics, as a Messenger and Prophet appointed by the Almighty Allah (SWT) and not by himself or by his people. If Muhammad (PBUH) was a self-proclaimed Prophet, the situation might be different. He could have easily reacted to the abusive approach of the desert Arab in the same way or even worse. If the Prophet (PBUH) were appointed by his people, the desert Arab would not dare to approach him abusively, as he was pretty aware of their customs. As a result, the Prophet (PBUH)'s noble method in dealing with the desert Arab rejected the possibility of he being a self-proclaimed prophet or appointed by his people, and strongly declared him to be the chosen Prophet of Allah (SWT). Indeed, this is asserted clearly in the last part of the text cited which relates to this incident through the Prophet (PBUH)'s immediate reaction, where he used his noble **altruistic method** in the light of good counseling in order to motivate and encourage the ignorant Arab to think and change their abusive and arrogant attitude: «{**The Prophet (PBUH)} turned to him and smiled, and ordered that a gift be given to him**».

This statement is divided into two parts. Part one, «{**The Prophet (PBUH)**} **turned to him and smiled**,…», displays the genuine and noble characteristics of the Prophet (PBUH), through which he shows a warm welcome to the ignorant Arab, regardless of his abusive approach. Besides, the Prophet (PBUH) through this noble gesture demonstrates to the desert Arab: (1) the divine commandment of Allah (SWT) about how evil can be abolished only with good advice and counseling; (2) the Prophetic lesson that an evil deed cannot be erased with another evil deed. Rather, it can be changed with a good deed; (3) the Prophetic manners in responding to the people's demands, which are: first "turned to him" signifying acceptance, and second "and smiled" denoting warm welcoming and listening. This Prophetic method pacifies the situation and brings hope to the Arab by assuring him the possibility of getting what he asked for, even though his request was not put forward appropriately. Part two, «…, **and ordered that a gift be given to him**», denotes the continuation to a higher level of the Prophet (PBUH)'s altruistic method and its completion through immediate execution that provided a satisfactory response to the demands of the desert Arab, even beyond his expectations.

It is observed from the above discussion that the Prophet (PBUH)'s **altruistic method** in the light of *al-Mawʿiẓah al-Ḥasanah* – smiling and giving away gifts to strangers with ignorant and harsh attitude, like the Bedouin Arab, reveals the possibilities of (1) changing their hostile feelings towards you; (2) accepting and respecting you as you are and not as they want you to be; (3) establishing a friendly relationship between them and you; (4) creating peaceful coexistence between them and you; and (5) their willingness and readiness to listen to you, to know more about your religious identity, and to study and write about your religion and its teachings. Indeed, if this is achieved, strangers and enemies would become friends regardless of their differences, and they would be willing to assist each other accordingly.

Analytical Method

This method is discussed in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* used by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with his people during the time of revelation on different occasions. The Prophet (PBUH) was known to his people before his Prophetic mission for his sound and rational

analytical approach in dealing with a particular incident before passing
his judgment on those among his people involved in it, regardless of the
circumstances. The **analytical method** is illustrated in the following
text of the selected historical incident:

حَدَّثَنَا أَبُو الْيَمَانِ، أَخْبَرَنَا شُعَيْبٌ، عَنِ الزُّهْرِيِّ(ح) وَقَالَ اللَّيْثُ: حَدَّثَنِي يُونُسُ، عَنِ
ابْنِ شِهَابٍ، أَخْبَرَنِي عُبَيْدُ اللهِ بْنُ عَبْدِ اللهِ بْنِ عُتْبَةَ أَنَّ أَبَا هُرَيْرَةَ أَخْبَرَهُ أَنَّ أَعْرَابِيًّا
بَالَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ فَثَارَ إِلَيْهِ النَّاسُ لِيَقَعُوا بِهِ فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللهِ: دَعُوهُ وَأَهْرِيقُوا عَلَى
بَوْلِهِ ذَنُوبًا مِنْ مَاءٍ، أَوْ سَجْلاً مِنْ مَاءٍ ـ فَإِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُمْ مُيَسِّرِينَ وَلَمْ تُبْعَثُوا مُعَسِّرِينَ
(Al-Bukhārī, 1987, Vol. 8, p. 37.).
حَدَّثَنَا زُهَيْرُ بْنُ حَرْبٍ حَدَّثَنَا عُمَرُ بْنُ يُونُسَ الْحَنَفِيُّ حَدَّثَنَا عِكْرَمَةُ بْنُ عَمَّارٍ
حَدَّثَنَا إِسْحَاقُ بْنُ أَبِى طَلْحَةَ حَدَّثَنِى أَنَسُ بْنُ مَالِكٍ ـ وَهُوَ عَمُّ إِسْحَاقَ ـ قَالَ بَيْنَمَا
نَحْنُ فِى الْمَسْجِدِ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ إِذْ جَاءَ أَعْرَابِىٌّ فَقَامَ يَبُولُ فِى الْمَسْجِدِ فَقَالَ
أَصْحَابُ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ مَهْ مَهْ. قَالَ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ "لاَ تُزْرِمُوهُ دَعُوهُ". فَتَرَكُوهُ
حَتَّى بَالَ. ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ دَعَاهُ فَقَالَ لَهُ "إِنَّ هَذِهِ الْمَسَاجِدَ لاَ تَصْلُحُ لِشَىْءٍ مِنْ
هَذَا الْبَوْلِ وَلاَ الْقَذَرِ إِنَّمَا هِىَ لِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَالصَّلاَةِ وَقِرَاءَةِ الْقُرْآنِ". أَوْ
كَمَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ. قَالَ فَأَمَرَ رَجُلاً مِنَ الْقَوْمِ فَجَاءَ بِدَلْوٍ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَشَنَّهُ عَلَيْهِ
(Al-Muslim, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 163).

It is narrated by Abū Hurairah (RA) that "A desert Arab
urinated in the mosque [of the Prophet (PBUH)], and the
people rushed to beat him. The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah
(SWT) said: «Leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler (full)
of water over the place where he has passed urine – For you
have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you
have not been sent to make things difficult for them» (Ṣaḥīḥ
al-Bukhārī, accessed April 15, 2020). It is also reported on the
authority of Anas bin Mālik (RA), who said: "While we were
in the mosque with the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT),
a desert Arab came and stood up and began to urinate in the
mosque. The Companions of the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah
(SWT), said: 'Stop, stop.' He [Anas] said: "the Messenger
(PBUH) of Allah (SWT), said: «Do not interrupt him; leave
him alone». They left him until he finished urinating. Then,
the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT), called him and said
to him: «These mosques are not the places meant for urine
and filth, but are only for the remembrance of Allah, prayer
and the recitation of the Qur'an». Or the Messenger (PBUH)
of Allah (SWT) said something like that. He (the narrator)
said that he {the Prophet (PBUH)} then gave orders to one of
the people who brought a bucket of water and poured it over"
(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Muslim, accessed April 15, 2020).

The above-mentioned incident indicates clearly the Prophet (PBUH)'s use of the **analytical method** in dealing with the Muslims and the Bedouin Arab in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah*, stopping them in advance from entering a conflict that might have harmed both parties. In addition, the Prophet (PBUH) employed this method in order to: (1) respond spontaneously to the chaotic situation between the Muslims and the ignorant Bedouin; and (2) to show to them the appropriate ways in dealing with each other's feelings, through which the harm caused by the tense situation can be prevented in advance by a careful analysis of the situation. This is shown clearly in the text of this incident, when the Muslims rushed to beat him "**the people rushed to beat him**" and the Companions said to him "**Stop, stop**." The Prophet (PBUH) responded to them by saying «**Leave him and pour a bucket or a tumbler (full) of water over the place where he has passed urine**» and «**Do not interrupt him; leave him alone**». The prompt reply of the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) to the actions of both the Companions and the Muslims, shows that he had analysed beforehand their feelings about the act of the Bedouin Arab, which made him realise the harmful outcome if their actions were allowed to take place. The Prophet (PBUH)'s utilisation of the analytical method in such a tense incident reflects his perfect counselling and communication skills. The former skill assisted the Prophet (PBUH) to analyse this incident immediately during its occurrence by observing and studying the Bedouin's gesture and Muslims' verbal speech. The latter skill enabled the Prophet (PBUH) to respond at once to their encounter in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah*, through which their hearts were comforted, their thoughts organised and their limbs monitored.

The Prophet (PBUH)'s goal in using the analytical method in the midst of the tense situation was to (1) respond immediately in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* to the feelings and actions of both the Muslims and the non-Muslims; (2) to stop the conflict or confrontation that might have taken place between them; and (3) to reply to the offensive act caused by the ignorant Arab in his *Masjid* by making him to realise his responsibility towards others. In order to understand this better, the second part of the text is analysed to identify further details.

Firstly, the Prophet (PBUH) interfered with the Muslims' actions in order to show to them their responsibilities towards others. This is clearly shown in the text of this incident when the Prophet (PBUH)

advised them: «**For you have been sent to make things easy (for the people) and you have not been sent to make things difficult for them**». Thus, the Muslims are obliged to control their feelings regardless of the situation by showing complete endurance, which would enable them to respond to others in appropriate ways. In order to make things easy for others and not difficult, the Companions and other Muslims were instructed to analyse the situation in which they were involved, before taking any action. Their swift response as shown in this incident indicates that the decision was made by them without analysing their position as Muslims, making them to forget or neglect their duties. Perhaps, the love and care they had towards the Prophet (PBUH) and his Mission caused them to react emotionally, and therefore, did not realise that they had a responsibility to guide the ignorant Arab, who acted unethically. In other words, both the Prophet (PBUH)'s closest Companions and all other Muslims had to know their role first before they think, speak and act while dealing with non-Muslims, who are ignorant about the Prophet (PBUH)'s Divine Message, *al-Qur'ān* and his *Dīn*, *al-Islam*. They had to do this as the beloved Prophet (PBUH) did in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah*.

Secondly, the non-Muslims are represented by the ignorant Arab, who is the main character in this incident. He unwillingly or unintentionally violates the rights of Muslims by vilifying their place of worship, *al-Masjid al-Nabawī*, in an offensive manner by urinating there, which led the Muslims to react and attempt to harm him. However, it was the Prophet (PBUH) who analysed the ongoing incident and immediately intervened by commanding the Muslims: «**Leave him …**» and «**Do not interrupt him; leave him alone**». The Muslims responded immediately to the order of their beloved Prophet (PBUH) by allowing the Bedouin Arab to finish his unpleasant act. It can be argued here that this incident does not reveal any hidden intention of the Bedouin Arab, which may have caused him to act unethically in front of the Muslims without fear. The questions raised here are: What made him to enter *al-Masjid al-Nabawī* and urinate in it? Why did he choose *al-Masjid al-Nabawī* to do this immoral act, knowing that there were other places outside *al-Masjid* for him to do this? Was he instructed by someone else to do this act? Was this the way how the Bedouin Arab showed his enmity and dislike for the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muslims? There is no direct answer to these questions in the text of this incident. Perhaps

one might assume many other possible reasons that were behind the ignorant Arab's unethical and harmful act. The prompt response of the Prophet (PBUH) to control the tense situation between the Muslims and the Bedouin in this incident shows that he was the only one to analyse what was happening and why it was happening. One should know that this incident occurred during the time of revelation in Madinah. Certainly, it should be the Divine Plan of Allah (SWT) with the purpose of: (1) educating the Muslims about their position and duties towards others; (2) showing them the right ways to respond to such a delicate situation; and (3) giving a chance to the Bedouin Arab to embrace *Dīn al-Islām* by allowing him to know about the Truth communicated to him by the Prophet (PBUH). The knowledge of the unknown granted to the Prophet (PBUH) by Allah (SWT) provided him with the ability to **analyse** the situation of this incident and then to respond immediately to its happenings by controlling in advance the physical confrontation that might have taken place between the Muslims and the ignorant Arabs. When the tension between them was under control, the Prophet (PBUH) approached the Bedouin Arab in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah*. Although the Prophet (PBUH) had the ability to dismiss him, beat him or even kill him, yet he called him in the light *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* to show him the importance of al-Masjid by saying: «**These mosques are not the places meant for urine and filth, but are only for the remembrance of Allah, prayer and the recitation of the Qur'an**». This text shows that, through this incident, the ignorant Bedouin Arab had the privilege from Allah (SWT) to listen to the Prophetic advice of Muhammad (PBUH), the best created being among all the seen and the unseen creatures. This was a great opportunity for the Arab to be introduced to the Truth without any form of violence. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) achieved his Prophetic Mission by using the analytical methodology to respond to this incident in the light of counselling by introducing to the ignorant Arab the fundamental elements of *al-Dīn al-Islam*, which are: (1) *al-Qur'ān*; (2) Allah (SWT); (3) *al-Ṣalāh* (prayers); and (4) *al-Masjid* (the place of worship). In addition, the Prophet (PBUH), in the light of his Prophetic counseling and beautiful advice, achieved his goal, making the Bedouin Arab realise that what he did was unethical. He achieved this Prophetic goal by: (1) showing complete endurance towards the offensive act of the Bedouin Arab, that is, "urinating in *al-Masjīd al-Nabawī* (the Prophetic Mosque)"; (2) avoiding any abusive and violent method in his dealing with the

Bedouin Arab; and (3) responding to him in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah*.

It is remarked from the above discussion that the Prophet (PBUH)'s use of the **analytical method** in the light of *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* enabled him to: (1) respond to the tense situation between the Muslims and the ignorant Arab; (2) control the feelings of Muslims by showing them the role they should play in dealing with strangers like the Bedouin Arab; (3) provide sound solutions for the conflict created by the Bedouin Arab as a result of his ignorance; (4) explain to the ignorant Arab Bedouin the purpose of *al-Masjīd* and its importance; (5) make the ignorant Arab realise that his act of vilifying Muslims' *al-Masjīd* (place of worship) was unethical in nature; and (6) show to both the Muslims and the Bedouin Arab how to coexist with each other by respecting and accepting each other as they are. Besides, the Prophet (PBUH)'s excellent and noble attitude towards the ignorant Bedouin Arab served as a model for his closest Companions and other Muslims involved in this incident, who wanted to stop the Bedouin or even assault him if they were allowed to do so by the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (PBUH). Finally, the methodology used by the Prophet (PBUH) to respond to this incident shows to every Muslim, as well as human beings at large, how to control their feelings before they judge each other's actions.

The Prophet (PBUH)'s Dialogical and Peaceful Methods in the Light of *al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan* (Arguing with What is Best)

The pre-Islamic Arabian society was a diverse society consisting of people with different religions, belief systems, worldviews, civilisations, ideologies, traditions, and customs. The Arabs were the dominant group in the Arabian Peninsula, which used to control the region. They were divided into many tribes and therefore, two separate social classes were established among them. The first social group was represented by the elite of each tribe to whom all the affairs of their people had been entrusted. The second social group was represented by the masses, in general, made up of members of different tribes with low social status and slaves, who were used as market products. Nevertheless, both social groups followed the pagan belief system and idol worship. They loved their idols to the extent that each tribe had an idol representing its

identity in *al-Kaʿbah* (the House of Allah used for prayers and annual pilgrimage), and therefore, 365 idols surrounded *Kaʿbah* before the Prophethood of Muḥammad (PBUH).

The Jewish and Christian communities, who were minorities among the Arabs, were following revealed scriptures, sent to them by Allah through Prophet Moses (AS) and ʿĪsā (AS), but were corrupted by them. In other words, the three religious communities perceived the idea of one God in different ways, but none of them followed pure monotheism except a few, who followed *Dīn al-Ibrāhīm*, like Waraqah Ibn Nawfal. Thus, in the midst of this diverse religious society with different belief systems, Allah (SWT) revealed the Final Universal Message – *al-Qurʾān* through the Final Universal Prophet and Messenger, Muḥammad (PBUH), in order to respond to their false religious claims and practices, as well as to change their corrupted worldviews. The Prophet (PBUH), inspired by the Qurʾanic methodology, utilised various methods in dealing with his people to convey his Prophetic mission. However, in this section the focus of discussion is on two selected methods, dialogical and pacifying, which were used by the Prophet (PBUH) in the light of **al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan** (arguing with what is best) while dealing with others and their religious claims during the time of revelation. In order to understand these methods, the text of the selected incident is cited in its original language, Arabic, followed by its translation into English. Then, it is analysed in a detailed form in line with its context.

Dialogical Method

This method is discussed in the light of **al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan** utilised by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with his people during the time of revelation on different occasions. The Prophet (PBUH) was known by his people before and after his Prophetic Mission for his sound **dialogical method** used in his discourse with the members of his diverse community consisting of the Arab pagans and the idol worshippers, as well as the Jews and the Christians. He dialogued with them in the light of what is best with the support from Allah (SWT) throughout his Prophetic mission during the Makkan and the Madinan periods. The text of the selected historical incident is as follows:

عَنِ ابْنِ إِسْحَاقَ، قَالَ: قَدِمَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ عِشْرُونَ رَجُلًا وَهُوَ بِمَكَّةَ أَوْ قَرِيبٌ مِنْ ذَلِكَ، مِنَ النَّصَارَى حِينَ ظَهَرَ خَبَرُهُ مِنَ الْحَبَشَةِ، فَوَجَدُوهُ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ [الْمَجْلِسِ]، فَكَلَّمُوهُ وَسَأَلُوهُ، وَرِجَالٌ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ فِي أَنْدِيَتِهِمْ حَوْلَ الْكَعْبَةِ. فَلَمَّا فَرَغُوا مِنْ مَسْأَلَتِهِمْ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا أَرَادُوا، دَعَاهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ إِلَى اللَّهِ ، وَتَلَا عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنَ، فَلَمَّا سَمِعُوهُ فَاضَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ مِنَ الدَّمْعِ، ثُمَّ اسْتَجَابُوا لَهُ وَآمَنُوا بِهِ وَصَدَّقُوهُ، وَعَرَفُوا مِنْهُ مَا كَانَ يُوصَفُ لَهُمْ فِي كِتَابِهِمْ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ، فَلَمَّا قَامُوا مِنْ عِنْدِهِ اعْتَرَضَهُمْ أَبُو جَهْلٍ فِي نَفَرٍ مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ فَقَالُوا: خَيَّبَكُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ رَكْبٍ! بَعَثَكُمْ مَنْ وَرَاءَكُمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ دِينِكُمْ تَرْتَادُونَ لَهُمْ فَتَأْتُونَهُمْ بِخَبَرِ الرَّجُلِ، فَلَمْ تَظْهَرْ [تَطْمَئِنْ] مُجَالَسَتُكُمْ عِنْدَهُ حَتَّى فَارَقْتُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَصَدَّقْتُمُوهُ بِمَا قَالَ لَكُمْ، مَا نَعْلَمُ رَكْبًا أَحْمَقَ مِنْكُمْ. أَوْ كَمَا قَالَ لَهُمْ. فَقَالُوا: سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نُجَاهِلُكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ، لَا نَأْلُوا أَنْفُسَنَا خَيْرًا. فَيُقَالُ: إِنَّ النَّفَرَ النَّصَارَى مِنْ أَهْلِ نَجْرَانَ، وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ أَيُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ.

(Ibn Isḥāq, n.d., Vol. 1, p. 77; Ibn Hishām, 1411H./1991C.E., Vol. 24, p. 236; Al-Qurṭubī, 1384H./1964C.E., Vol. 6, p. 256; and, Ibn Kathīr, 1971, Vol. 2, p. 40; Al-Shāribi, 1412H/1991C.E., Vol. 2, p. 965).

It is reported on the authority of Ibn Isḥāq, who said: "Twenty men or close to that from the Christians came to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT), while he was still in Makkah, when the news about him (PBUH) reached them in Abyssinia. They found him in *al-Masjid* [*al-Majlis*], talked to him and asking him questions, while some Qurayshites were in their meeting clubs round the *Kaʿbah*. When they had finished asking the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) what they wished, the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) invited them to Allah (SWT) [His *Din al-Islam*] reciting to them verses from *al-Qurʾān*. Upon hearing *al-Qurʾān*, their eyes were filled with tears. Then, they responded to his call, had faith in it, and trusted him. They knew from him the things, which were described by him in their scriptures. When they got up to go away, Abū Jahl with a number of Qurayshites intercepted them, saying: "What a wretched band you are. Your people at home sent you to bring them information about the fellow, and as soon as you sat with him [the Prophet (PBUH)] you renounced your religion and believed in what he said. We do not know a more asinine band than you," or like what they said. They [the Christian delegation] responded to them: "Peace be upon you. We do not ignore you; we have our deeds and you have your deeds. We have not been remiss in seeking what is best." It is said: "The Christian delegation came from Najrān, but Allah (SWT) knows whether that was so" (Guillaume, 2004, pp. 179-180).

The text of this historical incident, which is reported by Ibn Isḥāq, an early bibliographer of the Prophet (PBUH), indicates that the Prophet (PBUH) used the **dialogical method** in dealing with the Christian delegation to know about their position towards his Prophetic mission and then responded to their concerns in a friendly conversation. The Prophet (PBUH)'s use of this method was done in the light of *al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan* that allowed him to listen first to their views on his Prophetic call and then, reply to their questions. In addition, the Prophet (PBUH)'s objective in using this method in this incident was to inform the Christian delegation about al-Qur'an and then, invite them to Allah (SWT) – *Dīn al-Islām* on the basis of mutual respect and better understanding.

The first part of this incident reveals the Prophet (PBUH)'s willingness to accept the twenty members of the Abyssinian Christian delegation to engage in a friendly dialogue with them. Thus, from the very beginning of this historical event, the Prophet (PBUH)'s dialogical method was used when he accepted to listen to the Christian delegation's inquiries about his Prophetic mission. The text of this incident starts with the arrival of the Christian delegation in Makkah after hearing the news about the Prophethood of Muhammad (PBUH). They met with the Prophet (PBUH) at *Kaʿbah*, while he was performing his prayers. The Prophet (PBUH) received them although it was the first time to see them: "**…found him [the Prophet (PBUH)] in al-Masjid, and sat…**" It can be argued based on this information that both the Prophet (PBUH) and the Christian delegation accepted willingly to meet with each other and engage in a peaceful conversation. Besides, this indicates their readiness to share with each other their religious identities and teachings. The Prophet (PBUH)'s intention was to inform them about his Prophetic call. On the other hand, the Christians' intention was to confirm whether the news about Muhammad (PBUH)'s Prophetic mission was true or false. Therefore, they decided to come to Makkah and hear the news from the Prophet (PBUH) in person, which could justify what they had heard about him from others. It can be asserted here that the acceptance of both parties to engage in friendly conversation signifies their pure intention in using the dialogical approach towards each other's views, regardless of their different religious backgrounds. In addition, this friendly meeting between the Prophet (PBUH) and the Christian delegation initiated, for the first time, the beginning of inter-religious

dialogue between Muslims and Christians. The question raised here is what was the nature of their dialogue?

The second part of this incident shows the Prophet (PBUH) engaging in inter-religious dialogue with the Christians. The Prophet (PBUH) implemented the dialogical approach in the friendly conversation that took place between him and the twenty members of that delegation, who "**…talked with him, asking him questions**." The friendly relationship that was established between the Prophet (PBUH) and the Christians provided an opportunity for both parties to be well-informed about each other's similarities and differences in the light of the teachings of their religions. Even though detailed information about the nature of the questions asked by the Christian delegation is not provided in the text of this incident, it can be argued that they might have asked the Prophet (PBUH) questions to prove the news about his Prophetic mission. In addition, they were eager to know about whether Muḥammad (PBUH) was the last Prophet or not as foretold in the Christian scripture, which was the main aim of their coming to Makkah. The question raised here is, what was the outcome of the Prophet (PBUH)'s utilisation of the dialogical method in responding to the Christians' questions?

The third part of this incident provides the answer to that question. After the Christians were satisfied with the answers provided by the Prophet (PBUH), "**the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) invited them to Allah (SWT) reciting to them verses from *al-Qur'ān*.**" It can be argued here that the Prophet (PBUH) invited them to accept his Prophetic call after knowing that what they asked for was made clear to them about his Mission. This invitation was made on the basis of mutual respect for the close relationship that was established between them after the long friendly conversation. How did the Christians respond to the Prophet's invitation? It is mentioned in the text of this incident that all the members of this Christian delegation "**Upon hearing *al-Qur'ān*, their eyes were filled with tears**." The recitation of Qur'anic verses was the Prophet (PBUH)'s final response to their queries, through which their hearts were conquered and their eyes were filled with tears of joy, and therefore, "**they accepted his call, believed in him, and declared his Truth. They knew from him the things, which were described of him in their scripture**." It can be argued based on this text that their immediate response to the Truth after hearing it from the Prophet (PBUH) indicates that they were true followers of Jesus (PBUH) by

adhering to his teachings, as prescribed in the Divine Scripture - *al-Injīl*. Also, their acceptance of Prophet (PBUH)'s Truth acknowledged the Jesus (PBUH)'s Prophecy about Muḥammad as the final Messenger from Allah (SWT). The Christian delegation's sincere and willing submission to Allah (SWT) was immediately reflected in their response to the Quraishites.

The last part of this incident shows the dissatisfaction of Quraishites with the Prophet (PBUH)'s achievement from the inter-religious dialogue he had with the Christians. They were very annoyed upon hearing the reversion of the Christians to the Prophet's Message. Abū Jahl, who led the Quraishites, showed his anger towards the Christians through his offensive words, "**What a wretched band you are…**" and "**…We do not know a more asinine band than you**." Abu Jahl's aim in using such abusive expressions was to provoke the Christians, which could lead them to get angry and renounce their Islam or enter into a fight with the Quraishites. However, Abū Jahl and his people were astonished when the Christian delegation argued with them in the light of what is best, as taught by the Prophet (PBUH) "**Peace be upon you. We do not ignore you; we have our deeds and you have your deeds. We have not been remiss in seeking what is best.**" The text of this statement reflects the Prophet (PBUH)'s dialogical method used by the Christian delegation, who became Muslims, in their response to the offensive claims of Abū Jahl and his circle. Indeed, the Islam (submission) of the twenty Christians shows the Prophet (p.b.u.h)'s greatest achievement during the time of revelation in Makkah.

It is concluded from the above discussion on the Prophet (PBUH)'s utilisation of the dialogical method in responding to the Christian delegation that there should be willingness and readiness to engage with others in matters pertaining to their religious teachings. It was the appropriate use of this method by the Prophet (PBUH) that created a friendly environment in the inter-religious discourse between him and the Christians, which led the latter to be convinced with the Prophetic Truth and profess its acceptance.

Pacific Method

This method is discussed in the light of ***al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan***, as implemented by the Prophet (PBUH) in dealing with his people during the time of revelation in various events. The aim of the argument here is to know how the Prophet (PBUH) used the **pacific method** to respond to the disagreements between him and the Arab pagans, the Jews and the Christians on matters concerning *al-Tawḥīd* (the Oneness of Allah). They polluted this concept at the time of revelation as they associated others with Allah (SWT). The text of the elected historical incident is as follows:

قَالَ ابْنُ إِسْحَاقَ قَدِمَ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَفْدُ نَصَارَى نَجْرَانَ سِتُّونَ رَاكِبًا ...
الْمَدِينَةَ، فَدَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ مَسْجِدَهُ حِينَ صَلَّى الْعَصْرَ،...وَقَدْ حَانَتْ صَلَاتُهُمْ،
فَقَامُوا فِي مَسْجِدِ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ يُصَلُّونَ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: دَعُوهُمْ فَصَلَّوْا إِلَى
الْمَشْرِقِ... يَقُولُونَ [عَنْ عِيسَى]: هُوَ اللَّهُ، وَيَقُولُونَ: هُوَ وَلَدُ اللَّهِ، وَيَقُولُونَ:
هُوَ ثَالِثُ ثَلَاثَةٍ.

(Ibn Hishām, 1411H./1991C.E., Vol. 3, pp. 112-114; Ibn Kathīr, 1420H./1999C.E., Vol. 2, p. 50.)

قَالُوا [لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ]: مَا تَقُولُ فِي عِيسَى، فَإِنَا نَرْجِع إِلىَ قَوْمِناً وَنَحْنُ نَصَارَىَ، .
يَسِرْناَ إِنْ كُنْتَ نَبِيًّا أَنْ نَسْمَعَ مَاً تَقَوُلُ فِيهِ؟ قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ: «مَا عِنْدِي فِيهِ شَيء
يَوْمِي هَذَا، فَأَقِيمُوا حَتَّى أُخْبِرَكُمْ بِماَ يَقَوُلُ لِي رَبِّي فِي عِيْسَى». فَأَصْبَحَ الْغَد وقد
أنزل الله، هذه الآية: ﴿إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَى عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ
كُن فَيَكُونُ * الْحَقُّ مِن رَّبِّكَ فَلاَ تَكُن مِّن الْمُمْتَرِينَ * فَمَنْ حَاجَّكَ فِيهِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا
جَاءكَ مِنَ الْعِلْمِ فَقُلْ تَعَالَوْاْ نَدْعُ أَبْنَاءنَا وَأَبْنَاءكُمْ وَنِسَاءنَا وَنِسَاءكُمْ وَأَنْفُسَنَا وَأَنفُسَكُمْ
ثُمَّ نَبْتَهِلْ فَنَجْعَل لَّعْنَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَى الْكَاذِبِينَ﴾ آل عمران: 61-59

(Ibn Hishām, 1411H./1991C.E., Vol. 3, pp. 112-114; Ibn Kathīr, 1420H./1999C.E., Vol. 2, p. 50.)

وَقَدْ دَعَا ۚ وَفْد نَجْرَان لِذَلِكَ لَمَّا حَاجُّوهُ بِهِ، فَقَالُوا: حَتَّى نَنْظُر فِي أَمْرِنَا ثُمَّ نَأْتِيك،
فَقَالَ ذَوُو رَأْيهِمْ: يَا مَعْشَرَ النَّصَارَى لَقَدْ عَرَفْتُمْ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا لَنَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ، وَلَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ
بِالْفَصْلِ مِنْ خَبَرَ صَاحِبِكُمْ، وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْتُمْ أَنَّهُ ماَ لاَعَنَ قَوْمٌ نَبِيًّا قَطُّ، فَبَقِيَ كَبِيرُهُمْ
وَلَا نَبَتَ صَغِيرُهُمْ، وَلَئِنْ فَعَلْتُمْ ذَلِكَ لَنَهْلِكَنَّ، فَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ أَبَيْتُمْ إِلَّا إِلْفَ دِينِكُمْ وَالْإِقَامَةَ
عَلَى مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ فِي صَاحِبِكُمْ، فَوَادِعُوا الرَّجُلَ وَانْصَرِفُوا إِلَى بِلَادِكُمْ.

(Ibn Kathīr, 1419H./1998C.E., Vol. 2, p. 42)

فَأَتَوْا الرَّسُول وَقَدْ خَرَجَ وَمَعَهُ الْحَسَن وَالْحُسَيْن وَفَاطِمَة وَعَلِيّ، وَقَالَ لَهُمْ: «إِذَا
دَعَوْت فَأَمِّنُوا» فَأَبَوْا أَنْ يُلَاعِنُوا وَصَالَحُوهُ عَلَى الْجِزْيَة.

(Al-Baghawī, 1417H./1997C.E., Vol. 2, pp. 48-49; and Al-Muḥlī (d. 864H.) & Al-Suyūṭī (d. 911H.), n.d., Vol. 1, p. 361.)

Ibn Isḥāq said that a deputation of sixty riders from the Christians of Najrān came to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) in Madinah. They entered the Prophet (PBUH)'s Masjid as he was praying the afternoon prayer…. The time of their prayers having come they stood and prayed in the Prophet (PBUH)'s *Masjid*. The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) said that they were to be left to do so. They prayed towards the east…They said about Jesus: He is God, the son of God, and He is the third person of the Trinity. They said to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT): "What do you say concerning Jesus as we return to our people and we are Christians, so facilitate us if you are a Prophet to hear what you say about him?" The Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT) said: «I do not have anything concerning him on this day. So, stay till I inform you what my Lord says to me about Jesus». The next morning, Allah (SWT) revealed these verses: "The similitude of Jesus before Allah is as that of Adam; He created him from dust, then said to him: "Be". And he was. * The Truth (comes) from Allah alone; so be not of those who doubt. * If any one disputes in this matter with thee, now after (full) knowledge Hath come to thee, say: "Come! Let us gather together, - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!" (Āl-e-ʿImrān: 59-61). Then, the Prophet (PBUH) invited the Najrān delegation to settle what they had disputed with him [about Jesus]. But they said: "Let us consider our affairs; then, we will come to you later with our decision." Hence, their chief adviser said: "O Christians! You know very well that Muḥammad is a Prophet sent (by God) and he has brought a decisive declaration about the nature of your Master. You know, too, that a people has never invoked a curse on a prophet and seen its elders live and its youth grow up. If you do this, you will be destroyed. But if you decide to adhere to your religion and to maintain your doctrine about your master, then take your leave of the man and go home." They came to the Messenger (PBUH) of Allah (SWT), who came out accompanied by al-Ḥasan, al-Ḥussayn, Fāṭimah and ʿAlī. He [the Prophet (PBUH)] said to them: «If I invited you [to the Truth], so believe [in it]». Hence, they refused to resort to cursing and reconciled themselves with *al-Jizyah* (the tribute) (Guillaume, 2004, pp. 271-277; Al-Ghazālī, 1999, pp. 460-461; and Lings, n.d., p. 324).

The content of this incident, as described by Ibn Isḥāq, reveals that
the Prophet (PBUH) employed the **pacific method** in dealing with the
Christian delegation from Najrān. The Prophet (PBUH) utilised this
method in the light of ***al-Jidāl bil-Lati Hiya Aḥsan***, where he responded
to their religious practices and their claims about the person of Jesus
(PBUH). The question raised here is, what was the Prophet (PBUH)'s
main purpose in using this method in this event? His main aim was
to respond peacefully in the light of arguing with what is best to the
theological claims of Christians about the Truth of Jesus, to provide
them with sound evidence supported by Revelation. Another question
raised here is, how did the Prophet (PBUH) employ the peaceful method
in this incident? This method was used by the Prophet (PBUH) in this
historical incident at three different stages related to the inter-religious
discourse between him and the Christian delegation.

Stage one deals with the encounters between the Prophet (PBUH)
and the Christian delegation recounted at the beginning of this incident.
When the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions, including other
Muslims, finished their afternoon pray, the Christian delegation of sixty
riders from *Najrān* (including religious and political leaders) entered
al-Masjid al-Nabawī. After a while, they stood up and prayed in the
Prophet (PBUH)'s *Masjid*, who allowed them to do so. The Prophet
(PBUH)'s **pacific method** is applied at this stage in relation to: firstly,
the Prophet (PBUH)'s acceptance of this delegation in his *Masjid*. By
right, he could stop them from entering *al-Masjid*, as it is a place where
the Muslims perform their daily prayers, remember Allah (SWT), recite
al-Qur'an, teach *al-Islam* and carry out activities concerning their
community. Thus, etiquette is required in entering *al-Masjid*. However,
it is not known whether the Christian delegation followed this etiquette
while entering the Masjid, as nothing is mentioned about this in the text
of this incident. Secondly, the Prophet (PBUH)'s approval to allow this
delegation to offer their religious prayers in his *Masjid*. Even though
the Christian delegation did not ask for permission from the Prophet
(PBUH) to perform their religious prayers in his *Masjid*, he still allowed
them to do so. Why did not the Christians ask for permission before
offering their prayers? Did they not think that their act could disturb the
feelings of the Muslims as they were in their place of worship, which was
very different from their own place of worship, the church? Perhaps, the
Christians' attitude towards the Prophet (PBUH), his Prophetic mission,

and the Muslims by entering *al-Masjid al-Nabawī* and offering their prayers without permission is very provocative in nature. It annoyed the Muslims, who were not happy with their actions. However, this was different with the Prophet (PBUH) as none of their intentions and actions posed any threat to his Prophetic call. The pacifism shown by the Prophet (PBUH) towards the Christian delegation and their religious practices reveals his Prophetic plan and strategy in conveying his Prophetic Message to them, regardless of their attitude.

Stage two reveals the conversation between the Prophet (PBUH) and the Christian delegation concerning the person of Jesus. When the Christians finished their prayers, they started to argue with the Prophet (PBUH) about Jesus. As it is mentioned in the text of this incident, the Christians claimed that Jesus is: (1) God, (2) the son of God, and (3) the third person of the Trinity. The *Najrānī* Christians argued with the Prophet (PBUH) about Jesus, as they wanted to know the Truth about his Prophetic mission, which was one of the aims that motivated them to come to Madinah. For this reason, they asked the Prophet (PBUH): **"What do you say concerning Jesus as we return to our people and we are Christians, so facilitate us if you are a Prophet to hear what you say about him?"** To prove his Prophetic mission, the Prophet (PBUH) needed to provide them with satisfying answers about Jesus, so they could inform their people when they returned. Their provocative expression **"if you are a Prophet"** shows their doubt about the Prophet (PBUH)'s Prophetic mission. The Prophet (PBUH) neither got angry with the way they asked the question, nor did he dismiss them. Rather, he requested them in a peaceful way to stay in Madinah until he had proved to them with a revelation from Allah (SWT) their claims about Jesus: «**I do not have anything concerning him on this day. So, stay till I inform you what my Lord says to me about Jesus**». The Prophet (PBUH)'s statement affirmed to them the reality about Jesus (PBUH), as there was no specific revelation about this. Besides, this reveals the truth about his Prophetic mission. If he was a self-claimed prophet, then, easily he could respond to their questions based on his reasoning or just simply lie to them. This kind of behavior reveals how the Prophet (PBUH)'s peaceful approach was applied to respond to their arguments about Jesus in the light of what is best. Therefore, at this stage, the doctrinal discourse between the Prophet (PBUH) and the

Najrānī Christian delegation on Jesus did not create any enmity in their relationships.

Stage three indicates the outcome achieved by the Prophet (PBUH)'s use of the **pacific method** in replying to the claims of the Christian delegation about Jesus. This stage starts with the revelation from Allah (SWT) to the Prophet (PBUH) as a Divine Evidence against the claims of Christians on Jesus. The content of this revelation proves the creation of Jesus. Allah (SWT) tells the Prophet (PBUH) that if the Christians still argue with you about Jesus, then, say: "Come! Let us gather together, - our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves: Then let us earnestly pray, and **invoke the curse of Allah on those who lie!**" (Āl-e-'Imrān: 61). After hearing this, the Christian delegation came to the Prophet (PBUH) asking for an excuse without making any decision on their polemical discourse on Jesus. In addition, their excuse shows that they realised the truth of Muhammad (PBUH)'s Prophetic mission. After knowing this reality, they could not make any decision. Therefore, the only thing left for them was to excuse themselves by saying to the Prophet (PBUH) **"Let us consider our affairs; then, we will come to you later with our decision."** The Prophet (PBUH), in a peaceful manner, accepted their excuse and allowed them to go and reconsider their position, though Allah (SWT) revealed these verses. He gave them permission to leave in order to give them a chance to know more about the theological teachings of Christianity on Jesus, and maybe, they could come to their sound reasoning by accepting the Revealed Truth. It can be argued that if the Christians knew that their claims about Jesus were true, then, why would they hesitate to decide about their position? Why would they have to ask someone else's opinion? Did they not know the teachings of their religion about Jesus?

After leaving the Prophet (PBUH), they asked their chief advisor about this matter, who said to them: **"O Christians! You know right well that Muḥammad (PBUH) is a Prophet sent (by God) and he has brought a decisive declaration about the nature of your Master."** Thus, his statement proves strongly (1) the acknowledgement of the Prophethood of Muḥammad (PBUH) by a Christian, whom they considered as the wise among themselves; and (2) the fallacy of their claims about Jesus, as the Truth about Jesus was made clear by the revelation. In this sense, there was no other way after this that they could

argue with the Prophet (PBUH). Therefore, he continued to advise them saying **"You know too that a people has never invoked a curse on a prophet and seen its elders live and its youth grow up. If you do this you will be destroyed."** In this statement, he warned them about the destructive consequences towards them and their families, if they would accept the Prophet (PBUH)'s suggestion about joining a prayer with all their family members by invoking the curse of God on those who lie about Jesus. After the Christians saw the Divine Evidence about Jesus (PBUH), would they accept the Prophet (PBUH)'s suggestion? The last advice given to them by their chief was **"But if you decide to adhere to your religion and to maintain your doctrine about your Master, then take your leave of the man and go home."** It may be argued that if their chief advisor knew the truth about the Prophetic mission of Muhammad (PBUH), then, why would he tell them to continue following their religion blindly? Instead, he could have advised them to embrace the Prophetic call. However, he provided for them a peaceful solution that made them stop their arguments with the Prophet (PBUH) on Jesus (PBUH) and go home peacefully if they wanted to maintain their religion. When they heard this from their chief advisor, they did not worry anymore about whether their claims were right or wrong. Rather, they opted for the last option by surrendering themselves and accepting any suggestions that the Prophet (PBUH) would give them in return for their rejection of the prayer that invokes the curse of Allah (SWT) on those who lie.

Their chief advisor gave them satisfactory suggestions that motivated them to come back in the presence of the Prophet (PBUH) and express their final decision. Thus, they came to the Prophet (PBUH) who welcomed them accompanied by his grandchildren, al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥussayn, his daughter Fāṭimah, and his cousin and son-in-law ʿAlī (may Allah be pleased with all of them). The Prophet (PBUH) peacefully invited them to embrace *al-Islām* «**If I invited you [to the Truth], so believe [in it]**». How did the Christians respond to the Prophet (PBUH)'s call? Did they accept to embrace the Prophet (PBUH)'s message? Rather, they rejected the Prophet (PBUH)'s truth and continued to follow blindly their distorted version of truth according to their religion, Christianity. In addition, to save themselves from this situation they opted to accept *al-Jizyah* (the tribute) instead of resorting to the curse. In spite of this, the Prophet (PBUH) agreed with their

decision and accepted to establish with them a peaceful covenant that would guarantee for them complete freedom to practice their religion.

It is concluded from the above analysis of this historical incident that the Prophet (PBUH)'s utilisation of **the pacific method** at three different stages in his discourse with the members of the Najrānī Christian delegation, reveals: (1) the Prophet (PBUH)'s tolerant approach in dealing with the Christian delegation by allowing them to perform their prayers in his mosque; (2) the continuity of friendly relationships between the Prophet (PBUH) and the Najrānī Christian delegation although they disagreed theologically on the person of Jesus; (3) the Divine Evidences provided by the Prophet (PBUH), via the *Qur'anic* revelation, against the Christians' arguments about Jesus; (4) the Prophet (PBUH)'s unique principles regarding the inter-religious dialogue between Muslims and others; and (5), the universal mission of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), which rejects compulsion:

"(256:البقرة) (لاَ إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّين) - Let there be no compulsion in religion." [al-Baqarah: 256].

Conclusion

This paper concludes that the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology in dealing with other religions to convey his Prophetic mission is of great significance and relevance to contemporary Muslim scholarship in the study of other religions, faiths, traditions, civilisations, customs, and ideologies. The *Tawḥīdic* essence of the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodology is endorsed by the three central Qur'ānic principles, *al-Ḥikmah* (Wisdom), *al-Mawʿizah al-Ḥasanah* (good advice), and *al-Jidāl bil-lati Hiya Aḥsan* (arguing with what is best), used by him throughout his Prophetic mission. Through the textual analysis of selected historical incidents during the time of revelation, this study discovered, revealed and explored six unique methods, i.e., **the descriptive, the objective, the altruistic, the analytical, the dialogical and the peaceful,** used by the Prophet (PBUH) in the light of these three Qur'anic cardinal principles in dealing with other religions. The Prophet's use of these methods in responding to the behaviours and claims of adherents of other religions has, in most of the incidents discussed in this study, granted him the following achievements: (1) changing their hostile

feelings towards him; (2) to respect him and his Prophetic mission; (3) to embrace *Dīn al-Islām*; and (4) to establish a friendly relationship and peaceful coexistence between him and them. Hence, to build a good relationship with followers of other religions, this study urges contemporary Muslims to ***study, analyse and understand*** the Prophet (PBUH)'s methodologies, and ***apply*** them making them ***relevant*** to their discourses and writings related to other religions.

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Muslim Specula Principum: The Art of Islamic Governance

Asilatul Hanaa Abdullah[1]

Abstract: The genre of specula principum or mirror for princes is an important literary genre that provides valuable guidance on how to be an effective and virtuous ruler. The advice offered includes matters of lifestyle preferences, obligatory duties, and religious afflictions which manifest in the respective ruling institutions in place at the time. The teachings of Islam are considered to be comprehensive, i.e. they encompass every aspect of life, making it the foundation of all Islamic governance mechanisms. This paper focuses on aspects of specula principum that give advice to rulers who are misguided to the extent where their reign may be deemed oppressive. The works chosen for this analysis include *Bustan al-Salatin* by Nuruddin al-Raniri, who was from Gujrat, India; *Nasihat al-Mulk* by al-Ghazzali, a Persian; and *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* by Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani, from India. These three works have been chosen because of the similarities in their content, despite being from different eras and parts of the Muslim world. The main objectives of this study are: to examine the impacts of Arab-Persian culture on Indian Muslim civilisation, which then permeated the Malay world via India; to identify the similarities of the virtuous qualities of rulers mentioned in these works; and finally, to understand how Islamic cultures that are based on the concepts of Islamic universality, openness and flexibility, exist not in isolated chambers, but rather, within a continuum of expanding culture.

Keywords: Universality, Islam, Virtuous Rulers, Mirror for Princes, Continuum.

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Introduction

Specula principum is the Latin equivalent of the mirror for rulers. Technically, it can be defined as a literary genre of political writing that emerged during the Middle Ages. Simply put, it is a collection of texts that highlight the dos and don'ts of governing, or an instruction manual for kings on how to rule their subjects and kingdoms. The Islamic tradition of intellectualism during the Abbasid period developed when Caliph Harun al-Rashid established *Bayt al Hikmah*. This institution became the centre for translations and book production. Starting from the 7th century, Islam started to spread to India and later expanded with the establishment of several sultanates and empires (Anjum, 2014).

The newly established Islamic civilisations were open to accept sciences, philosophy and art of the Hellenistic and Persian civilisations. Among the significant contributions of Persian knowledge in the Pahlawi language was *Adab* literature, or the art of governance, that gave birth to the genre of *specula principum* or mirrors for princes. They covered not only the art of governance but technical knowledge as well. At one point in history, the Abbasids were accused of trying to promote Persian ideas of kingship over the Islamic notion of the caliphate. This was subjected to a theological debate by Muslim thinkers in the 9th century, culminating eventually in the incorporation of Islamic values in *Adab* literature, which had traditionally utilised a Persian framework. This fusion of Hellenistic, Persian and Islamic knowledge took proper form in the 10th century (Robinson, 2009).

The *Adab* literature, or Persian ideas of kingship, was closely related to the Zoroastrian religion. The Zoroastrians believed that religion is the foundation of kingship and it is the primary duty of the king to protect religion. They also regarded their religion as the word of god. They held that each man was apportioned his due place on earth as per the wisdom of god. Thus, it was deemed that god operated on earth through these men, i.e. the kings are the representatives of god on earth, requiring that they be virtuous and just kings. The notion of 'just kings' being 'god's shadow on earth' was appreciated by Islamic jurists who considered it to be analogous to Islamic theories, additionally highlighting the similarities between the two religions (Lambton, 1962). Thus, this concept was integrated into Islamic political thought. This idea is the highlight of this paper.

Since Islam places emphasis on the notion of a just ruler, in fact, considering that an essential tenet of Islamic politics, this genre is especially significant. The mirrors for rulers' genre finds its roots in Arab-Persian culture, which was brought over to India. Persian works such as *Qabus Nama*,[2] *Siyasat Nama*[3] and *Nasihat al-Mulk* are among the most significant works that influenced this genre in India. This was subsequently transmitted to the Malay world.

The Malay World, India and the Arab-Persian Liaison

Islam entered India by means of three ways, one of which was via sea trade. India and Arabia had trade relations prior to the birth of Islam, as being surrounded by seas fostered trade activities between the regions. Products from West India were transported to Arab regions. Arab traders settled down in the coastal Malabar region. The commercial relations between the two familiarised the Arabs with the Indian coastal region, thus making propagation of Islam easier.

Long before the arrival of the Aryans in India, the latter already had contact with Persia. Archaeological data shows that the artefacts discovered in Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa resemble the artefacts found in the Iranian Dejleh and Forat rivers. This theory has been reinforced by archaeological data from 2000 A.D. found around the Silk Valley of Kashan, Persia, which was the meeting point of the Persian and Indian civilisations. The Indo-Iranian tribes, in search for better livelihood, travelled to India (and what is now Pakistan). Ever since these migrations, the cultural and racial connections between Persia and India flourished. This was a continual relationship that can be observed in terms of the similarities between the Persian and the Indo-Aryan languages, myths, and customs. The most interesting aspect is that Sanskrit, Avestan, and the ancient Farsi language share the same roots (Esfahani, 2013).

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[2] Unsurulmaoli Keykavus ibn Iskandar ibn Qabus ibn Voshimgir ibn Ziyar wrote *Qabus Nama* in the 11th century as a didactic text for the son of the ruler of Tabaristan, known as Gilanshah.

[3] *Siyasat Nama*, called *Siyar al-Mulk* in Arabic, was written for Malik Shah, the ruler of Seljuq empire. The book is an advice for the ruler written by Abu 'Ali Hasan Tusi, or Nizam al-Mulk, in the 11th century.

The Arab conquerors and their immediate successors maintained the social structure of Sind and adopted the Sindhi language alongside Arabic. This amalgamation extended to other cultural aspects such as clothing and food. Under the Delhi Sultanate and the Mughals, Persian culture flourished as these rulers encouraged literary and intellectual activities in the Persian language (Islam, 2017).

The Malay world had vital trade entrepots, with people of various nationalities visiting them even before the advent of Islam. Archaeological discoveries establish Indian contact with this region as early as the 1st century B.C. Diverse Indian populations, in terms of languages and castes, were in constant contact with the Southeast Asian maritime kingdoms. They had their own settlements all across this region, with the Hindu-Buddhist cultures later replaced by the Islamic culture (Hoogervorst, 2015).

Islam had gained a strong foothold in India by the 12th century, and it started to arrive in the Malay Archipelago. The Indian Muslims traders were the first to Islamise the Malay populace. The former is believed to be have been from Gujarat, based on the archaeological data found on the tombstone of Malik Ibrahim, which was believed to have been imported from Gujarat. This was followed by people from other regions of India, such as the Deccan and the Coromandel, also travelling here. The Indians laid the foundation for Islamisation, which was later built upon by the Arabs during the second wave of Islamisation (Hamid, 1982).

The Malay world has a strong Indian influence; this is established by the fact that there are hundreds of Malay words which have a Sanskrit origin. Religious Sanskrit words like *puasa* (fasting), *sembahyang* (prayers), *syurga* (heaven) and *neraka* (hell) were maintained even after the advent of Islam. Indian scripts like *Pallava* and *Devanagari* were used widely, which can be seen in the pre-Islamic stone inscriptions found across the Malay world. The arrival of Islam brought Muslim scholars to this part of the world and led to the innovation in the Malay script. They did not merely introduce a new writing system but also brought Arab-Persian influence to Malay literature (Sulaiman, Rashidi & Seong, 2015).

The advent of Islam in the Malay world made it a necessity to have a functioning script to teach Islam to the locals. Thus, the Arabic script with its intimate connection to Islam was chosen to be the

base for this new Malay script. However, some modifications were done to accommodate Malay phonetics, which eventually gave birth to the Jawi script. The gradual Islamisation of the Malay world led to the establishment of Islamic learning centres. These centres began promoting Islamic education in the respective areas. Religious books used in teaching Islamic knowledge were authored by religious scholars mainly in the Malay Jawi script. Among the prominent authors of the time were Hamzah Fansuri, Abdul Rauf Singkel and Nuruddin al-Raniri (Othman, 1997).

Pre-Islamic Malays were not too keen when it came to writing academic works. Most of the historical works contain myths and legends, and the main medium was stone inscriptions. The tradition of book writing emerged with the coming of Islam. Under the Islamic Malay Sultanate, learning institutions were established and the people started religious learning via manuscripts. However, these early writings were not locally produced. They were brought in from India, Arabia and Persia. These institutions flourished since they attracted Muslim scholars from all over the world who brought with them influential academic works (Hamzah A. H., 2017).

Arab-Persian Mirror for Princes

In Islam, history is part of the divine plan of God. The religion advocates that God created Adam and Eve as vicegerents on earth. Consequently, mankind, as their descendent, has the responsibility to continue the legacy of being a vicegerent. The primary duty of mankind is to worship Allah, about which they will be questioned by God on the Day of Judgement. The temporal nature of human life, which is merely a platform to earn rewards for the ultimate day of resurrection, is the central theme of the Islamic mirror for princes. Kings and leaders are bestowed with power by God, and thus they will be held more accountable on the Day of Judgement. Supreme Justice will be served in the Hereafter, therefore, rulers must be wary of their actions on earth.

The concept of mirror for princes in Persian tradition finds its foundation in the Zoroastrian doctrine of kingship. According to this doctrine, kings are seen as humans chosen by god, and are thus deemed to be god's shadow on earth and, as such, must behave like shepherds that guide the people to the way of god. To be a good vicegerent of god,

a king must not be oppressive and must instead be a just king (Harun, 2009). The mirror for princes is a voluminous text that provides advice and guidance to rulers about matters of administration and governance. These texts not only emphasise the importance of being pragmatic rulers but also insist that rulers set a moral example for their subjects to emulate.

The mirror for princes was a Persian literary genre that was later adopted and adapted by the Arabs. During pre-Islamic times, the Arabs did not possess a concept of written history, rather it consisted of orally-transmitted myths, legends and historical accounts of tribal warfare. After the spread of Islam in the 7th century, the literary genre of *Sirah* and *Maghazi* started to surface. *Sirah* encompassed the history of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), while *Maghazi* covered the detailed records of the Prophet Muhammad's battles. The compilation of the *Sirah* gave rise to the field of *isnad*, i.e. the detailed account of the chain of transmitters to ensure that each narration can be accurately traced back directly to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself. During the time of the Umayyads and the Abbasids many written works of history were produced. It is during the 10th century that Persian influence became apparent in Islamic writings (Harun, 2009).

Persian mirrors for princes also flourished in Muslim-ruled India. This genre specifically is known as the Indo-Persian mirrors for rulers. Among the writings produced in this genre are *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, *Zakhirat al-Mulk* and *Akhlaq-i Hakimi*. *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* is a contemporary to al-Raniri's *Bustan al-Salatin* (Harun, 2009).

The *Adab* of writing Mirrors for Rulers

The concept of *Adab* is very important in Islam. *Adab* has a long history and is closely related to ethics in human interactions with each other. *Adab* in the modern world refers to the discipline of the practical intellect of putting something where it belongs according to its proper values. Literature is seen as the keeper of civilisation and thus called *Adabiyyat* in Islam. The cultured man is the collector of the teachings and statements that educate the self and society with *Adab*. The recognition and acknowledgement of the rightful and proper place for every word in a written or uttered sentence so as not to produce a dissonance in meaning, sound and concept is considered as *Adab* towards language.

Adab is also the display of justice (*'adl*) as it is reproduced by wisdom (*hikmah*) (Mohd Shahril, 2015).

The dictionary of Islam defines *Adab* as the discipline of the mind and manners, good education and good breeding, politeness, deportment and a virtuous mode of conduct and behaviour. In terms of Muslim historiography, Lichtenstadter divided *Adab* into two parts: first, as Arabic poetry with commentaries, and second as a handbook or list of instructions for pragmatic governance and an archetype of exemplary morality for kings and court officials (Harun, 2009).

Generally, mirrors for rulers are divided into two main parts. The first part is concerned with duties and responsibilities of, and expectations towards, kings and court officials. This is accompanied by excerpts from the Quran and Hadith or quotes from scholars to support these advices. The second part consists of didactic stories. These stories are represented in anecdotal forms to explain the rules and regulations laid out in the first part. Many of the anecdotes are based on historical events, including stories of the prophets, and previous caliphs and rulers. The lead character or the hero exemplifies a role model of justice and honesty in a religious society. Didactic stories in *Adab* literature serve as practical examples to rulers and kings to explain dos and don'ts under various circumstances.

The didactic stories are written to provide subtle philosophical explanations, in a beautiful and appealing manner. These same methods were later transmitted from the Arab-Persian tradition to the Indo-Persian culture, and later to Malay-Islamic literature (Harun, 2009).

Al-Ghazzali

Al-Ghazzali's full name was Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Mohammad al-Tusi al-Ghazzali. He was born in Tus, Khorasan, which is modern day Iran, around 1058 CE. After the death of his father, he was put under the tutelage of Imam Ahmad al-Radhkani, a teacher of jurisprudence, before he joined a madrasah. He later joined Nizamiyyah College and became the pupil of Imam al-Juwayni (Sa'ari, 1999).

After the passing of Imam al-Juwayni, an influential Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, invited al-Ghazzali to his court. He was impressed with al-Ghazzali and appointed him as a Professor of Nizamiyyah College. Al-Ghazzali produced a lot of writings mainly focusing on theology,

Sufism and philosophy. Like al-Raniri, he also authored a mirror for princes, *Nasihat al-Mulk*. This book was written in Tus around the year 1106 or 1109, during his time in Nishapur. He is said to have been influenced by Nizam al-Mulk who had written his own mirror for princes, *Siyasat Nama*. *Nasihat al-Mulk* was either written for Sultan ibn Malik Shah, known as the king of the East and the West, or the king's brother Muhammad (Kamarudin, 1997).

Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani

Around the 17th century, the Mughals' courts in India received numerous Iranian immigrants. One of them was Muhammad Baqir Najm-i Sani. Baqir was recruited into the elite *Mansabdari* services. The *Mansabdari* was a system where bureaucrats served in the state's military during wartime and continued their bureaucratic functions in peacetime. It is in the *Mansabdari* service where he rose in ranks from a mere soldier to bureaucratic services. The Mughals later appointed him as a governor of one of their provinces. Baqir was married to the niece of Emperor Jahangir's wife, Nur-i-Jahan. Thus, he established himself as kin of the emperor (Sani, 1989). Baqir was a highly cultured man who had a penchant for writing and was mainly engrossed in writing poetry. His didactic work, *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, or his advice to the Indian emperor Jahangir, was written in three days. Although it is often argued that Baqir's work is rather secular in comparison to al-Ghazzali's, yet, there is no doubt that the essence of Baqir's work is similar to that of other Islamic scholars. In spite of belonging to a different denomination in terms of religious schools of thought, Baqir's work carries the universal message of the Islamic concept of just rulers (Morony, 1989).

Nuruddin al-Raniri

Nur al-Din ibn Ali ibn Hasanji ibn Muhammad Hamid al-Raniri was born towards the end of the 16th century to a diaspora of Hadrami descent in Ranir, Gujarat. This Hadrami family was known as the Hamid clan (Hamzah N., 2015). The Hamid clan came from Zuhra, considered one of the ten Quraysh tribes. He had mixed Indo-Arab ancestry. The name al-Raniri is taken from the place he was born i.e. Ranir, Gujarat. It is believed that al-Raniri had close contact with the Islamic Kingdom of

Aceh and some believed he was well trained in the Malay language even before his arrival in Aceh (Majid, 2015).

His arrival in Aceh was not well received by the then Sultan of Aceh, Sultan Iskandar Muda because of his opposition to the teaching of *Wujudiah* by Fansuri which the sultan had taken quite a liking to personally. Thus, al-Raniri travelled to Pahang where he met the future Sultan of Aceh, Sultan Iskandar Thani (Majid, 2015).

The early Muslim preachers conveyed the teachings of Islam orally, as such al-Raniri played a vital role in documenting Islamic teachings in the 17th century. These works, written in Arabic and Malay, expounded the basic tenets of Islam. While his writing mainly focussed on the subject matter of theology with particular references to Sufism, he also wrote the mirror for princes, *Bustan al-Salatin* or Gardens of Kings (Hamisi, 2017). In the genre of mirror for princes, *Bustan al-Salatin* is regarded as the most important literary work in Malay literature. It was written for al-Raniri's patron, Sultan Iskandar Thani, the ruler of Aceh around 1637 (Rody, 2015).

Kings as God's Shadow on Earth

In the Islamic world, the concept of mirror for princes is very significant, attributing the ruler as someone of a special class i.e. someone with a chosen purified lineage. These lineages were considered to be bestowed upon a ruler by God himself. The citizens are obligated to obey the ruler as the latter is metaphorically considered to be God's shadow on earth. To disobey a ruler is to disobey God himself. Rulers are considered shepherds, making them responsible to guide those under their rule (Harun, 2009).

If a nation can be compared to a ship, then a ruler is the captain of the ship. The ruler is responsible to command the ship and control the voyage. A lack of experience would cause the destruction of not only the ship but the lives of the crew. A citizen of a country relies on the wisdom of the ruler to lead the country. For these reasons, the ruler is expected to be well read and wise so as to be able to lead his people (Zakaria, 2016).

The ruler is entrusted to administer a state and its citizens, and to ensure that the people can live in peace and harmony. The main duties of a ruler are to ensure the safety of the citizens, to protect the sanctity of

religion, to provide for the establishment of the rule of law, to do justice and to care for the citizens. A ruler that is accepted by the people is given the right to be obeyed by the people. This empowerment facilitated the political obligation to be obeyed by the people. Obedience to rulers is equated to the obedience to God (Zakaria, 2016). This notion is supported by a Quranic verse in Surah al-Nisa, verse 59, "O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those charged with authority among you. If ye differ in anything among yourselves refer it to Allah and His Apostle if ye do believe in Allah and the Last Day: that is best and most suitable for final determination."

The same verse was used by al-Ghazzali in *Nasihat al-Mulk* and al-Raniri in *Bustan al-Salatin* to justify the position of a ruler as God's shadow on earth. In *Nasihat al-Mulk*, al-Ghazzali specifically referred to the kings as shadows of god on earth:

> You should understand that God on High selected two classes of the son of Adam and endowed these two classes with superiority over the rest: the one being prophets, blessing and peace be upon them, and the other kings. To guide His slaves to Him, He sends prophets; and to preserve them from one another, He sends kings, to whom he bound the welfare of men's lives in His wisdom and on whom He conferred high rank. As you will hear in the traditions, "the Sultan is God's shadow on earth", which means that he is the high-ranking and the Lord's delegate over His creatures. It must therefore be recognised that this kingship and the divine effulgence have been granted to them by God, and they must accordingly be obeyed, loved and followed. To dispute them is improper and to hate them is wrong (Bragley, 1964).

Al-Raniri wrote concerning the obligation of following the rulers' instructions that, "to follow the instruction of kings is compulsory unless it is against the *syarak* (teachings of Islam)" (Harun, 2009).

Similar ideas can also be found in *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, a mirror for princes written for the Mughal emperor of India, Emperor Jahangir, accordingly, "Therefore, it is necessarily incumbent upon the Almighty's chosen creation, whom they call emperor (*badshah*), to inculcate in himself the morals of the custodian of the Shari'ah (the Prophet

Muhammad). Waging his campaigns and conducting the business of his dominion (*mulk*) and sovereignty (*dawlat*)" (Sani, 1989).

Thus, from these examples it can be concluded that the relationship between the ruler and the ruled is considered to be one of the most important tenets in Islam after the concept of prophethood. It is viewed as a continuum of the prophetic institution. Aside from being a symbol of political Islam, it is closely related to Islamic governance. Leadership, as in any other social structure is a vital social concept. In Islamic teachings, to have good leadership is considered compulsory. A good ruler with good leadership skills will guide the ruled towards success not only in this world but in the afterlife as well (Ali, 2016). The success of a nation relies on good leadership, as such, one should obey an elected ruler and should not go against their orders. The position of kings as god's shadow on earth is quite popular not only in Malay tradition but in Islamic culture as a whole (Zakaria, 2016).

The genre of mirror for rulers has created a new discussion on the role of rulers in the Islamic world, in light of Islamic teachings. The development of this genre across the Arab-Persian and the Indo-Persian cultures with the advent of Islam in India eventually brought it to the shores of the Malay Archipelago. These elements of good governance based on the Quran, Hadith and the ideas of Muslims scholars, trained in theology, Sufism and jurisprudence, have disseminated the universality of Islamic governance transcending geographical and cultural barriers.

The Concept of Just Rulers

Islam in the context of the Malay world is synonymous with the Malay race. Islam is considered as the way of life of the Malays. The mirrors for rulers have frameworks that provide insights on how to rule using this principle. The central theme of such works is just rulers (Ali, 2016). The concept of just rulers based on Islamic teachings is the foundation of mirrors for rulers not only in the Malay world but the whole Muslim world. Justice is the gist of good leadership in Islam. It acts like a force field that generates energy in Islamic leadership. The authors of these works not only explain the concept of justice but also provide examples of oppressive unjust rulers in the didactics section to serve as reminders and deterrents (Harun, 2009). The concept of just rulers is so important that we have various Quranic verses discussing it, for example in Surah al-Nahl, verse 90, it is said that, "Allah commands justice, the doing

of good and liberality to kith and kin and He forbids all shameful deeds and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you that ye may receive admonition."

The relationship between the ruler and ruled is a relationship that begets ownership. The rulers own the ruled by managing them so that they can live in a harmonious environment. At the same time, the ruled subjects have rights upon their rulers. These rights include fair treatment. A ruler's performance is measured based on how he handles his subjects. If a ruler is just and gentle towards his subjects, he is considered to be a just ruler. However, if he is unjust and oppressive, he is considered a bad ruler. A good ruler understands that he belongs to the people (Zakaria, 2016).

This responsibility to be a just ruler is considered to be an *amanah* (responsibility). This *amanah* should be directed towards those who deserve it, i.e. the subjects of the state. To be just is a concept so pertinent in Islamic leadership that it extends not only to non-Muslim subjects but also to enemies of the state. This notion is vital to maintain a harmonious state (Zakaria, 2016).

In the mirror for princes' genre, the concept of a just ruler is emphasised using verses from the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH). A king is continually cautioned against oppressive behaviours. Justice is viewed as actions that bring glory and prosperity. A just king would find it easy to maintain his rule and face less munity, rebellion or usurpation of power. Being unjust and oppressive would only result in his own destruction and loss of power. This reminder is given in didactic forms using harsh and strong languages, while on the other hand, a just ruler is praised using *belle lettres*.[4] A just ruler is always welcomed and loved by their subjects. This is because his justice would ensure they lived in harmonious and blissful conditions. Thus, the subjects would not hesitate to protect the ruler from any enemy. Another means of caution used by these authors is to remind the rulers that they are subjected to Allah's ultimate judgement. The just ruler would receive Allah's blessing both in this life and the afterlife. The retribution for oppressive rulers would also be severe in the afterlife (Harun, 2009). Justice is the most important aspect of being a ruler because a ruler is expected to regulate the affairs of the people. If a ruler is a tyrant then

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[4] Artistic and beautiful literary works, can be fictional or non- fictional.

this would lead to the birth of a rebellious movement to topple him and this would not only affect the tyrannical ruler and the complicit nobility but also the innocent people of the land (Sani, 1989).

Both al-Raniri and al-Ghazzali emphasised on this issue of justice. The priority of a ruler is the welfare of the people. They both made references to the righteous Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab in their didactic stories. The rightly guided caliphs were the four rulers that came after the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and strictly followed the Prophet's teachings in all affairs. They discharged their duties faithfully and are considered as ideal role models for Muslim rulers (Khan, 1978).

An example from *Bustan al-Salatin* expresses the story of Caliph Umar helping a woman with her children. This story also finds mention in *Nasihat al-Mulk* (Harun, 2009),

> One night, Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab was walking around Madinah with Zaid ibn Aslam and found a hungry woman with three children sheltering outside the city. The woman had placed a pot on a fire, but the pot only contained water. The woman did this just to make her children patient. The Caliph then went back to the city and brought a sack of flour which he slung over his shoulder. Zaid ibn Aslam wanted to help but the Caliph replied, "If you carry this load, who will carry my load of sin before God?" (Bragley, 1964).

Al-Ghazzali, in *Nasihat al-Mulk*, when mentioning Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab, writes, "And look to Umar and his attitudes, o kings. He is feared for his firmness and strictness, but still he fears the wrath of Allah on the day of reckoning. While you o kings, forget the affairs of your subjects, and you forget the real owner [God] of the government" (Bragley, 1964).

While al-Raniri upon ending the story of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab writes that "Rightly so, to all kings to follow the behaviour of *Amirul Mukminin* Umar (*radiallahuanhu*) hence would inherit *Amirul Mukminin* (*radiallahuanhu*) just behaviour" (Harun, 2009).

The importance of being just was also advocated by Baqir in *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri* as he said that, "Therefore, it is necessarily incumbent upon the Almighty's chosen creation, whom they call an emperor (*badshah*), to inculcate in himself the morals of the custodian of the Shari'ah (the Prophet Muhammad). Waging his campaigns

and conducting the business of his dominion (*mulk*) and sovereignty (*dawlat*)" (Sani, 1989).

Although there are slight differences among these three works, for instance al-Raniri and al-Ghazzali gave the example of Caliph Umar and Baqir used the example of the Prophet (PBUH), overall they all have a similar message. To conclude, although the rulers' right to power is acknowledged and upheld, they are constantly cautioned not to be oppressive and tyrannical, since not only would this create disharmony on earth but the rulers would be held strictly accountable for all their actions by the King of all dominions, Allah. Thus, a ruler must follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the righteous caliphs that governed after him, fearing God's retribution on the Day of Judgement.

Conclusion: Mirrors for Rulers as Muslim Universal Teaching

While the purpose of this article has been to discover the impact of the Arab and Persian cultures on the Indian Muslim civilisation, which then subsequently impacted the Malay world, one must not overlook the most important feature which is that the universality of Islamic teachings is what enables the occurrence of such a phenomenon.

The Islamic civilisation is the civilisation which embraces all of humanity and, by doing so, professes the equality of all human beings irrespective of their ancestries, races, nationalities and colours. This unique characteristic encouraged and fostered the contribution of all members of the Muslim *ummah*, indiscriminately, as well as that of non-Muslim citizens. This paved the way for another concept, which is openness. People of different races and ethnicities contributed to Islamic civilisation via human experience thus making Muslim civilisation a joint endeavour of all citizens (Ashimi, 2016).

The wealth of Islamic knowledge has been derived from strands of various cultures such as Semitic, Hellenistic, Persian and Indian. This genre of mirrors for princes, pertaining to the art of governance was thus derived from Islamic civilisation's interaction with Sassanid civilisations, prior to which this literature was known as *Adab* literature in Persian. The subject matter of the Persian moralistic fables ranged from animal life to mirror for princes. This specific kind of literature then gained importance in the Abbasid court. The advent of Islam

encouraged the Persian authors to produce a genre that incorporated Persian ideas of kingship with the notion of the Islamic caliphate, thus the mirrors of ruler's genre was born (Robinson, 2009).

As Islamic teaching spread from Arabia to India, it brought along the cultural influences from both Arab and Indo-Persian traditions. The universality and openness of the Islamic civilisation created a new amalgamated Islamic/Muslim culture. This culture further assimilated with Malay culture and produced literary genres and mirrors for princes is one of them particular to Malay culture. The concept of Dewa-Raja or godly kings in Hinduism was replaced by the concepts of 'Gods' shadow on earth' and 'just kings.' The Malay mirrors for princes are an example of how the universality of Islamic teaching leads to a continual progression of culture that evolves with every society it interacts with. Despite Indian missionary efforts to syncretise Islam with existing beliefs to make it easy to accept in the Malay world, to say that Islam comes from India exclusively is quite impossible, as there is ample evidence of the existence of such a literary genre as mirrors for princes that clearly originates from Arab and Persian traditions. The unique aspect of Islamic religious expansion was fusion. The religion and culture, as it expands, incorporated local features where the teachings of Islam integrated with other cultures. This is demonstrated in example of how the Islamic Shari'ah deems appropriate local traditions as Islamically sanctioned legal rulings. Islamic teachings are inherently universal not only in terms of dogma but also in terms of culture. However, this does not mean that one culture copied from another but rather the universality of the teachings, which was the centre of Muslim life, acts as a catalyst to absorb different cultures that are in line with Islamic teachings. In short, it is important to note that the nature of the Islamic polity beginning from the establishment of the first Islamic state of Madinah was essentially egalitarian in nature. Unlike the Western concept of the nation state, in Islamic teachings there is no concept of class distinction where one human is higher than the other. Being a Muslim has always meant being part of an egalitarian polity because the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not merely a religious preacher but the leader of the first Islamic state of Madinah. These unique characteristics of Islam have allowed for the creation and development of academic and literary works, such as those highlighted in this paper, to be written by scholars and bureaucrats from across various cultures and epochs.

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Re-Thinking Muslim Political Identity in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: The Muslims in Sri Lanka have an identity crisis that affects their political representation. Whilst this has enabled them to pursue a path of accommodationist politics, there has been an evolution in the grassroots around Muslim politics. This challenges the Muslim political representation especially in the wake of the Easter Sunday attacks. It explores the formation of identity based on imagined communities and geographies that is also based on a lost *ummatic* identity. This paper discusses the concept of Sri Lankan 'Muslim' identity which is politically 'constructed' as a response to colonial influence as well as nationalistic aspirations of other ethnic communities within the country. As a result, ethnic institutionalisation which leads to religious consciousness had transformed into a political identity for survival leaving the community with a hybrid identity. The paper discusses that the political elites from the community were intent on pushing for a political identity but did not consider the changing dynamics of the context. It shows that the consistency of the transformation of the minorities due to changing demographic contexts at the grassroots amidst static political contexts reflects that the legitimacy of political elites from the minority communities is undermined, unless they can transform to meet these challenges. This shows a need to reimagine how identity is formed and its narration to manage relations with the 'Other'. The paper also offers some insights into how the Muslim political representation can be reimagined.

Keywords: Politics, Imagined Communities, Imagined Geography, Muslims, Sri Lanka, Identity Crisis.

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Introduction

There is an identity crisis currently being faced by the Sri Lankan Muslim community as it navigates between trying to find an ethnic identity, a political representation and remaining true to religious values. This tension around Muslim identity leads to a sense of frustration (Ismail Q. , 1997) due to the inability to fully understand and articulate the identity of the Sri Lankan Muslims as well as the inability to recognise where the 'Muslim' fits within the Sri Lankan national consciousness. Though there have been different perspectives around Muslim identity in Sri Lanka (see Hussein, 2018; Bush, 2003; Asad, 1993; Shukri, 1989; Deverajah, 1994), there are very few which express a sense of frustration (and despair) with the inability to holistically articulate the identity of the Sri Lankan Muslim. Hence, this paper attempts to discuss the political identity of the Muslims, which is seen as the public face of this identity crisis.

The tension has been felt especially since 2019, after the Easter Sunday attacks, which challenges the Muslim identity as a whole (Irshad, 2019) to not only condemn the attacks carried out by a local group affiliated with ISIS and to prove 'patriotism', but also to deal with anti-Muslim violence affecting the country in the aftermath of the violence (Amarasingam & Fuller, 2019). The latter incidents in particular had put a strain on the expression of Muslim political identity, especially as it has been a recurring feature of the previous few years (Reuters, 2018; Mashal & Bastian, 2018; Tegal, 2014). However, the violence against Muslims in 2019 and the immediate preceding years is nothing new but represents repeated anti-Muslim violence that occurred in Sri Lanka over the past three to four decades (Nagaraj & Haniffa, 2017). With the current COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the Muslims are once again been targeted and represented in the media as the main cause of spread the virus in Sri Lanka and had their basic burial rites being denied (Saleem, 2020).What is clear especially from the recent violence and vilification (2014-2020) is that the Muslims and their identity have become the target of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists. The various dimensions of the Muslim identity have been systematically challenged by the latter, ranging from halal certification, to *niqab*, to Islamic financing and even to political engagements. The challenge comes from two perspectives: (1) the spreading of myths about the community that makes the community scapegoats in terms of representing their identity

as a threat to the Sinhala-Buddhist economic dominance and racist population politics (Wettimuny, 2018) and; (2) the indifference and silence of the majority (Gunasekara, 2018).

> The phenomenon of Islam in Sri Lanka is not new, and can be traced back to Arab traders (Shukri, 1989) coming to Sri Lanka before and after the advent of Islam as well as through a history of migration as a result of colonisation. The ethnic categorisations of 'Muslims' were primarily constructed in response to emerging nationalism from other communities in Sri Lanka in the 19th century but, the community have struggled to carve out their ethnic space, frequently compressed between two dominant ethno-nationalism projects (Ismail Q. , 1997).

The question for the Muslim community is 'how does one navigate religious expression in an ethnic identity discourse that is also challenged by political biasness?' Thus, it is in this light, that the discussions of Muslim political identity need to be framed, understood and discussed. This identity has occupied a perilous position, being compressed between two dominant identity groups, the Sinhalese and the Tamils. It is also being subjected to a context of Sri Lanka of "cultural and religious beliefs that imbricate with economic and political factors in forming the dominant power structures such as nation-states in a network of local and global powers" (Fernando, 2008, p. 8). The politics of interpretation (within and without the Muslim community) has undoubtedly created a tension in the institutionalisation of the Muslim identity as it wrestles between the distinction of faith as a theological marker (i.e. a religious motivator, a political representation) and faith as an identity marker (i.e. a communal galvanizer). This tension for the Muslim community in Sri Lanka centres around the nexus of political and ethnic identity versus religious expression in which the latter incorporates personal (and social) capital while the former only incorporates social capital. In this regard, Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' and Edward Said's 'imagined geography' theses are transformed into an 'imagined Muslim community' with a struggle between the local and the universal, such as the local community versus the global transnational Islamic community (or the *ummah*). Hence, there is always a dynamic tension between the relatively local focus and the civilisational focus, as well as the struggle of forming specific concept of moral patriotism and how

it may reflect a sense of belonging to a larger collective community such as the Islamic community. In addition, Barth's discussion of ethnic boundaries is worth mentioning while discussing self-identity with social interaction. In other words, it is impossible for an individual to have an ethnic identity in isolation which needs to be declared in opposition to another person. In this perspective, the tension and challenge for the Muslim community is reflected in how it interprets its relationship on a transnational scale and within the local context. This paper suggests a holistic re-imagination of Sri Lankan Muslim political identity, expression and agency as well as an approach to the conversation. This paper addresses the gap in understanding the political identity of the Sri Lankan Muslim community, especially in moving forward after the Easter Sunday attacks which had led to more public scrutiny. The aftermath of the incident calls for the Muslims to assimilate and accommodate the 'Sri Lankan' identity. The paper also addresses the dynamics of politically active minorities and attempts to demonstrate how evolving circumstances and contexts need to be comprehended to ensure relevance and coherence. Finally, it is important to note that this paper is an analysis of the identity of the community based on primary and secondary sources.

An Imagined Community with Imagined Geographies

The Muslim identity in Sri Lanka has emerged from a constructivist perspective which constructs an ethnic identity by instrumentalising religion for political reasons. Thus, the community is unique in that sense that they have become an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983) with an 'imagined geography' (Said, 2000).

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities is useful to anchor the Muslim community. Since, despite not actually knowing all other members of the community – or even having face to face contact at the time of discussion, the community was 'imagined' by political elites in the sense of horizontal comradeship and shared history; yet, the actual inequalities and hierarchies that existed in reality, and the limitations because of an understanding of a 'boundary' (Anderson, 1983). This boundary is better explained clearly through the imagined geography narrative, that Edward Said (2000) has used to evolve this concept as a form of social constructionism from the imagined community narrative.

The term 'imagined' in this context, refers to 'perceived'. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said (1993) pointed out that no human will be completely free from the struggle over geography, territory, space and place.

From this point of view, the formation of the Sri Lankan Muslim identity is based on a perceived link to history, time and space. This imagined geography for the processes of cultural intervention of the Sri Lankan Muslim narrative was shaped by a long tradition of efforts to forge effective political formations in times of global crises. In other words, these efforts with transnational ambitions had profoundly shaped the history of the 20th century which includes the legacies of anti-colonial movements and other internationalist thought. According to Said (1993, 2000), imaginative geography is a form of invention used by practitioners of an empire to re-interpret the meaning of certain territories and create discourses justifying the need for control over such re-imagined places. This exercise in imagination begins by reconstructing the history of those places coveted by empire builders. This practice of constructing alternative representations of places and people is what Edward Said refers to as the crafting of 'imaginative geographies' (Said, 1993; Said, 2000).[2] Thus "institutionalising Muslim difference, the British, in a crucial sense, helped 'create' Muslim identity" (Ismail Q. , 1997, p. 73).

According to Barth (1969), discussions on 'ethnic boundaries' canalises social life which frequently entails a rather complex organisation of behaviour and social relations whilst recognising a limitation of shared understandings and differences in criteria for judgement of value. Based on this perspective, ethnic groups may persist as significant units if they imply marked differences in behaviour and allow the persistence of cultural differences. Hence, ethnic divisions in Sri Lanka were formed and reinforced as a result of the boundaries placed by different groups and the interactions which occurred between them. This is particularly reinforced by the Muslims themselves who use the term 'Muslim' as a religious, political and cultural signifier, considering it as their identifier under which they pressure for action on issues that allow them to take on the concern of an 'ethnic' community. Thus, the term 'Muslim' is

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[2] It is clear that the formation of the Moor or Muslim identity by the political elites in response to colonial periods, also tried to imagine a `geographical` space with links to a pan Arab citizenship and transnational Islamic expression.

frequently associated with political, ethnic, cultural as well as religious point of view and this is replicated in academic discourse.

The term 'Muslim Community' used to describe Sri Lankan Muslims reflects a sense of homogeneity across the heterogeneous ideological and geographical groups that constitute Muslims in Sri Lanka. The term also poses some challenges due to the usage of religious labels as ethnic markers. It indicates a theological and scriptural basis for the formulation of an identity based on common acceptance which views that anyone who performs the rituals, such as the five daily prayers, fasting and pilgrimage, is a devout Muslim. As a consequence, the default position is that Muslim identity revolves around rituals and dogma, which form the most important feature in Islam, and where moral and social responsibilities fit in (Yakun, 1990).

Osman Bakar further defines that the Muslim *ummatic* identity is based on the Qur'anic concepts of *Tawhid* (Oneness of God) and the "Muhammadan Shariah" (Bakar, 2012). It is these concepts that formed the basis of the *ummatic* identity which is a fundamental theme in Islamic discourse which is based on the unity of Muslims, as differing communities united by faith; expressed through the concept of an *ummah* (community) that transcends internal divisions (al-Ahsan, 1992). The traditional Muslim *ummatic* identity was founded on the twin principles of divine unity and Muḥammadan apostleship" (Bakar, 2012). Yet this has become lost as a result of many occurrences including the encounters of Muslim societies with the European empires (Aydin, 2017). As a result, narratives presented about Islam by Muslims err towards presenting the faith as unified and potentially monolithic, based on a perfected form revealed in the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Hence, "the key assumption of orthodox Islamic thought that doctrines have been set out in the unchangeable and faultless form of the Qur'an; and that therefore any belief or practice can be challenged only so far as it does not have a real basis in the original truths that were revealed to Mohamed" (Jacobson, 1998, p. 112). However, this concept of Muslim 'exceptionalism' and monolithic unity is unsubstantiated because it "derives not from the theological requirements…but from the legacy of imperial racialisation" (Aydin, 2017, p. 6).

Nevertheless, it is based on this notion that the Muslim community, led by the political elites, institutionalised their identity, founded on an

imagined assumption. Thus identities have been imagined where global, regional, national and local spaces have entered into relationships of replication, consequences and repercussion. Appadurai (2006) refers this phenomenon as 'geography of anger', stating that this "is one way to examine how the fear of small numbers and their power shape the mutual relationships of different spatial scales and sites" (p. 93). Thus, the concept of imagined communities and geographies lead to the concept of geography of anger, where global concerns and tensions can produce complex replicas of the larger struggles, creating "a freshly charged relationship between uncertainty in ordinary life and insecurity in the affairs of states" (Appadurai, 2006, p. 101). In other words, this imagination leads to uncertainty and identities became a flash point for insecurities, and the minorities subsequently evolve to face those circumstances.

Building a Political Identity

The political identity of the Muslims was formed on the "anvil of Portuguese religious persecution of them as 'Moors'" (McGilvray D. B., 2008, p. 10), it was only under the British colonial regime in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, in response to the prevailing British colonial model for categorising and representing indigenous Ceylonese by 'race' in the census and on the appointed Legislative Council, that the Sri Lankan Muslim elites energetically constructed their 'racial' identity as Arab descendants. It can be said that the central innovation in the period leading up to independence in 1948 was not the bifurcation of Sinhala versus Tamil political identities but the development of 'the political separation of the Ceylon Moors as a distinct ethnic group from the larger Tamil-speaking community' to ultimately distance the Muslim community from the characteristic Dravidian linguistic chauvinism but also to "safeguard their socio-political and economic interests" (Nuhman, 2007, p. 13).

What history shows is that the Muslim political elites of the South used this development to cooperate with the Sinhalese political parties, which formed the successive governments since independence to consolidate their interests (Imtiyaz, 2009). Whilst the Sri Lankan government's enthusiasm to accommodate Muslim demands helped them in their quest for a separate identity (Imtiyaz, 2012). It is no

surprise that the continuous Tamil indifference towards the Muslims and the strained political relationship between the two communities since the end of the 19th century was the real catalyst for why sections of the Muslim political leadership opposed the Tamil nationalist struggle for political autonomy and developed the full expression of political identity as an independent community (Ali, 1997).

This political expression of the Muslim identity where faith is an identity and community galvaniser has blurred boundaries with a Muslim identity based on a theological construction in which faith is a theological marker (Imtiyaz, 2012) in the sense of identifying the level of one's piety and practice of the religion. This blurring boundaries have also meant that their Muslim identity has placed them in a religious category beyond the Sinhala-Tamil ethnic and linguistic binary leading to other underlying challenges facing the identity politics of the Muslim community, particularly in the relations with the other religions in Sri Lanka. This is not about considering whether the label of one or the other is better or worse, but certainly this blurring of boundaries has meant that people from other communities are left confused as to where Muslims are and also sceptical about their 'true' belonging to the country. For example, the celebrated Sri Lankan Buddhist revivalist of that time, Anagarika Dharmapala, was a leading campaigner against the Muslim presence in the country. To him, Muslims were "'aliens' and 'foreigners' and deserved to be expatriated to Arabia" (Ali, 1997, p. 260). It was felt that there was a threat to the existence of Buddhism in the country and Muslims were never part of the country and 'belonged' elsewhere. Thus, the Muslim identity became and still remains a challenge as two thirds of all Muslims live and work in Sinhala-majority parts of the island, where Muslim business people and professionals are aware of the potential of the Sinhala animosity (McGilvray D. B., 2008). One cannot underestimate this antipathy towards the Muslim community on the part of the majority of the Sinhalese Buddhist community, as incidents in 1915 and others throughout the 20th century do not only displayed the outright hostility, but also had been manifested in the formation of a political party formed by Buddhist clergy known as the *Jatika Hela Urumaya* (JHU, or National Heritage Party) that represents the most xenophobic wing of the Sri Lankan Buddhist monkhood (ICG, 2007).

O'Sullivan (1999) states that, in the context of ethnic competition, the composite Muslim identity had developed into a political force with demands for Muslim rights and Muslim development. Thus, the situation had become even more complicated with the founding of a direct Muslim political party in 1981, known as Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC). The formation of Sri Lanka Muslim Congress was a direct response to the vulnerability of the Muslims in the North and the East who were in need of protection from the Tamil Tiger's violence and extortion (McGilvray D. B., 2011). This was an issue which was largely ignored by the Southern Muslim politicians who were practising the politics of accommodation with the main Sinhalese political parties. The emergence of the SLMC centred in the Eastern province provided an anomaly in Muslim political representation, by challenging the strategies of the Colombo-based Muslim political elite by explicitly promoting the interests of the Muslim community as a whole, attempting to cohabit with the Sinhalese polity (Imtiyaz, 2012), developing the concept of a separate 'other' and eventually posing a "Muslim nationalist threat to the Sinhalese and the Tamils" (ICG, 2007). The SLMC also prided themselves on invoking a religious identity on top of the evolution of an ethnic identity (Johansson, 2007), shifting the centre of Muslim leadership to the east (Ameerdeen, 2006).

Though initially, the key policy issues of the SLMC were to address the security and peace in the north and east of the country, especially in guaranteeing the livelihood and security concerns of the Muslim farmers and fishermen in the north-eastern war zone (ICG, 2007). It also attempted to address the needs of Muslims living in close proximity to their Sinhalese majority neighbours in the dense urban areas of the island's south-west. Thus, the difference from other communities was that the SLMC effectively encouraged Muslim nationalism through religion, while other ethnic communities managed to execute it by language (O'Sullian, 1999) thereby emphasising the difference of 'others'.

By articulating a vivid religious identity fused with geo-political interests, it was not long before the Muslim urban elites of the south west who had previously controlled the political representation of the Muslim community were expressing concern about the potential of antagonising relationships with the Sinhala majority community. In 1990s, the SLMC started to put forward a proposal for a Muslim Self-

Governing Region (MSGR) as a means of guaranteeing the safety and rights of Muslims in the north east (McGilvray & Raheem, 2007).[3] This proposal aimed at establishing a separate Muslim 'homeland' in particular, that prompted the southern Muslims to oppose the SLMC for fear that it would lead to a Sinhala backlash (Ali, 2004).

By developing this counter narrative of a separate and distinct Muslim nationalist identity, it is also thought that this would lead the Muslim community to be on a collision course with the LTTE, which could explain their changing attitudes towards the end of the 1980s (Ali, 1997). This was especially reflected in the increasing attacks in the east as well as the expulsion of Muslims from the north. Though very little information has emerged on the LTTE's anti-Muslim pogroms and expulsions in 1990, it was obvious that these incidents did not happen in a political vacuum.

Many scholars (McGilvray, 2011; Ali, 1997; Imtiyaz, 2009; ICG, 2007) suggest that the LTTE's anti-Muslim violence in 1990 was a natural consequence of the exclusivist politics of Tamil militancy and an expression of deep seated Tamil ethnic chauvinism unleashing collective punishment for Muslim collusion with the state. Yet, it is clear that the emergence of the SLMC seriously undermined the LTTE campaign for exclusive political control in the region. "There seems to have been a concern on the part of LTTE leaders that Muslims would act as a fifth column against the insurgency in the north and east" (ICG, 2007, p. 9).

It appears that the increasing militant threat as the LTTE had strengthened their hands amidst a weakening influence from Muslim politicians in the mainstream political parties, reflecting that the SLMC emerged as a party which provides a "political voice and leadership" (Ameerdeen, 2006, p. 109) to Sri Lanka's Muslim community.

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[3] The MSGR not only provided security but also political legitimacy and meant a demarcation of a separate Muslim homeland or sub-provincial unit, modelled on the idea of an autonomous power sharing unit for the Tamils which had been the subject of many debates by the government in the 80s and 90s in an attempt to deal with the LTTE issue (McGilvray & Raheem, 2007).

Challenges for Muslim Political Leadership: A Skewed Model for Muslim Democracy

Whilst it might be easy to dismiss the behaviour of the politicians, especially the SLMC, as purely self-interest, it is clear that there are more to the conversation. In the wake of the Muslim politicians to extract benefits or commercial opportunities (not only for the community but also personally in the form of ministerial appointments), it is safe to say that the moves of the Muslim politicians, including the SLMC, were just politically oriented in order to lessen resistance (Ali, 1997; Ali, 2004; McGilvray, 2011) in the context of the Sinhala-Tamil schism and the prospect of 'otherness' in the country.

However, it became apparent since the early 1980s that this system of accommodative politics had become detrimental, especially to the interests of the east and north Muslim communities. The circumstances of community safety and security prompted a rethink of the Muslim engagement vis-à-vis politics, especially with the emergence of the SLMC which promotes the interests of the Muslim community as a whole and, at the same time, focuses on the security and well-being of the Muslim communities in the north and east. This rethink has not only meant a further division in political aims and motives but has meant that a single 'Muslim agenda' that can unify the entire Muslim electorate in the island that has proved impossible for the SLMC (or any other breakaway Muslim political parties or politicians) to forge.

The SLMC experience can be interpreted as one of the early models of 'Muslim Democracy' (Nasr, 2012), which is the phenomenon of political traditions that integrate Muslim religious values – drawn from Islamic teachings on ethics, morality, family issues, rights, social relations and so on – into political platforms designed to win regular democratic elections. The concept of Muslim Democrats has particular relevance to the SLMC whereby Muslim Democrats view political life with a pragmatic point of view with the aim of crafting viable electoral platforms and stable governing coalitions to serve individuals and collective interests within a democratic arena whose bounds they respect, win or lose (Nasr, 2012). In this sense, Nasr (2005) states that "Muslim Democrats do not seek to enshrine Islam in politics, although they do wish to harness its potential to help them win votes" (p. 14). The integration of the values should not also be viewed in the absence of the

prevailing context of that time which coincided with a steady increase of religious consciousness within the Sri Lankan Muslim society. In addition, the SLMC also succeeded in gathering support from the Muslim private sector, especially among the middle class society which felt isolated from the traditional political elites of the south. In this sense, it reflects how the emergence of Muslim Democrats was empowered by the bourgeoisie, as it combines the religious values of the middle and lower middle classes with policies that serve their economic interests (Nasr, 2005). Certainly, the early pronouncements and agenda of the SLMC points to this model. However, this is the edge where the comparison with the Muslim Democrats that Nasr (2005, 2012) talks about then ends. The concept of Muslim Democracy is more sound for Muslim-majority countries where the concepts of Islam and democracy need to interact with one another and that there is no discrepancy about the identity (either ethnic or faith) of the constituent members.

Therefore, it doesn't fully provide justice to the entire predicament faced by the Muslim community in Sri Lankan politics. In order to understand this, one has to critically investigate the origins of its problems. By identifying themselves as Muslims, the Muslim political elites (from the south and subsequently from SLMC) aims at blurring the distinctions between faith as a theological marker (i.e. a religious motivator) and faith as an identity marker (i.e. communal galvaniser). By deliberately blurring these lines, they were able to utilise it to serve their own interests to the detriment of their community. For example, it is the concept of the homogeneity of the Muslim community, through the concept of the *ummah* or the religious motivator, that Muslim political elites had contributed their parts in establishing Muslim schools or fighting for the rights of the community. However, they failed (especially those from the south) in realising the heterogeneous nature of the community, or the communal galvaniser, with regards to the threats of the security and livelihood faced by the Muslims in the north and east.

There was a lack of clear articulation and policy from the Muslim political leadership instead of choosing to move between the notions when circumstances provided. In my opinion, they would have been able to provide alternatives for communal galvanisation as well as helping to bridge the schism within the Sri Lankan society if they had properly understood their religious motivation and sought to provide solutions

within Islamic teachings. Fed with the theological motivation for justice and peace, they could have used their heterogeneous diversity to ensure that a bridge between the communities could have been built. Instead of focusing on the strength of their theological construct to articulate issues of 'deep meaning', they chose to focus on theological issues of a superficial nature such as issues of worship or law in their effort to develop a separate political identity.

In the wake of rising religious consciousness by the Muslim community, the political elite neglected the theological discussions necessary for developing identities and contextualising faith, thus, failed to provide efficient leadership. Rather, in articulating this, their sole aim of developing a separate identity has fallen prey to the global malaise afflicting Muslims, which is the push for a 'pure' Islamic identity based on a theological construct. But while taking the identity of a global community / race, they neglected local contexts and cultures. A pure community identity is a new phenomenon within Islamic teachings and was not seen in history. There are different manifestations of Islam and Muslim communities united with a pure theological marker, of which the latter is mistaken to be the identity. This had eventually led to a global concern on the issues of the rise of 'conservative' Islam.

By pushing for a new political identity, what has happened is that the doors have been opened for discussions on a religious identity that is not only foreign to Sri Lanka but fails to take its local contexts and cultures into account, causing any future discussion of post conflict reconciliation even more challenging as people feel that the Muslim community had become more isolated (linguistically, culturally and socially) than before. Thus, the main question remains here that: can a Muslim Democratic party exist in the situation of a minority where the faith identity also becomes an ethnic identity? The experience from Sri Lanka demonstrates that such a scenario is complex or at least difficult to maintain and sustain as circumstances evolve and causes change in how identities are represented.

Reimagining Identity

Though the Muslim political elites adopted a policy of accommodation whilst ensuring their community interests were maintained, it is clear

from the anti-Muslim violence in the past few years that the effort was not enough. The bottom line is that the Sinhala-political elites and politicians had intentionally politicised Buddhism as a means to advance their political agenda in implementing disproportionate concessions to Buddhism and Sinhala-Buddhists while the ethnic and religious minorities are completely marginalised. However, it is important to note that the agenda was not entirely motivated by political intentions. In short, the political Buddhism must have been present in the society; even if within a small minority of the population. Some factors which have played significant roles in politicisation of Buddhism include the worldview of an influential segment of the Sinhala-Buddhist population, a 'nationalist' response to the westernisation, fear and anxiety of a perceived outside connections of other ethnic or religious communities. Despite this, the Muslims had undertaken a policy of accommodation, yet, somehow, this has also become a challenge to the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists as it caused insecurity in their majority and in the religiosity of their fellow countrymen.

The era after the end of the conflict in 2019 should have really been a chance to rethink ethnicity-based politics and explore a return to more inclusive politics given the fact that the circumstances had changed. It also provided an opportunity to rethink about the methods of the Muslim community represented itself vis-à-vis the others. However, the Muslim political elite has failed to recognise this shift. The political institutionalisation of the Muslim community lacks a united political front and thus, failed to grasp the opportunity in Sinhala national politics. Instead, it opted to acquire for the similar status quo of political representation and thereby had weakened the Muslims' case for more political negotiation, representation and identity. By failing to take into account of the changing nature of the community as a result of other globalising external factors, such as religious reformation, the rise of Islamophobia, a securitised agenda and also the changing nature of the country especially in post 2009, the Muslim community cannot alleviate their grievances by playing ethnic politics. This is reflected in how the Muslim politicians were not able to gather support or to influence the government of the day to completely put an end to any possible recurring violent events, such as the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks, occurs in the future.

However, in the absence of any credible Muslim political leadership, the questions that were and are posed is what happens when this political influence is lost and who takes up the slack? How can Muslims get the representation for their identity? These questions are important because of the new pressures faced by the Muslim community, particularly after the end of the conflict. It was clear that the influence of the Muslim politicians had waned over time and they completely lost the previous influence.

In the gap that emerged in terms of leadership, Muslim civil society stepped in and abrogate that role to religious leaders especially as this happened in parallel to a global Islamic reformation. As faith becoming an identity that was much more fixed and almost a refuge from insecurity, which was brought about by the conflict and the subsequent identity politics, faith leaders were expected to lead and represent the Muslim community. Unfortunately, they were not equipped to handle both and only managed to emphasise religious representation and identity. The incidents in post 2009 era had exposed the weaknesses in leadership, which was unable to answer the questions being posed on religious identity and expression vis-à-vis political representation.

In addition, the incidents also displayed that the civil society and political leadership were entrenched in the past and dependent on religious leaders. Despite severe criticism of the weakness of the religious leaders, the civil society and political leadership were unable not only to provide constructive criticism (for fear of criticising religion) but also were not able to fully understand the depth and strength of the anti-Muslim movements. Instead, they opted to think in terms of a binary perspective of political manipulation without proper understanding that the polity of the day was exploiting the insecurity faced by the Muslim community. The feeling held by many within the civil society was that current leadership was to attempt and keep the ongoing accommodation politics and, by changing respective governments with another political party and then working with the new government, such violence and feelings could be avoided. Their false premise was that one Sinhala political party was better than the other and, by bringing one into power over the rest, the problems of the Muslim community will be solved. The violence of recent years effectively made such concept redundant, leading to the questions of how and where the Muslim community positioned themselves. As a result, the Muslim community faces the

serious situation at the crossroads in 2020 related to the future of Muslim identity, political survival and expression of agency.

It is clear that there is a paradox in the Muslim identity and that the Sri Lankan Muslim community is at best a complex mix of different ideologies and thought processes. Faith is not merely a theological marker (a religious motivator) but also an identity marker (a communal galvaniser), which means that tensions remain there between racial and religious identities. In defining themselves as such, the identity of the Sri Lankan Muslim community has been developed and evolved not only based on ethno-nationalist tendencies but also from theological and spiritual bases.

This duality construction of a Muslim identity has become a challenge for the Sri Lankan Muslim community as they attempt to profess their Sri Lankan identity and a sense of belonging. By identifying themselves ethnically as Muslims, politically constructed from the late 19th century, the Muslim political elites played on blurring the distinctions between faith as a theological marker (religious motivator) and faith as an identity marker (communal galvaniser). This meant that the Muslims energetically constructed their 'racial' identity as a distinct ethnic group that is founded on religious and cultural elements of their identity. They interchanged religious motivators and communal galvanisers whenever it suits them. Due to the renaissance in Islamic theological movements and thinking globally, the concept of Muslim representation in Sri Lanka evolved into theological and ideological formations on top of political representation.

This provides a challenge, with respect to the classification and representation of the Sri Lankan Muslims on the bases of an ethnic identity, even though the generic definition of a Muslim does not relate to an ethnic representation but to a religious connotation. Thus, the concept of an ethnic 'Sri Lankan Muslim' is slightly misleading and confusing as it reflects a sense of homogeneity beyond just religious practice to cultures, traditions, experiences and language which is made difficult by the heterogeneous nature of the geographical location of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka, religious practices and traditions and often at odds with the concept of nationalism or the nation-state. By deliberately blurring the lines between theology and identity, the political elites were able to utilise it to serve their own interests to the

detriment of their community. Ultimately, this also caused a sense of disengagement and isolation among the Muslim community.

Hence, this identity had emerged as a double edged sword, with a negative aspect of being a minority and, at the same time, reifying an identity that is not singular and cohesive but that evolved due to the influence of global politics and a securitised lens. In the reification of the Sri Lankan Muslim identity, this process does not recognise the challenges faced by different communities, neither internally nor externally. This means that the singular point of an identity does not negotiate the lived experience and challenges of the community and communities. Thus, a real tension occurs between the reified identity (of a singular binary expression) and the lived reality of political experiences.

In other words, there has been a form of transformation, institutionalisation and politicisation of the Sri Lankan Muslim identity into a religious or ethnic identity since the colonial period where 'Islamic' became an ethnic boundary marker that was instrumentalised politically. However, this did not take neither the local nor global experiences of the Muslim communities into much consideration. This led the community to have a political identity that was also influenced from the outside but, at the same time, did not take their evolving individual identities into account. This meant that the identity did not meet its purpose and left it open to challenges.

The Essence of the Problem

There is a lack of clear articulation and policy of identity, rather, a move between both notions of religious marker and community galvaniser are mostly followed when circumstances are provided. In the wake of rising religious consciousness by the Muslim community and by neglecting the necessary theological discussions necessary for developing identities as well as contextualising faith and failing to provide leadership in articulating this, the sole aim of developing a separate identity for the Muslim community in Sri Lanka has fallen prey to the global malaise afflicting Muslims. This had become the motivation for the Muslim community to obtain a 'pure' Islamic identity based on a theological construct and, at the same time, taking the identity of a global community

or race into consideration, while neglecting local contexts and cultures. This is considered as a new phenomenon within Islamic teachings and history because there is no such thing as a pure community identity. There are different manifestations of Islam and Muslim communities united with a pure theological marker, of which the latter is mistaken to be the identity. This confusion causes global concerns and issues of the rise of 'conservative' Islam.

By pushing for a new political identity without understanding the changing dynamics of the context, the doors have been opened for discussions on a religious identity that is not only foreign to Sri Lanka but it fails to take local contexts and cultures into account, making any future discussion of the post conflict reconciliation even more challenging. As a result, the Muslim community feels more isolated linguistically, culturally and socially than before.

Prospects of New Solutions: Change of Narrative

According to Sen (2006), the encouragement and retention of multiple identities means that people have several enriching identities which may include nationality, gender, age and parental background, religious or professional affiliations. It is the recognition of this plurality and the search for commonalities within this pluralism that will lead to greater respect and, ultimately, understanding and acceptance. Thus, these new solutions will have to challenge people to accept diversity and create equal opportunities for diverse communities, ethnicities, traditions, cultures and faiths. Similarly, Barth (1969) claims that there is a need to possess and celebrate multiple identities and that it is problematic and reductive to limit individuals to conform to a single superordinate ethnic identity only. By reducing pluralities, there is a risk of reducing the dynamics, potential for creativity and future transformation as well as emergence of ethnic groups and identities. Thus, "if identities are always constructed, then they can also be deconstructed, perhaps even reconstructed" (Ismail Q. , 1997, p. 95). Therefore, the mainstream Sinhalese needs recognise the plurality of the nation. The minorities, on the other hand, need to rethink the concept of multiple identities and pluralism.

Thus, there is a need for a holistic re-imagination of Sri Lankan Muslim identity, expression and agency and an approach to the conversation. This includes a reimagination of the political identity and expression of the Muslim community. What we have seen with the transformation of identity in Sri Lanka amidst the shift in its political and conflict context is that political elites from the Muslim community had failed to understand the change in political context in Sri Lanka.

The experience of the political challenges of the Muslim community in Sri Lanka also raises questions about its complex political transitions, especially in post conflict scenarios, where politically active minorities have to tread a fine line in terms of balancing national and community sentiments. In politically complex transitions, politically active minorities cannot rely on block votes (as this may work temporarily) and on dividing the majority. However, this scenario is a narrow window. Thus, in order to remain active and viable, ethnic block voting needs to evolve in the way of producing another narration of identity. This new narration of identity has to consider multiple identities that also divides the majority vote. Identity is flexible and changing while minority polity also has to be flexible and evolving to respond to this issue. The process of minority block voting only works if the majority of the community is divided politically which was largely the case during the conflict in Sri Lanka. With the end of the conflict, the Sinhala community was largely aligned politically with the state, and the Muslim community concept of block voting thus became irrelevant. In other words, block voting has a shelf life and cannot be considered as a panacea for minority politics. There has to be a realisation of an evolution of politics and thinking which is also affected when politically active ethno-religious minorities have a double problem in traversing their ethnic and religious duties and principles.

Thus, the transformation of a constituency at the grassroots in the light of change in political and global contexts could undermine the legitimacy of political elites if they failed to understand, appreciate and respond appropriately to meet those challenges. The Sri Lankan Muslim community shows that though its conformation to its identity can protect the right of an ethno religious minority in the wake of political challenges, religious expression, which can lead to a homogenisation of identity and the process of the homogenisation of the political identity of the Muslim community can lead to their isolation, away from key

political debates. Therefore, a Muslim Democratic (political) party cannot exist easily in a situation of a minority where a faith identity is also part of a conversation of an ethnic identity. The experience from Sri Lanka is a complex scenario and it is very difficult to be managed as a binary expression. Hence, a recognition of the multiplicity of identities as well as a changing context at the grassroots and at the top may improve the situation.

The same happened in Sri Lanka where Muslim political elites failed to understand grassroots dynamics that is the part of a cycle that has been experienced before in the mid-1980s. Consequently, the formation of the SLMC took place as elites from the south failed to understand the security concerns of the eastern Muslims and, thus, it was perceived that the eastern Muslims needed their own separate party to look after their interests. Similar event occurred again in 2009, when ethnic politics lost their legitimacy after the conflict and the dynamics of the community changed at the grassroots. From being largely a divided polity during the conflict, the Sinhala majority community became 'united' at the end of the conflict which emboldened extreme nationalists and, thereby, weakening the Muslim polity. The root of problem also underwent a change in its context as the political context has changed. In other words, at the societal level, the Sinhala-Muslim relations did not improve after the conflict and, in fact, exposed all the weaknesses and fractures that had so far been masked by the conflict and the focus perhaps on the Sinhala-Tamil relations. During the conflict, the Sinhalese forgot about their relations with the Muslims and the Muslims were naively and blissfully ignorant in developing their identity and expression. This was exposed and exploited by the extreme Sinhala nationalists after 2009 which led to the violent incidents in 2014, 2017 and 2018. However, the Muslim political elites did not reflect this bottom up change in community dynamics and the emergent of the nationalist mainstream politics. The Muslim community, also being led by political and religious dynamics, failed to appreciate these dynamics as well. Lewer and Ismail (2011) allude to this when they talked about the next steps for the Muslim community in the east of Sri Lanka as a three pronged approaches of Muslim political thought: how in the east the Muslim polity engages with their Tamil counterparts; how these regional politics renogitiates a position with the government of Sri Lanka and the central perspective; and the politics that stands for a more nationalistic solution.

Therefore, the three pronged approaches of Muslim political thought has to consider the changing context and an evolution of the community in terms of influences and externalities. Although there were some attempts to do away with the ethnic nationalist politics by the founder of the SLMC such as the formation of another party with Sinhala parties to get the Muslims back to mainstream politics, such attempts were short-lived and unsuccessful. Then what is the strategy for a nationalistic solution? Part of the solution starts from a rethinking around collective mobilising for addressing community concerns is undertaken. The type of political engagement which has been seen in the past decade is no longer the way forward for the Muslim community.

According to Anderson (1983), the Muslim community had succeeded in becoming an 'imagined' political community based on an 'imagined geography' that disregards the majority of the other inhabitants within the nation and reproduces their imaginations with cultural roots. However, they had underestimated the ethnic confrontation with the Pan-Islamic influences that would result the temporal and spatial dynamics of religious expression, especially by Islamic reformism in the late 1970s. Hence, there was a perfect storm as the global Pan-Islamic reformism coincided with the search for the Muslims in Sri Lanka in order to establish a separate identity in the face of the conflict and attempting to develop an expression for themselves which is separate from the 'other'. This was seized upon by the Muslim elites in Sri Lanka who somehow did not fully understand that this would have a life of its own and evolve. With Pan-Islamic influences, there became a preoccupation with looking internally as opposed to considering the external message of reform that is at the heart of the original Islamic message, that is changing the society for the better. The lack of synergy between the practices through which Muslim society is transformed and energised as well as the practices of society at large exhibited by these reform groups. Yet, the meeting point between the language of the piety movement and the demands of social expression for ethnic representations in the larger Sri Lankan context was completely missing. The reification of the Sri Lankan Muslim identity assumes the homogeneity of identity without recognising the diversity of individual communities and identities.

Recalibrating the Premise

The premise of the reimagining of the Muslim political identity in Sri Lanka has to be one where Islamic reformism in piety and theology makes sense in: (1) recognising the diversity and homogeneity of the Muslim community; (2) guiding an ethnic and local agency and expression whereby, cultural practices and traditions are enhanced instead of being replaced by theology; (3) obtaining greater justice against discriminations and; (4) defending civil responsibilities and the democratic processes, restoring the dignity of conscience and human values (Ramadan, 2004). From this perspective, Muslim political representatives and political party (or even a reformist group) who define themselves with guidelines from the Qur'an and Islamic principles, should have focus on conveying honesty and incorruptibility. With grassroots support, it has used those same principles towards building an identity and relations with other communities by emphasising an ethical system and orientation that promotes social justice through equal rights and opportunities.

The reimagination of the community identity has to include reassessment of what the Muslim community represents and ultimately identifies with. In its evolution, it had undertaken a number of different forms of identity as it sought to carve a place in Sri Lanka. However, it is clear from the recent anti-Muslim violence that the community is now at a crossroad. The role that they carved out for themselves depends on them being seen as part of the solution and not as an additional problem. This comes back to the fact that they need to articulate a comprehensive and an inclusive platform and identity based on their Islamic principles of ethics. The community cannot shed its religious label and, thus, a reassessment of the identity needs to begin with an appropriate understanding of how one approaches Islamic reformation.

The concept of piety and spirituality needs to be segregated from the political reality of identity expression. Therefore, the premise is that one can be a good political Muslim and a bad spiritual Muslim: one can practice the spiritual aspects of Islam, become a 'practicing' Muslim but a bad political representative. However, this issue should not be too prescriptive in merely relating the Muslims in Sri Lanka with spirituality and piety.

There is a need for a reassessment of the identity of the Muslim community (and beyond). Muslims in Sri Lanka are not homogenous but heterogeneous and are made of multiple identities. They had emerged and evolved and, although they are linked with religion, they are spiritually different and need to work on that to ensure some better relationships.

The gist is that the Muslim community can neither be ignored nor marginalised (by either the Tamil or the Sinhala polity) when considering the future of Sri Lanka in a post-conflict scenario. However, the role that they carved out for themselves depends on how they are seeing themselves as part of the solution instead of an additional problem. This comes back to the fact that they need to articulate a comprehensive and an inclusive platform and identity, based on their Islamic principles of ethics. Their part in reconciliation and forgiveness based from their Islamic references is vital.

However, Sri Lankan Muslim community cannot afford to be politically naive and needs to develop a sophisticated argument and agenda. Due to the global concern on the rise of conservative Islam, it is easy to conflate terminology and ideology with radicalisation, violent extremism and potential conflicts. In this case, Muslims, especially those who are living in areas where Sinhalese are the majority and who have legitimate grievances, need to pay attention. While Muslims are aware of the challenges they are facing, they have to be able to understand their failure and its consequences. Thus there is a need of a realisation of that exclusive social practices and values practiced among the Muslims have to be curtailed. This allows the beginning of a potential conversation in ensuring that tensions can be alleviated.

Conclusion

Attempts at redefining politics and religion are not useful in Sri Lanka mainly due to the interconnectedness between the two identities. I argue that in Islam, ethnic and politics are intertwined and constitute a different perspective that creates a political or ethno or religious representation. This is definitely different from traditional approach towards the classification in which religion, ethnicity and politics are understood as fixed and separate. Instead, we needed to examine: (1)

how a hybrid of these representations are done? (2) how should the boundaries between these concepts are resolved? and; (3) what factors cause these movements and its implications? The way forward needs to be about a re-imagination of what the Muslim community is, represents and, ultimately, identifies with. It needs to include reassessment on how well the community manage the formation of attitude towards 'other' ethnicities and practices adopted to mitigate negative attitudes. In this regard, much work is needed by the Muslim community to done towards possible behavioural change in order to experience 'other' communities.   Muslims had struggled and still continue to struggle to articulate their grievances from the conflict in a manner that brings confidence to the other two parties of a sincerity of goals for the benefit of the whole country and in a manner that perhaps changes the current misconceptions regarding Muslims' place in the conflict. However, the role that they carved out for themselves depends on how they portray themselves as part of the solution instead of an additional problem. This comes back to the fact that they need to articulate a comprehensive and inclusive platform and identity it based on their Islamic principles of ethics. This is one of the antidotes that can neutralise the advances of a minority of the Sinhala Buddhist extremists.

The Muslim community was caught between a rock and a hard place. Undoubtedly, their future prospects could be based on their lessons from the past, but the past should not become a ball and chain for the future. The Muslim politicians had made some mistakes in developing a separate identity. Their naivety and quest for political representation obscured the gains that could have been made for the country. Due to the current increase in religious consciousness of the community, which blurs the lines between religious and ethnic identities, the Muslim community faces many challenges for a sense for representation and identification. Any movement forward needs to articulate a common space for all of these representations to take place.

Therefore, the Muslim community needs to move forward by reassessing their current circumstances. Sri Lanka suffered its worst suicide bombing attack with the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks on churches and hospitals. Carried out by locals who belong to a Muslim terror group aligned with the Islamic State, the scale of the attacks not only shocked the global community but its aftermath had caused unnecessary scrutiny on the Muslim community. Though the latter was

quick to respond and distance themselves from the acts of violence, they are now under scrutiny in terms of their identity and actions. The ramifications of the Easter Sunday attack are that that the Muslim community is under pressure to 'respond' and 'reform' according to the concerns of others towards their conservative religious practices and identity. The current COVID-19 phase had brought renewed scrutiny on the Muslim community. The accommodation politics that the Muslim polity had hitherto been employing has probably now disappeared and they will have to employ if not forced to go through a different type of relationship. As the Muslim community being securitised, they are expected to change their visible identity and their expressions of religious practices as well as how they define themselves vis-à-vis the other communities and within the country. How this manifests itself depends on how proactive the community and polity are versus how much they react to different situations. The four phases described above could serve as a starting point for that conversation as the nation seeks a way towards healing. It is clear that the narrative of the Sinhala Buddhist nationalists will become more prominent and hence, the minorities will now need to acquiesce even more.

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Book Review

Ali Salman, Mohammad Hashim Kamali and Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil (Editors) - Democratic Transitions in the Muslim World (2018)

by Syaza Farhana binti Mohammad Shukri

Among Muslim-majority countries in the world today, only a handful can be said to be democracies. This puzzling fact has been investigated and written about by countless scholars in the past decades such as Olivier Roy, John Esposito, Asef Bayat and Daniel Brumberg, just to name a few. Following the tragic end of the 2010 Arab Uprisings (tragic for the current state of civil unrest and war ongoing in the Middle East), scholars from the East are now trying to make sense of this enigma regarding the relationship between Islam and democracy. To the writers in this edited book, Islam and democracy are not intrinsically antagonistic. The world around these authors seems to have accepted democracy, if not substantially, at least instrumentally as a peaceful mechanism to choose persons into power.

In order to provide a diverse discussion on Islam and democracy, the editors were able to put together writings from leading and emerging authors across the globe and from various backgrounds. Some of the authors include Alim Yilmaz from Turkey, Nehad Khanfar from the United Kingdom, Fida Ur Rahman from Pakistan, Saeed Nariman from Iran, Syed Farid Al-Atas from Singapore, Rafiullah Azmi from India, Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf from Indone-sia and Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz from Malaysia. The authors range from academi-cians to activists and current politicians. Based on their observations, these writers presented their ideas at a conference that was held in

Kuala Lumpur in November 2017 and from that discussion came this book, a compilation of selected papers.

Ali Salman, one of the editors and CEO of Islam and Liberty Network, provided a short introduction that lays out questions to be answered by the book and the subsequent structure of the chapters. Instead of presenting an overarching theoretical framework and narrative, the in-troduction makes it clear that the book is meant as a buffet of information on the general topic of Islam and democracy. The five main sections of the book are as follows: 'Muslim Political Theory', 'Narrative on Islam and Democracy', 'History of Democratic Transitions', 'Islamic Political Parties' and 'Future Agenda'. Ali claimed that we are now past discussing the compat-ibility between Islam and democracy, concluding that religion and the state are undeniably 'twin brothers' that cannot be separated. He further argues that future discourse should continue to be on understanding the effects of combining religion with democracy in Muslim societies. This review, however, will counter that from the different arguments found in the various chap-ters of the book, it appears that the debate is yet to be over and that is not necessarily horrible.

While the edited book covers a wide range of topics, the most significant chapters, perhaps, are in the first two sections titled 'Muslim Political Theory' (which contains only one chapter) and 'Narrative on Islam and Democracy' because the authors of these chapters provided theoretical backgrounds to the argument at hand which is that Islam is compatible with democracy instead of just regurgitating information on different Muslim countries' experiences with democracy as is the case in later chapters. In discussing such a heavy topic, there is no running away from going back to history. As most authors in the book pointed out, with only the Quran and Hadith being authoritative sources in Islam, we are left to scour through history to understand how the understanding of liberal democracy - freedom of speech, rule of law, respect for minority rights - have been practiced in Muslim history for centuries. For example, using al-Juwayni to make his argument, Muhammad Khalid Masud wrote, "While the prophets were chosen by God, Imams are chosen by the community, making wider society the source of legitimacy for *Imamah*" (p. 18).

Imamah, here refers to the rulers who are to lead Muslim societies following the end of prophethood. In short, he is making the argument that without God's direct intervention, the people have the power to confer or to withhold authority - that is the basis for democracy.

Furthermore, as has been discussed elsewhere, the current absence of democracy in the Muslim world, specifically in the Middle East, was highly dependent on past experiences of colonisation and the resulting westernisation and modernisation effects (Alkadry, 2002; Ayoob, 2007; Springborg, 2007). Due to the fast-changing nature of the post-colonial world, dictators such as Gamal Abdel Nasser, Hafiz al-Assad, and Saddam Hussein took advantage of rising Arab nationalism to entrench their footing in countries that were looking to carve out their own modern identity. Unfortunately, their secularisation project did not include democratisation as well. Since these countries have a Muslim majority population, one is susceptible to make the conclusion that Islam is the problem. However, practicing Muslims in countries such as Egypt were crying, "Islam is the solution" (the Muslim Brotherhood's most frequently used slogan). This conundrum, and the eventual debate on secularism within an Islamic country, may not be understood if one fails to acknowledge the multifaceted forces at work. Alim Yilmaz wrote, "In modern times, that separation [between religion and public institution] works in favour of the state at the expense of the religion" (p. 30).

The authoritarian regimes in Muslim majority countries advocated secularism only as a means to control the masses as opposed to secularism's real meaning, which is to return the rights of practicing one's religion to the people. Therefore, Yilmaz argued that when Muslims call for a return to Islam, they are calling for the end of dictatorships, and not necessarily the interweaving of religion and politics.

To have a book on democratic transitions in the Muslim world would entail chapters discussing the lived experiences of Muslims, both today and in the past. In the sections 'History of Democratic Transitions' and 'Islamic Political Parties', various countries were discussed including Malaysia, Iran, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Turkey, Palestine and Egypt. While this provided a wide range of examples for the reader looking to understand the phenomenon known as political Islam, the inclusion of

such varied cases is also, unfortunately, one of the book's weaknesses. There appears to be a lack of cohesion on what the book is attempting to do. The chapters move from discussion on history and society to the judicial system and to political parties. Even for specific chapters on Islamic political parties, there does not appear to be an argument that the book is making except to prove that there is no monolithic experience of Islamism, but the unique experiences of different Islamic political parties. An example of this incoherence can be seen when M. Shahadat Hossain wrote, "Islam…is a religion that spans beyond personal worship and rituals…therefore, reject the concept of secularism" (p. 163) whereas earlier chapters have been suggesting that "secular democracy cannot be reduced to the institutional separation of religion and state but shows the degree of democratic toleration and civility towards religion as a political culture (p. 78).

Despite the editing issues, if one is to go through the different chapters, there are definitely those that splendidly complement one another. For example, in his lengthy discussion on the evolution of PAS as an Islamic party in Malaysia, Wan Saiful Wan Jan discloses the behind-the-scenes event that took place in 1999 when members of the PAS central committee met with Islamic scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradhawi and Rached Ghannouchi to discuss the possibility of working with a non-Muslim party and having a woman as the opposition leader. While conservative leaders within PAS initially opposed the suggestions, they eventually relented after being told that "these were Islamically-justified and necessary" (p. 194). Similarly, in Nehad Khanfar's chapter on Hamas democratic transformation, there is a belief that, "Building partnership with them [secularists or communists] is something religiously justified, based on the Shari'ah principle of balancing between interests" (p. 249). From these two examples, it becomes clear that the debate on the place of democracy within the struggle of Islamic political parties are far from concluding. We can only hope that democracy is not just a means for power with no intention by parties to respect the ideals of liberal democracy. If these Islamic political parties backtrack on pluralism, freedom of speech and rule of law, what hope is there for the grassroots who look upon these parties for guidance in choosing the next national leader?

In a nutshell, this book may best be considered as an introductory literature to those who are beginning to dip their toes into the debate on

Islam and democracy. Otherwise, there is not much substantive value to it as many of the arguments put forth have been written in detail by other scholars in the field. On a whole, the book reads more like a conference proceeding given the lack of a clear argument or even a new understanding on the subject. Nevertheless, the book may be lauded as proof that we may never come to a definite conclusion on the matter - and that is not necessarily a bad thing. The discourse on Islam and democracy may take different forms depending on where the author comes from, the power relation in the country and even the geopolitics of the Muslim world as a whole. If democracy is the final aim, there should also be a democratisation of knowledge. For, as long as we agree to respect each other's view on the matter, there is nowhere else to go but to flourish and to make Islam the great religion of intellectual discourse it once was.

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