

Islamic World in the Global Scenario, Challenges and Strategy: A Study from the Seerat Nabawi's Perspective

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Abstract

Islam is the perfect religion from every aspect and for every time which provides guidelines for all situations of human life. Islamic political system is one of these aspects which is based on the principles of Holy Quran and sayings of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and it supports such a civil structure which follows the directives and requirements mentioned in the afore said two main sources. In Islamic political system, the supreme authority is Almighty Allah and human being utilizes this right as His vicegerent. The present global political system and the strategy of Muslims invite the attention of the thinkers around the globe for effective international interaction between Islamic world and others. This shows that serious deliberations are direly needed to compete with the current challenges.

In the present paper, the contemporary situation of global political system will be discussed in order to determine the development of western political system, suggest means to compete with the challenges of this age and to facilitate in devising a suitable strategy for it.

Introduction

The foundation of the very first Islamic state was laid by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) himself in the city of *Madina Munawwara* after his migration to this city from the holy city of *Makkah Mukarrama*. After this, a long series of Muslim rule is stretched in the sheets of history in the shape of caliphate,

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kingdoms and states. The History of Muslim ummah in terms of its rise and fall, is very interesting. The Muslim ummah evolved from the scattered Arab tribes who were considered savage and ignorant in that time. However, after embracing Islam, they reformed and civilized rapidly which resultantly influenced all nations of the world by and large.

In the modern day world, the institution of “state” has got extra ordinary significance. From Islamic perspective, the collective goal of whole Islamic instructions, is the formation of *ummah* instead of single state on a piece of land which should carry all features and characteristics mentioned in the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The study of Holy Quran reveals that the aforementioned goal has been described at many places; it reads:

وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ¹.

“Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining Al-Maruf (i.e. Islamic monotheism and all that Islam orders to do) and forbidding Al-munkar (polytheism, disbelief and all that Islam has forbidden)”

The word “*ummah*” has been derived from the Arabic root of “*Umm*” which stands for mother, root, center and pivotal point etc.², this literal meaning points to the meaningfulness/relevance of this term by describing the unity of people their devotion to center and pivotal point. The term “*ummah*” denotes a group of people which has absolute commitment with a single center and a single personality, which enjoys brotherhood and feeling of sympathy for one another, which moves on a clear straight path and which has a perfect book for guidance. In this connection, the number of people has no lower or upper limit, any group which portrays these qualities will be entitled to be called as “*ummah*”.³

The religion of Islam not considered such weak features as foundations which have been used in past like color, caste, sect, tribe, language, region and progeny etc. rather it used the foundation of firm belief as foundation for the creation of “*ummah*”.

The Holy Quran has mentioned two important features of the “*ummah*”:

- i. *Thus, We have made you, a just nation, that you be a witness over mankind.*⁴
- ii. *Truly, this, your ummah is one religion, and I am your lord, therefore, worship me (alone).*⁵

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) has said;

“I am the last prophet among prophets and you are the last of the nations (ummah) among others”.⁶

On the other hand, the term “west” does not denote our western side in geographical sense, nor it means the countries lying in west of our country, rather it means a specific civilization and culture which has a very deep relevancy with Islam for the last 250 years. And, it is expected the relation between Islam and West will survive for a long period in future as both are inter related with each other and study of each other is essentially required for the both.⁷

Current Challenges

No one can deny the fact the general and overall condition of the present day Muslims all over the world is not in a good state. Muslim world is facing a number of challenges which may vary in nature, however, they are growing with the passage of time. The challenges are divided in intellectual, political, educational, cultural, strategical and technological domains. These challenges have not emerged for the first time as the study of history shows that Muslim world has been facing them from the very beginning. Just after the demise of the Prophet (PBUH) some tribes refused to pay zakat at one hand, and some figures declared their false prophet hood, at the other. Throughout the journey of 1400 years, each generation faced his own challenges in the shape of intruders, intellectual as well as cultural threats and colonization. If we look at present day situation and make a list of current challenges, it can contain the following ones:

- i. Misconception of Terrorism and Extremism about Muslims
- ii. Pursuit of Islamic knowledge through establishment of appropriate institutions
- iii. Arrangement for seeking higher and specialized Islamic education
- iv. Elimination of non-Islamic motives and prejudice
- v. Elaboration of Islamic view against terrorism and Islamic instructions for peace and safety
- vi. Efforts for spreading and preaching the true message of Islam
- vii. Establishment of fully skilled military force equipped with modern sophisticated technology
- viii. Provision of research and academic opportunities

- ix. Achievement of Financial independence
- x. Freedom from economical colonialism
- xi. Development of Industry
- xii. Provision of Scientific and technological education
- xiii. Facilitation in Economics, Commerce and Trade studies

Future Strategy in the light of Islamic Teachings

Present situation and ground realities help us in estimating for future challenges. It has been feeling that Muslim world has reached to such deep level of downfall, from where it cannot be arising once again to lead the world politically, morally and economically. However, profound study of present situation reveals that Muslims are in state of renaissance and reawakening around the globe. It shows that Muslims are getting informed to know their rights and their significance in the global geographical cum political scenario. At the same time, they are recognizing their rivals and foes which is assisting them in countering the conspiracies against them.

The Muslim world has been bestowed upon with numerous natural resources in addition to plenty of human work force and conducive work environment. The unity of Muslim world can make it independent from all external challenges and threats. Central Asian Countries, Afghanistan, Iran, Gulf States, and Pakistan have been blessed with natural resources while a number of Muslim countries possess fertile agricultural land. Far East Muslim countries are rich in forests and woods, Majority of Muslim countries own strategically significant geographical lands, sea ports and air routes. The population of Muslim world is 1.6 Billion which is living in 57 Muslim countries while a large number of Muslims are living in Non-Muslim countries as minority. They have a heavy potential work force hence a brilliant future can be imagined for Muslims around the globe provided to the provision of sincere and competent leadership.

Presently, many Muslim countries have gone through the wave of change which depicts that Muslim are getting awake to realize their importance and do efforts for their survival.

Muslims are required to end their differences in order to reach the ultimate goal of God's pleasure because their rivals are trying their best, either publicly or secretly, to destroy Muslims. All Muslims are direly needed to acquire knowledge which has been declared "lost treasure" of a believer in sayings of Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH). The pursuit of knowledge without discrimination of religious, materialistic, spiritual, classical and modern is the need of the day. The competency of Muslims in knowledge, education, science and technology will play a key role in getting rid from the exploitation by powerful states. Nowadays, power, authority and supremacy is absolutely dependent upon education and technology. The Muslim world should feel the gravity of situation and should plan for the future on war basis. Muslim are fortunate enough to have the treasure of divine guidance and revelation which protection is guaranteed by Almighty Allah himself. The young Muslim generation can be capable of leading the whole world, once again.

- **Development of International Trade and Business**

From the times immemorial, international business and trade has a significant role in politics among nations around the globe. Those countries, which are developed in trade and business, are considered influential in global strategic policies. In the modern world, we can observe the influence of Japan, China and Germany in international policy making due to their overwhelming business and industrial growth. The religion of Islam has considered this effective and dominant factor in its policy making and international relations. There are various injunctions in the Holy Quran and Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) which support this notion e.g. the Surah of Al-Quraish reminds about the blessings of Almighty Allah in the shape of peace for safe trading in summer and winter.⁸ Many of the companions of the Prophet (PBUH) were famous international traders and businessmen who played key role in the rapid spreading of the Islam in many nations outside *Madina Munawwara*.

If the Muslim world reorganize its trade and business activities in such a manner which can serve the collective interests of Muslim world, the results will certainly be fruitful.

- **Honoring the agreements**

Fulfillment of agreements is a core feature of Islam as mentioned in the Holy Quran:

وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا.

“Fulfill your commitment/promise, indeed the fulfillment of promise will be questioned”

From domestic daily life to the national and international level agreements, the fulfillment of commitments, agreements, contracts and treaties is compulsory for their successful completion. Any system cannot be imagined successful without fulfillment of promises or commitments. The seerah of the Prophet (PBUH) guides us that the Prophet (PBUH) himself honored all agreements and commitments with every one even with non-Muslims. Nowadays, the fulfillment of agreements are viewed in the context of powerful and weak nations. The fulfillment of commitment is not considered mandatory and binding for a powerful country versus a weak one. For an efficacious and successful global system, the honoring of agreements is direly required.

- Cooperation

Islam is not a confined religion which views only the welfare of its followers rather it instructions are for every nation and tribe who wishes to contribute in the welfare of the humanity. The Holy Quran adds:

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ¹⁰.

“And help one another in good/virtue/righteousness and piety but do not help one another in sin and transgression”

In this piece of commandment, all humans are directed to assist one another on the basis of humanity instead of religious or ethnic one and avoid all those activities which pose harm to the humans. Moreover, Muslims are directed to do more favors with non-combatants and civilians. The seerah of the Prophet (PBUH) guides us towards the example of the “Pact of *Fudool* (حلف الفضول)” which was happened in the days before Islam and Holy Prophet (PBUH) participated in it, himself. This pact was reached in the result of motives of the Prophet’s uncle *Zubair bin Abdul Muttalib* and was aimed to assist the destitute and oppressed. After the decoration with prophet hood, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to say that he would prefer to engage in such pacts again in Islam, if invited.¹¹

- Respect for all

For the successful implementation of any global system, respect of influential, leaders, seniors and elders of any nation mandatory because their respect and reverence is considered as accepted international norm of respecting all members of the nation. Similarly, their disrespect and contempt is considered disregard of all. Keeping in view the importance of this norm, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said “*People are like gold and silver; those who were best in Jahiliyyah (Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance) are best in Islam, if they have religious understanding*”.¹²

On another occasion, when the Holy Prophet (PBUH) was deciding about the prisoners of Badr, he said “if *Matam bin Addi* would have alive today and recommended to free these prisoners, I would have freed them”.¹³ In this saying, he showed his respect for the elder of the tribe of *Quraish* who was a man of principle and had an impartial personality.

- Assistance of the oppressed

The suggested Islamic global system has the elementary feature of helping the oppressed, wherever they are, in order to make this land a peaceful and pleasant place of living for every human being without the discrimination of color, ethnicity and religion.

The Holy Quran mentions:

أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتُلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا¹⁴

“Permission to fight (against disbelievers) is given to those (believers), who are fought against, because they have been wronged”.

The Holy Prophet (PBUH) advised to *HazratMaaz bin Jabal* (RA) as “*Beware of the supplication of the oppressed, for there is no barrier between it and Allah*”.¹⁵

- Tolerance

A peaceful, pleasant and substantial global system can be assured where imposition of creed, belief or opinion is avoided. A colonial system can impose its opinions however, a cooperative and welfare based system does not follow this notion. For bringing harmony and coordination among nations, they should be invited to join on “common grounds” e.g. The Holy Quran invites Jews and Christians to join Muslims on the common ground of worshipping Almighty Allah:

“O’ People of Scripture (Jews and Christians): Come to word that is just between us and you, that we worship none but Allah (alone) and that we associate no partners with Him, and that none of us shall take others as lords besides Allah”.¹⁶

In the same manner the Holy Quran forbids to abuse gods because it retaliation their followers will abuse God of the Muslims.

وَلَا تَسُبُّوا الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَسُبُّوا اللَّهَ عَدْوًا بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ¹⁷

“Do not insult those they call upon besides God, lest they insult God out of hostility and ignorance”

Similarly, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) permitted his followers to get knowledge from the books of Jews and Christians by saying:

“And tell others the stories of Bani Israel (which have been taught to you), for it is not sinful to do so”.¹⁸

While debating international issues, the clash of interests can lead to variety of opinions on a specific issue and in such a situation, each party argues to support his stance. In such circumstances, everyone should listen to other’s point of view moderately and patiently showing respect for his opinion. The Holy Quran advises in this connection as”

ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْخَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُمْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ¹⁹

“Invite (mankind) to the way of your Lord with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in way that is better”

Clash of opinions and variety in point of views is an unavoidable phenomenon in international relationships as each nation supports his interest, firstly. Hence, there is possibility of imposing the decision/willing of powerful nations over weak ones. The teachings of Islam direct to avoid this situation at all costs as the Holy Quran mentions:

وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ²⁰

“Transgress not the limits, truly, Allah does not like the transgressors (those who cross limits)”.

- Dialogue

The importance of dialogue cannot be ignored in local and international issues. The seerah of the Prophet (PBUH) affirms the significance of Dialogue in the solution of issues between nations. The “Pact of Madina”

was signed and agreed between Him and Jews residing in the suburbs of the city. Another milestone in this regard was achieved in sixth year after *Hijrah* in the shape of a peace deal with the angry rival tribe of the *Quraish*. Dialogue played a key role throughout Prophet's life.

- **Achievement of Technology**

The western world has made tremendous progress and development due to its sophisticated modern technology in the result of continuous quality education and research. The Muslim world has to follow Islamic instructions of unity, cooperation, utilizing the mutual expertise/specialties, distribution/arrangement of educational resources to compete with the challenges and threats of present and future.

The current era is considered as an era of super technology and sophisticated expertise. The Holy Quran directs Muslims to equip themselves with every possible mean and force to eliminate the domination of transgressors:

وَأَعِدُّوا لَهُمْ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ مِنْ قُوَّةٍ وَمِنْ رِبَاطِ الْخَيْلِ تُرْهِبُونَ بِهِ عَدُوَّ اللَّهِ وَعَدُوَّكُمْ²¹.

“And make ready against them all you can of power, including steeds of war to threaten the enemy of Allah and your enemy”

The seerah of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) guides us in this regard, as well. He sent some of his companions to the Yemen for learning the use of Catapult skill in war. Subsequently, he used this skill in besiege of *Taif*, successfully.²²

If we look at the resources of Islamic world, we come to know that some Muslim countries are rich in financial resources while others in human and natural resources but Muslim world is in a dilapidated condition besides all this. Therefore, serious and sincere coordination combined with the true spirit of unity/harmony to utilize all these resources in an effective manner. The OIC should play a more active role in this connection to eradicate exploitation of Muslim countries.

- **Ijtehad**

Ijtehad is as necessary for the Muslim world as achievement of modern technology because the former is concerned with mental and intellectual development while the latter is concerned with material development. The modern challenges need to be solved in the best possible manner in the

guidance of the Shariah. The academic treasures and assets require to be utilized effectively once again through their reshaping and reorganization. Another academic challenge is bringing the comprehensiveness in our educational system through combination of Modern/secular subjects with religious ones.

Summary

Muslim world is facing numerous challenges currently, which are effecting each and every aspect of Muslims' individual and collective life. These challenges range from intellectual to technological ones. Islamic ideology has the full ability to unite the humanity under its umbrella without any discrimination. Muslims around the world need to acquire knowledge of faith and religion in addition to the modern and technical subjects. Presentation of true Islamic picture is very necessary in order to eliminate the misconception of terrorism and extremism. The resources of Muslim world should be utilized for mutual interests of the Muslims. OIC should play more active role to organize Muslims and defend their interests. The teachings of the Holy Quran and Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) should be followed to regain the lost prestige of Muslims.

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