



مرکز پژوهشی های بین المللی حوزه های علمی
Center for International Research of Hawrah (ICHI)

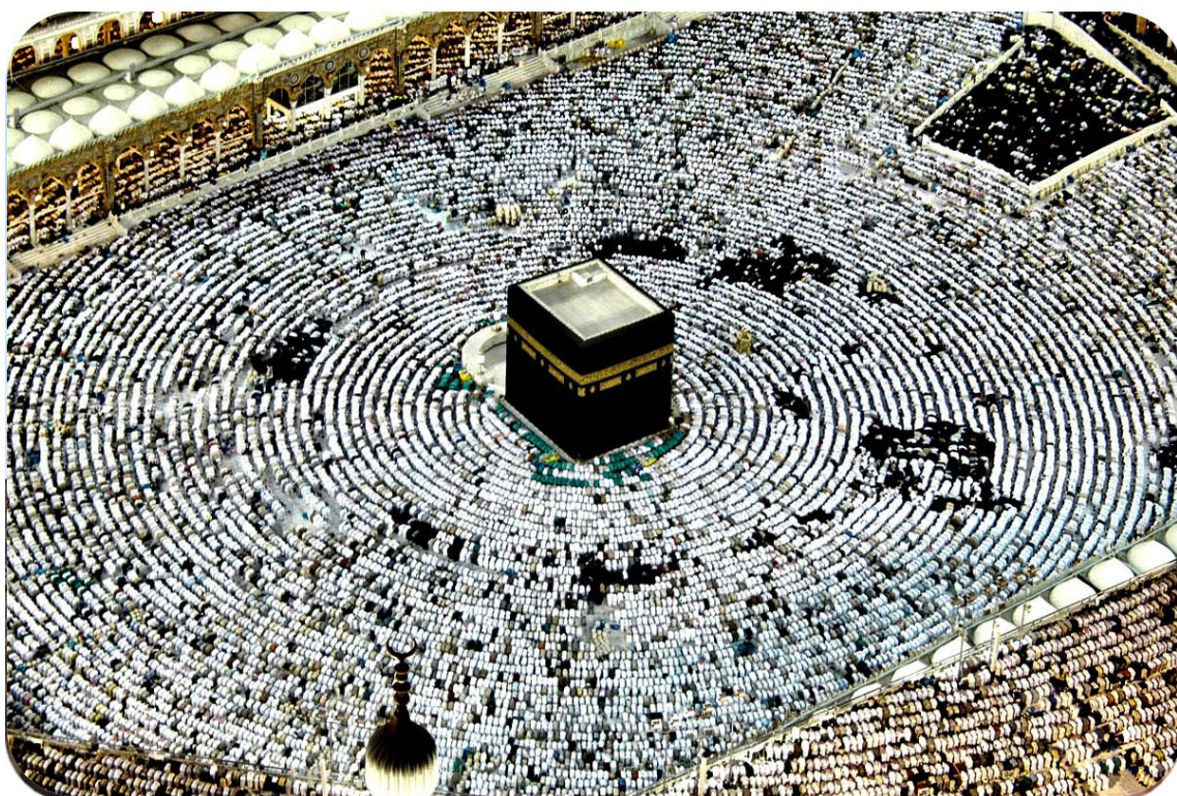
E'tesam



E-Journal Etesam | Special issue of Unity Week, anniversary of the
birth of the Prophet Akram (PBUH)
Year 1 / Issue 1/ August 2026

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Phenomenology of Social Relations of Muslims in Light of Islamic Unity: Relying on the Statements of the Martyr Imam Khamenei (may his secret be sanctified)

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Abstract

Islamic unity is among the fundamental issues of the Islamic world; for Muslims, despite sharing common principles such as Monotheism (Tawhid), Prophethood, the Holy Quran, the Qiblah, and many religious rites, face social harms including mistrust, takfir (excommunication), identity disparagement, sectarian strife, and weak cooperation. The fundamental issue of this paper is examining the gap between the shared doctrinal beliefs of Muslims and the reality of their social relations. Adopting a descriptive-analytical approach grounded in Quranic principles and the proximity (taqrib) perspectives of Imam Khomeini (qs) and the Martyr Imam Khamenei (qs), this note regards unity not as a temporary expediency, but as an Islamic principle and a social covenant based on faith-based brotherhood (ukhuwwah imaniyyah). According to this approach, Islamic unity does not mean erasing sectarian differences or establishing jurisprudential and theological

uniformity; rather, it denotes the rational and ethical management of differences, preserving the dignity of the followers of various denominations, respecting one another's sanctities, and cooperating on the shared issues of the Islamic Ummah. Mutual understanding, correcting negative mentalities, abstaining from insult and takfir, and practical cooperation are among the most critical components for actualizing unitarian social relations. Along this path, proximity institutions, religious scholars, seminaries, universities, the media, and cultural elites have a duty to transform unity from the level of a slogan into a sustainable culture and mechanism in the social life of Muslims.

Keywords: Social relations, Faith-based brotherhood, Proximity of Islamic schools of thought (Taqrīb al-Madhāhib), Phenomenology, Monotheistic identity, Imam Khamenei (qs).

1. Introduction: The Issue of the Rupture between Doctrinal Commonality and Social Relations

Muslims share extensive common ground in the fundamental principles of religion. Faith in the One God, acceptance of the Holy Quran, belief in the finality of the Messenger of God (peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny), a unified Qiblah, and shared participation in a significant portion of religious devotions form the main elements of their shared identity. Nevertheless, these doctrinal commonalities have not always led to fraternal social relations and cooperation among Muslims. In a number of Islamic societies, sectarian differences, instead of providing a ground for dialogue and mutual understanding, have turned into misunderstanding, cynicism, contempt, takfir, and at times violence.

From the perspective of the Holy Quran, the fundamental relation among believers is brotherhood: *"The believers are but brothers"* (Al-Hujurat: 10). Furthermore, the Holy Quran calls Muslims to hold fast collectively to the divine rope and avoid division: *"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided"* (Aal-Imran: 103). Therefore, Islamic unity cannot be reduced merely to an ethical recommendation or a political agreement; unity is a social issue that concerns the quality of Muslims "being together." The Martyr Imam Khamenei (qs) explicitly states: "Unity is not a tactical or expedient matter limited to political conditions; rather, it is 'an Islamic principle' and among the Quranic foundations" (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, October 13, 2014; see also: The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, September 16, 2024).

Insulting sanctities, labeling, and takfir are not merely theoretical or theological disputes; rather, they directly eliminate the possibility of forming fraternal relations. Extremist currents operating under the banner of Shiism or Sunnism, though seemingly espousing different slogans, are identical in their practical outcome; by provoking sectarian sentiments, they destroy public trust and transform sectarian differences into social and security conflicts (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, May 13, 2009). For this reason, while explicitly stating his decisive opposition to insulting the sanctities and symbols of the Ahl al-Sunnah, His Eminence emphasizes the necessity of preventing behaviors that deepen the sectarian rift and pave the way for the exploitation of divisive and arrogant powers (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, August 17, 2015).

2. Ontological and Normative Foundations of Islamic Unity

Islamic unity has two fundamental dimensions: first, the ontological dimension, which pertains to the shared identity of Muslims and their membership in the Islamic Ummah; second, the normative dimension, which defines the desirable mode of conduct Muslims should maintain toward one another.

2-1. Monotheistic Identity and the Shared Foundation of the Ummah

The Holy Quran states: *"Indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"* (Al-Anbiya: 92). Based on this noble verse, Islamic identity, prior to being contingent on sectarian, ethnic, and linguistic divisions, is anchored in Monotheism and the worship of the One God (Tabataba'i, **Al-Mizan**, vol. 14, pp. 316–317). Emphasizing shared principles is considered one of the most vital strategies for consolidating Islamic unity. The followers of Islamic denominations, despite differences in certain jurisprudential and theological matters, fall within the broader framework of Islamic identity and the single Ummah; hence, sectarian difference cannot negate the principle of their belonging to the Islamic community and the fold of Islam.

The Martyr Imam Khamenei (qs), likewise, emphasizing that unity is "an Islamic principle" rooted in revelatory foundations, rejects any reduction of it to a temporary tactic (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, October 12, 2012; The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, September 16, 2024). In this view, unity is part of the religious identity of Muslims and a prerequisite for safeguarding the dignity, independence, and authority of the Islamic Ummah.

2-2. Faith-Based Brotherhood: The Social Manifestation of Shared Identity

The Holy Quran, through the explicit expression *"The believers are but brothers"* (Al-Hujurat: 10), defines believers within the relationship of brotherhood. Faith-based brotherhood is not merely an emotional feeling or an ethical recommendation; it entails a set of sharia-mandated social rights and responsibilities (Tabataba'i, **Al-Mizan**, vol. 18, pp. 314–315). Observing human dignity, providing mutual aid, fulfilling covenants, preserving reciprocal rights, and attending to the problems of other Muslims are among the social outcomes of this brotherhood.

Accordingly, contempt, ostracization, violence, insults, and depriving Muslims of social rights are incompatible with the logic of Islamic brotherhood. If Muslims regard themselves as members of one Ummah and brothers to one another, sectarian difference must not lead to the negation of their dignity or the stripping of their rights. Faith-based brotherhood is realized only when it transcends the level of mental conviction and manifests in individual, social, and political conduct.

2-3. Demarcating Scientific Disagreement from Sectarian Hostility

A fundamental point in the discussion of unity is distinguishing between scientific disagreement and sectarian hostility. Jurisprudential and theological disputes are part of the history of Islamic thought, and in many cases, they have originated from the scholarly endeavor to understand religious texts more accurately.

Such disagreements, if kept within the bounds of argumentation, scientific dialogue, and the observance of disputation ethics, are not necessarily incompatible with unity.

Allameh Tabataba'i (qs), emphasizing the commonality among Islamic schools of thought regarding the pillars and necessities of religion, considers the continuation of fair scholarly discussion and debate indispensable for discovering truths; yet, he completely separates

the boundaries of these discussions from falling into the trap of sectarian prejudices and imposing presuppositions onto religious texts (Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 1, pp. 10–11).

The problem begins when scientific disagreement turns into ad hominem attacks, dissemination of lies, labeling, fostering cynicism, and negating the religious identity of others. Unity does not mean that the Shi'a should abandon their convictions or that the Ahl al-Sunnah should set aside their sectarian identity; rather, genuine unity is formed alongside the preservation of sectarian identities and mutual respect for them (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, November 3, 2020).

Ijtihadic plurality, if accompanied by scholarly ethics, can serve as an asset for the vitality of Islamic heritage. Therefore, the objective of proximity of denominations is not to eradicate scientific differences, but to prevent these differences from transforming into enmity and violence.

2-4. Negating Ethnic and Sectarian Fanaticism

The Holy Quran states:

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you"* (Al-Hujurat: 13).

Ethnic, linguistic, and sectarian differences, in Quranic logic, exist for mutual acquaintance, not for supremacy (Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, vol. 18, pp. 326–328). No ethnicity, language, or denomination should be taken as a criterion for intrinsic superiority, human dignity, or access to social rights. Nor should ethnic or sectarian affiliation lead to discrimination, mistrust, and enmity.

Imam Khomeini (qs) regarded the division of Muslims under titles such as Turk, Kurd, Arab, and Persian as an alien conspiracy completely contrary to the teachings of the Quran and Islam, and repeatedly affirmed that race and ethnicity are not criteria in Islam, and that all Muslims are brothers and equals (Imam Khomeini qs, *Sahifeh-ye Nour*, vol. 1, p. 391; *ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 84; *ibid.*, vol. 13, pp. 209–210). Therefore, while embracing cultural and linguistic diversity, Islamic identity must be capable of preventing these differences from turning into instruments of conflict.

2-5. Transitioning Unity from a Doctrinal Value to Social Action

Unity becomes sustainable when it is transferred from the level of belief and slogan to the realm of social behavior and institution. Mutual understanding, cooperation, scientific dialogue, rectification of the public mindset, observance of mutual rights, and collective engagement in the issues of the Ummah are among the most important practical manifestations of unity.

Correcting the public mindset is among the most essential duties of proximity institutions and conferences. Religious scholars, preachers, writers, and the media carry a special responsibility in this regard. They must introduce Islamic denominations fairly, abstain from baseless attributions, and rein in provocative and divisive rhetoric. Furthermore, educating on the etiquette of dialogue and strengthening the culture of listening to opposing views can pave the way for mitigating misunderstandings.

The establishment of institutions such as the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic Schools of Thought is an example of the endeavor to structuralize the process of unity and build

sustained communication between the scholars and thinkers of various denominations; by preparing the ground for acquaintance and mutual understanding, such institutions can transform unity from an abstract ideal into organized social relations.

3. Components of Unitarian Social Relations

Islamic unity in social relations is grounded upon three fundamental components: mutual acquaintance, veneration of sanctities, and practical cooperation.

3-1. Mutual Acquaintance and Correcting Negative Mentalities

A significant part of the distance separating Muslims arises not from genuine differences in core principles, but from ignorance, prejudice, incomplete historical narratives, media propaganda, and erroneous impressions concerning the other denomination. When individuals judge followers of another denomination based on stereotypes and hostile narratives, grounds for suspicion and mistrust are laid. To remedy this condition, accurate education in the foundations of Islamic denominations is essential. Muslims must become acquainted with one another's beliefs, history, sensitivities, and concerns through primary, authentic sources and distance themselves from distorted narratives. Respectful scientific dialogue can resolve many misunderstandings. The media and cultural elites also bear a distinct responsibility in this process; instead of reproducing division and highlighting extremist conduct, the media can showcase models of faithful cooperation and coexistence among Muslims.

3-2. Veneration of Sanctities and Prohibition of Insults

Sectarian difference does not grant a license to insult the symbols and sanctities of the followers of other denominations. Insulting sanctities wounds the religious feelings and sentiments of millions of Muslims and generates hostile chain reactions. Intensified animosity, collapse of trust, reinforcement of extremist factions, and opening avenues for exploitation by the enemies of the Islamic Ummah are the inevitable consequences of such actions.

In this context, the Martyr Imam Khamenei (qs) has explicitly prohibited insulting the sanctities of the Ahl al-Sunnah and their religious symbols, declaring any provocation of sectarian sentiments and exacerbation of disputes forbidden (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, May 13, 2009). In his view, provocative behaviors on the pulpit, in the media, and across cyberspace must be controlled; for such actions directly serve the enemy's conspiracy and run counter to the interests of the Islamic Ummah and the principle of the brotherhood of believers (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, August 17, 2015).

Here, the concept of "religious self-restraint" gains significance; meaning that an individual or intellectual current, even during scientific critique, keeps rationality and the overarching interests of the Ummah in mind and refrains from denigrating and disparaging the beliefs of others.

3-3. Practical Cooperation on Shared Issues of the Islamic Ummah

Unity should not be confined to passive coexistence or merely tolerating one another; rather, it must culminate in active cooperation on matters to which the destiny of the entire Islamic world is tied. The issue of Palestine, confronting the Zionist regime, combating poverty and ignorance, defending the dignity and independence of Muslim

nations, confronting extremist currents, and standing firm against the hegemony of global arrogance are among the most prominent spheres of this practical cooperation.

Cooperation in scientific, cultural, technological, and media fields can likewise solidify bonds between Muslim nations. Scientific conferences, joint media productions, and continuous communication among the elites of different denominations lay the groundwork for synergy of capabilities and enduring empathy.

4. Obstacles to Convergence and the Harms of Divisive Relations

Division typically takes shape in language, mentalities, preconceived judgments, and modes of personal communication before it manifests in overt conflict and military violence. Among the foremost obstacles to convergence are sectarian fanaticism, takfir, insulting sanctities, ethnic and national prejudices, negative propaganda, and weak cooperation.

4-1. Sectarian Fanaticism

Fanaticism arises when an individual or group turns sectarian affiliation into a benchmark for negating, cursing, and disparaging others. Under such conditions, scientific disagreement departs from the path of dialogue and degenerates into social hostility. Labeling, attributing false and distorted beliefs to followers of other denominations, and overlooking extensive points of commonality are among the detrimental consequences of this fanaticism.

Unity does not mean negating sectarian convictions; the Shi'a should remain upon their school, and the Ahl al-Sunnah upon theirs; yet, these sectarian identities must not lead to internal conflict and enmity (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, November 3, 2020). The central issue is not the existence of diversity, but an unhealthy and irrational engagement with that diversity.

4-2. Takfir and Sectarian Violence

Takfir represents the most extreme form of negating the "other" within Islamic society. When a Muslim is deemed outside the fold of Islam due to differences in subsidiary rulings (furu') or theological interpretations, the sanctity of their life, property, honor, and social rights is placed in jeopardy. Takfir is the direct precursor to violence, terrorism, bloodshed, and the destruction of the social capital of the Islamic world.

The takfiri movements of recent decades have been a prime example of enemies exploiting sectarian rifts to ignite civil wars across Muslim lands (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, November 25, 2014). By presenting an exclusionary and violent interpretation of religion, these currents channeled the strength of the Islamic Ummah into fratricide rather than confronting Zionism. Hence, a comprehensive struggle against the phenomenon of takfir and the refutation of its intellectual foundations is a universal responsibility and an urgent necessity resting upon the scholars of both sides.

4-3. Insult, Ethnic Chauvinism, and Divisive Propaganda

Insulting religious symbols, stoking linguistic and racial prejudices, and the operations of divisive media (whether London-based Shiism or American/Wahhabi Sunnism) further reinforce walls of mistrust among Muslims (The Martyr Imam Khamenei qs, October 12, 2020). These factors cause secondary identities and ignorant biases to dominate the overarching Islamic identity.

To eliminate these obstacles, strengthening proximity discourse on platforms, purifying literature, and practically promoting the ethics of critique and scientific disputation in seminaries and universities are inevitable necessities.

Conclusion

Islamic unity is formulated upon the monotheistic identity and Muslims' shared membership in a single Ummah. Explicit Quranic verses (such as Al-Anbiya: 92; Al-Hujurat: 10 and 13; Aal-Imran: 103) emphasize the single Ummah, faith-based brotherhood, collective adherence to the divine rope, and the rejection of ethnic chauvinism. From this perspective, despite ijthadic differences, Muslims share commonality in the most foundational pillars of religion and constitute an interconnected whole.

Unity is neither a temporary political tactic nor does it mean the assimilation of denominations into one another; rather, it is a Quranic principle, a religious obligation, and an objective necessity for the honor and empowerment of the Islamic Ummah. Ijthadic and scholarly plurality, provided it proceeds within a framework of ethics and fairness, will serve as a factor in the vitality of Islamic jurisprudence and thought. What plunges Muslim relations into crisis is ignorant fanaticism, takfir, insulting sanctities, and yielding to the divisive designs of imperialism.

The actualization of unitarian social relations depends upon Muslims attaining direct, unmediated acquaintance with one another, dispelling negative mentalities and prejudices, safeguarding the sanctity of each other's beliefs, and joining hands in the fateful issues of the Islamic world, particularly the liberation of Noble Jerusalem and the struggle against arrogance.

In this regard, the Grand Maraji', eminent scholars, academic elites, and media figures bear a momentous mission in transforming the doctrine of unity from an elite discourse into a lifestyle and the prevailing norm of social relations.

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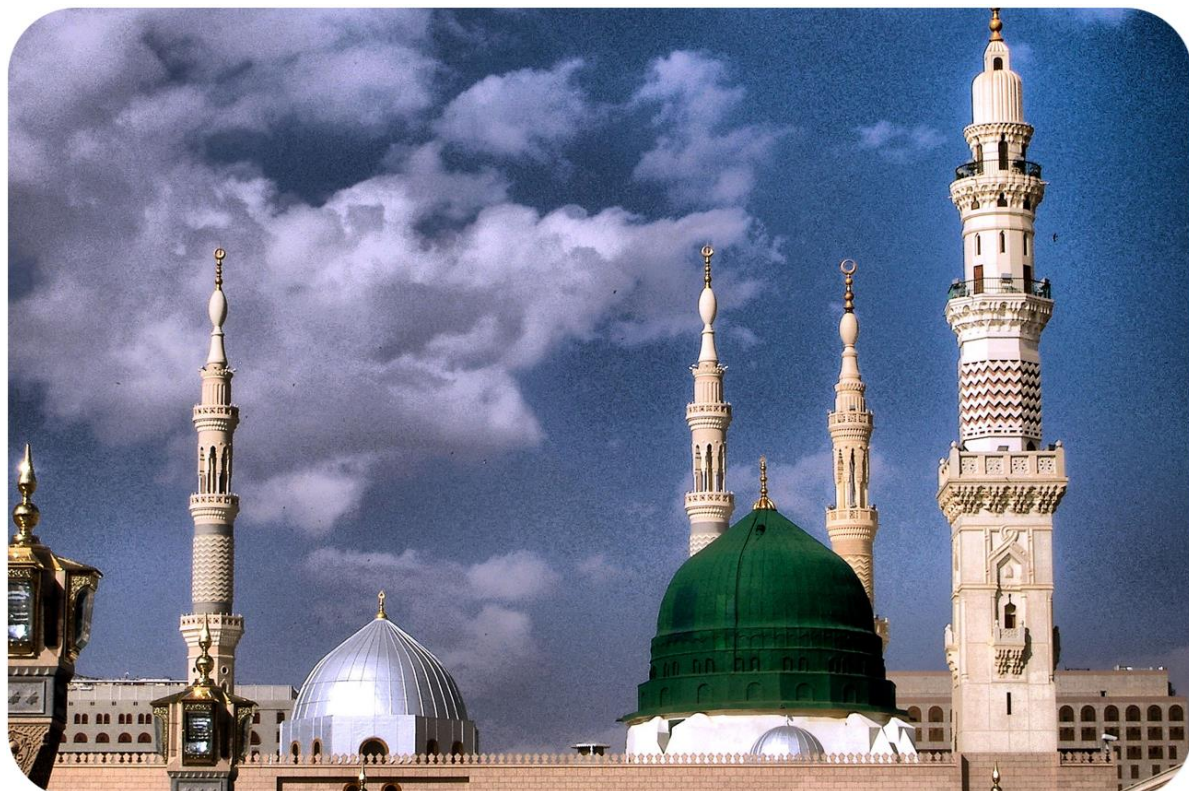
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The Importance of Islamic Unity in the Qur'an and Hadith

The Qur'anic verses and Islamic traditions emphasize the importance of unity, as well as the value of cooperation and solidarity among Muslims, while strongly condemning their division and dispersion. The Qur'an teaches us the secret of our unity, shows us the foundation to which Islamic brotherhood is connected, and explains how disagreement and fragmentation bring humiliation and weakness upon us and undermine our dignity and standing.

We all know with certainty that when the forces required to bring a particular object into existence are gathered and concentrated, that object can take shape more easily and more effectively.

For example, suppose a comprehensive and extensive encyclopedia were to be written on the greatness and various dimensions of the Islamic Revolution, including all its remarkable achievements and astonishing events. Or suppose an eloquent and comprehensive history were to be compiled, recording all the acts of self-sacrifice and devotion undertaken by the Muslim people of Iran. Such a task could be carried out in either of two ways:

First, one individual or several individuals could undertake such an important and extensive project separately and independently. Second, writers and researchers could cooperate by

pooling the abilities of experienced and capable specialists and, through the concentration of intellectual and scholarly power, produce such a significant historical work.

Undoubtedly, collective effort, together with the establishment of a strong central structure and the necessary coordination, would make us more capable of achieving such a great objective and more successful in fulfilling it.

Of course, just as unity and the concentration of power make us strong and successful in attaining our sacred ideals and objectives, dispersion and disagreement also drain our strength and leave us weak and powerless. How beautifully the poet has expressed this:

A hundred thousand threads, each one alone, possess no strength;

But when they are twisted together, even Esfandiyar cannot break them.

Islam and the Principle of Unity and Solidarity

Since the unity of the Muslim community plays a highly effective and influential role in its social and political life, and since Muslims can, through unity, achieve any great goal or undertaking with success and honor, the Holy Qur'an draws their attention to the bitter past of history—the period before the advent of Islam, when they were consumed by the darkness of ignorance and the flames of discord. It also reminds them that, when the radiant sun of Islam rose over the horizon of Arabia and Muslims were blessed with Islamic brotherhood, they were able to save themselves from destruction and annihilation.

The Qur'an says:

"And hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah and do not be divided. Remember Allah's favor upon you: you were once enemies, then He united your hearts, so you became—by His grace—brothers. And you were on the brink of a fiery pit, and He saved you from it." [1]

A people deprived of civilization, culture, and humane customs, once they came under the protection of Islam and the Qur'an, laid the foundations of a new and dynamic society through unity and solidarity. The bright star of their prosperity illuminated the darkened eyes of the world and revived the hearts of the sorrowful and despairing.

Instead of conflict and discord, they embraced unity and brotherhood; instead of bloodshed and murder, they turned to peace and social justice; and instead of ignorance and selfishness, they pursued knowledge and concern for others. Thus, within a short period, they illuminated a world immersed in darkness and barbarism with the light of knowledge, Qur'anic teachings, and Islamic ethics.

Our heavenly scripture, the Qur'an, teaches us the secret of our unity and reveals the foundation to which Islamic brotherhood is connected. It also explains how disagreement and dispersion bring humiliation and weakness upon us and destroy our dignity and standing. It states:

"Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another, lest you lose courage and your strength depart. Be steadfast; surely Allah is with those who are steadfast." [2]

“Obey Allah and His Messenger. Never quarrel or disagree among yourselves, lest you fall into weakness and helplessness and lose your dignity and greatness. Be patient and steadfast, for Allah is with those who remain steadfast.”

A careful examination of this verse clearly shows that the secret of Muslim unity and the motive for Islamic solidarity lie in obedience to God and His Messenger. Reaching this level of religious maturity and awareness is impossible without perseverance and the necessary patience.

Fortunately, the importance of unity and the value of cooperation and solidarity among Muslims have been emphasized in the verses of the Qur'an and Islamic traditions, while their dispersion and fragmentation have been severely condemned.

The Noble Prophet of Islam (PBUH) stated in a tradition: “Stay with the collective, for the hand of God’s support and power is with the community. Beware of division, for just as a sheep that is alone and far from the flock falls prey to the wolf, a person cut off from the Islamic community and separated from the main body of Muslims will become prey to the devil.” [3]

The Greatest Factor of Victory

Although various factors contributed to the progress of Muslims and the rapid, lightning-fast victories of Islam, unity and brotherhood among them were the most important and effective causes for the extraordinary expansion of Islam’s reach. By virtue of their faith in God and the life-giving teachings of Islam, Muslims achieved such unity that it was as if they were all one, and one was for all.

Inspired by the Holy Qur'an and following the tradition of the Prophet of Islam, Muslims prioritized the interests of the *Ummah* and the Islamic society over their individual interests. They desired for their religious brothers what they desired for themselves.[4] If someone was afflicted with pain, everyone felt the agony, and if a Muslim was blessed with a gift, everyone felt joy and gratitude.[5]

The sociopolitical maturity of Muslims and their spirit of self-sacrifice reached a level that astonished others. Having attained such a degree of social consciousness and the spirit of Islamic brotherhood, they were easily able to resist the great powers of the world at that time and raise the banner of Islamic justice in many neighboring countries.

The role of Islamic unity and brotherhood in the striking victories of the Muslims has been noted and acknowledged by many Western researchers of Islamic history and Muslim civilization. While recounting all their observations would fill countless pages, we provide a brief example from Gustave Le Bon:

“...When they [the Muslims] accepted Islam, they all gathered under the banner of monotheism and focused all their strength against outsiders; this was the primary cause of their progress and success...”[6]

Today, Islamic unity and brotherhood are more essential than ever for Muslims in securing their freedom and independence. If in the past, the Islamic *Ummah* possessed such sovereignty and grandeur that, as we noted, the light of Islam reached the rooftops of

European and Western countries in the shortest possible time, it was due to Islamic unity and the solidarity of Muslims.

If Muslims today are afflicted by Western and Eastern colonialism, and if global arrogance has cast its sinister shadow of domination over them, stripping away their freedom and national and religious sovereignty, it is because of the division and fragmentation of this great community and the lack of coordination and discord among them.

If the Muslims of the world desire, they can still achieve the Islamic unity and brotherhood of the glorious early days of Islam by leveraging their abundant commonalities, and once again regain their lost glory and sovereignty.

If, today, the leaders of Islamic countries would set aside their ambitions and selfishness, liberate themselves from the shackles of colonial subjugation, and embrace Islam and the Qur'an, they could defend the interests of the Islamic *Ummah* in international forums and global organizations, preventing the Muslims of the world from falling under the yoke of colonialism and international Zionism. But alas...

Alas, that instead of Islamic solidarity, they offer the Zionist and imperialist powers of the East and West ties of friendship—or rather, vows of servitude—and are never willing to take a step toward Islamic unity and brotherhood. How beautifully the great genius and herald of Muslim unity, Sayed Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, stated in this regard: “Their unity is based on disagreement, and their disagreement is based on unity; thus, they have united to never be united.”

Footnotes:

[1] Surah Al-Imran, verse 102.

[2] Surah Al-Anfal, verse 48.

[3] *Safinat al-Bihar*, Vol. 2, p. 360.

[4] The Commander of the Faithful, Ali (PBUH), in a testament to his son Imam Hasan (PBUH), says: “My son, make yourself a scale between yourself and others; love for others what you love for yourself, and do not desire for others what you would not desire for yourself...” *Nahj al-Balagha*, Fayd al-Islam, p. 912.

[5] This characteristic was so prominent and evident among Muslims that historians have emphasized it greatly. A Prophetic tradition relates that the Messenger of Islam (PBUH) said: “The likeness of the believers in their mutual affection and mercy is that of a single body; when one member suffers, the rest of the body joins it in sympathy with fever and sleeplessness.” See *Dastan-e-Rastan*, Vol. 2, p. 141.

[6] *The Civilization of Islam and the Arabs*, p. 790.

Edited items:

- Standardized the presentation of footnotes for academic clarity.
- Translated the poetical and historical references (e.g., Le Bon, al-Afghani) into coherent English while maintaining the original tone.
- Adjusted terminology like “seventy-maund volume” to natural English idioms.



Exegetical Approaches to Islamic Unity: A Comparative Analysis Based on Shi'i and Sunni Tafsirs

Unity is a concept that has long held a place in the religious culture of Islamic societies, gradually acquiring distinct significance. Both Shi'i and Sunni scholars and intellectuals, particularly over the past few centuries, have paid special attention to it. The Holy Qur'an likewise places great emphasis on the issue of Islamic unity. On the one hand, it highlights the positive outcomes of solidarity: in articulating the value and status of unity, it not only describes it as a great blessing worthy of remembrance and diligent preservation, but also calls upon the believers to reflect on the bitter periods of discord and turmoil to strive harder for its maintenance; for the unity among the community of believers was formed and realized through the will of Almighty God. On the other hand, it warns against the ominous consequences of discord, as division and disunity have undeniably been major causes of the decline and collapse of civilizations, human societies, and religious communities. Accordingly, the themes of unity, discord, and dispute are frequently addressed in the Qur'an, reminding believers of the factors fostering unity as well as the precursors to division. This study explores the concept and nature of Islamic unity, the

perspectives of prominent Shi'i and Sunni authorities on the subject, key Qur'anic verses pertaining to unity, and a critical analysis of the challenges facing Islamic unity.

Problem Statement

Unity and solidarity are sacred concepts in Islam, and it may well be argued that this theme appears in the Holy Qur'an more frequently than other sociopolitical concepts. Various Qur'anic verses emphasize unity and the struggle against all forms of discord, among which verse 103 of Surah Al-Imran is perhaps the most salient. History also attests that numerous figures have acted through thought and deed to foster the unity of the Muslim community. Foremost among them was the Prophet himself (PBUH), who rejected all forms of division regardless of their pretext or slogan, paying dedicated attention to calling Muslims toward comprehensive Islamic unity. Similarly, the Muslim Imams and many Shi'i and Sunni scholars, through their works, discourse, and stances during critical junctures, staved off division and laid the groundwork for mutual understanding, unity, rapprochement, and cooperation across the Islamic society. A prime example is the compilation of *Kitab al-Khilaf* by the prominent Islamic scholar Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (Shaykh al-Ta'ifa), in which the views and opinions of scholars from both schools, along with the juridical methods of deriving rulings in the fourth and fifth centuries AH, were compiled objectively and without bias, reflecting the conduct and dedication of leading religious authorities to such matters. Likewise, figures such as al-Tabrisi—whose exegesis *Majma' al-Bayan* was recommended by the late Allameh Shaykh Mahmoud Shaltout to the *Dar al-Taqrīb* as the finest commentary, and was subsequently published with annotations by Al-Azhar scholars and presented as an exegesis of the Qur'an representing all Islamic schools of thought—further demonstrate this commitment. It is evident, then, that the principle of unity and solidarity is not being addressed by researchers for the first time; scholars, researchers, and authorities of both schools have engaged with this topic, produced scholarship, and organized numerous conferences across Muslim nations. However, this study elucidates Islamic unity through the lens of Shi'i and Sunni exegeses and examines its relationship to the phenomenon of discord in light of the relevant Qur'anic verses.

The Concept and Essence of Unity

a) Linguistic Definition

The root “w-ḥ-d” (و ح د) is among the most profound and noteworthy roots in the Arabic language. In lexicographical works, it carries a consistent meaning: oneness, uniqueness, and singularity. Lexicographers are unanimous in this interpretation.

b) Meaning and Essence

The concept of *waḥdah* (unity) is intertwined with the term *ittiḥād* (union/solidarity). In the discourse of scholars, *ittiḥād* is often used to elucidate the concept of unity. It is noteworthy that *ittiḥād* can be conceptualized in two ways: real and metaphorical. Real *ittiḥād*—the transformation of two distinct things into one—is rationally impossible in the physical realm. Metaphorical *ittiḥād*, however, entails the transformation of one thing into another and occurs in two forms: First, when an entity combines with another to produce a third

product (e.g., mixing soil with water to create clay). Second, when an entity assumes a new form without mixing (e.g., water turning into steam through heat).

In political terminology, *ittihād* denotes the unification of two or more nations under a single political, military, and economic system, ultimately designating them as one state or nation.

The Qur'an approaches unity and union from a social perspective, emphasizing the importance of solidarity among nations, religions, Muslims, and within the family unit. Consequently, "Islamic unity" refers to the solidarity and cooperation of all Muslims—while preserving their respective religious identities—in the face of their common enemies.

Perspectives of Shi'i and Sunni Scholars

Great Shi'i and Sunni scholars have offered various definitions of unity. Among these, Allameh Amini, in his introduction to *Al-Ghadir*, states:

"Opinions and views regarding the unity of schools of thought remain free; they never sever the bond of Islamic brotherhood, which the Qur'an explicitly affirms in the verse: 'The believers are but brothers.' ... A single spirit and emotion govern our being: the spirit of Islam and the word of sincerity."

Ahmad Amin al-Masri, a prominent Sunni scholar, defines unity as:

"Unity means focusing on and adhering to the commonalities between two sects or groups. It is deeply regrettable that despite shared foundations—a single God, a single Prophet, and a single Book—individuals engage in conflict and division over minor issues."

The renowned scholar Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout states regarding Muslim unity:

"Difference of opinion is a natural social phenomenon that cannot be avoided. However, there is a distinction between a difference born of religious prejudice and intellectual rigidity, and a difference stemming from evidence and logic. The former is a blameworthy disagreement, while the latter is a fair disagreement—one accompanied by mutual respect for other schools. Both sides remain committed to the core principles and foundational sources of Islam. Just as the early leaders differed while respecting and excusing one another, we too should engage in scientific exchange. Thus, the goal of unity is not to invite people to a specific school of thought, nor to merge the Shi'i school into the Sunni, or vice versa; rather, our aim is for the various Islamic denominations to cooperate with one another based on mutual affection."

Finally, Sheikh Mohamed Ashour, Deputy President of Al-Azhar University and head of the Committee for Dialogue between Islamic Schools of Thought, presents a profoundly logical and sound perspective:

"The purpose of the concept of *taqrib* (rapprochement) between Islamic schools of thought is not to unify all schools or to abandon one to embrace another; this would be a misinterpretation of the concept. *Taqrib* should be based on scholarly discussion and scientific acceptance, serving as a weapon to combat superstition. Scholars of each school

must exchange their knowledge in their scientific dialogues so that, in moments of calm, they may learn, recognize, articulate, and reach conclusions.”

In reality, *taqrib* between schools of thought results in the attainment of *wahdat al-kalimah* (unity of word) and an *ummah wāḥidah* (a unified community), which the Qur'an strongly advocates.

A careful analysis of each of these definitions reveals that they carry fluid connotations, nuanced dimensions, and varying degrees of interpretability. Nonetheless, the most widely accepted and sound definition—which also happens to be the most common—is the unity of adherents of Islamic schools of thought in the sense of mutually supportive coexistence; in other words, Islamic empathy, harmony, and integration. Under this definition, followers of various Islamic denominations stand side by side while maintaining and affirming their distinct sectarian identities. As is customary, this conception of Islamic unity is framed and clarified in contrast to other, divergent interpretations.

Imam Khomeini (may he rest in peace), the late leader of the Islamic Revolution, endorsed a comprehensive approach, maintaining that Islamic solidarity by no means requires Muslims to compromise, concede, or refrain from reasoned theological and jurisprudential debate concerning disputed points of primary or secondary doctrine. Rather, the sole requirement of Islamic unity in this regard is that Muslims—in order to avoid fueling animosity and resentment—maintain their composure, refrain from insulting or defaming one another, and avoid leveling unfounded accusations; that is, they ought to observe toward one another the very standards and decorum that Islam mandates when inviting non-Muslims to the faith: “*Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best*” (An-Nahl: 125).

It becomes clear, therefore, that the unity of the Islamic *Ummah* does not mean that any school should abandon articulating and discussing its doctrinal and jurisprudential positions “in the best manner.” Rather, the objective is twofold: first, that Muslim denominations attain an authentic, informed understanding of one another’s intellectual and theological positions; and second, that they refrain from the discord repeatedly forbidden by the Holy Qur'an, so as to preserve and strengthen the foundations of Islam. By doing so, they form a unified front and an organized community to defend the sanctity of the Holy Qur'an and the immutable, shared principles of Islam against atheistic and hostile adversaries. This conduct represents an enduring tradition and practice upheld, emphasized, and practically exemplified by the Ahl al-Bayt, the caliphs, and leading religious and political authorities alike.

An Exegetical Analysis of Qur'anic Verses on Unity

The verses of the Holy Qur'an addressing the theme of unity can be categorized into two broad groups:

Verses that refer to interfaith unity in a broad sense

Verses that specifically address the unity of the Islamic *Ummah*.

The focus of this study is the second group of verses, which are examined below.

Verses Indicating the Unity of the Islamic Ummah

1. Verses That Directly Emphasize Unity

a) “And hold firmly, all together, to the rope of Allah, and do not be divided...”

“And hold firmly, all together, to the rope of Allah, and do not be divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, so that by His grace you became brothers. And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His signs, so that you may be guided.”

(Al ‘Imran 3:103)

This is among the most important Qur’anic verses concerning unity and has been subject to diverse exegetical interpretations. In this verse, God Almighty calls Muslims to the essence of Islamic faith, namely unity in the path of God, and identifies adherence to the divine rope—holding fast to the rope of Allah—as the means through which this unity is achieved.

There is a subtle linguistic point in the term *i’tisam* (holding fast), which is derived from the root *‘ismah*, meaning protection or preservation from error and destruction. The verse thus indicates that the foundation of religion is established through adherence to the *rope of Allah*, namely the divine law and the heavenly Book.

The prohibitive expression, “*wa la tafarraqu*” (“and do not be divided”), further reinforces this meaning. It instructs Muslims not to follow divergent paths, but rather to turn toward a single *qiblah*, pursue a unified purpose, and follow the path prescribed by the Qur’an and commanded by the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his family).

The command “*wa’tasimu*” (“hold firmly”) is expressed in the plural and is addressed to the Muslim community as a whole. Given that the preceding verses refer to the sedition of the Jews and their attempts to divide Muslims, the phrase “*the rope of Allah*” appears, by implication, to refer to Islam: a universal religion consistent with human reason and innate nature. Whether *the rope of Allah* is understood as Islam or as the Qur’an, it is not restricted to a particular time, place, sect, or group. Just as a person may save himself from destruction by grasping a rope, so too can humanity be delivered from the danger of downfall only by holding firmly to the Qur’an and Islam.

An examination of Shi’i and Sunni exegeses of this verse demonstrates a fundamental convergence among commentators on this issue. Although exegetes have proposed various possibilities—some identifying the *rope of Allah* as the Qur’an, others as Islam, and still others as the Prophet’s Household and the infallible Imams—these interpretations are not mutually contradictory. Similar diversity is also found in narrations transmitted from the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them). Yet neither these traditions nor the exegetical interpretations conflict with one another, because the divine rope denotes every means of connection with the Pure Essence of God: whether Islam, the Qur’an, the Prophet, or his Ahl al-Bayt. In other words,

all of these meanings are encompassed by the broad concept of “connection with God” implied by the expression *bi-habl Allah* (“to the rope of Allah”).

Ali ibn Ibrahim al-Qummi, a scholar of the third and fourth Islamic centuries, states in his commentary on the verse “*And hold firmly, all together, to the rope of Allah...*” that it refers to *tawhid* and *wilayah*. In a narration transmitted by Abu al-Jarud from Imam Ja’far al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), the prohibition “*do not be divided*” is explained as a prohibition of division and a command to unite around the *wilayah* of the Household of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family).

Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh regards this verse as a form of extended metaphor. He explains that the condition of Muslims in holding fast to the Book of God, maintaining unity, and cooperating with one another is comparable to the condition of a person grasping a firm rope from a high place: a rope that provides security and prevents one from falling. In effect, whoever holds firmly to the Book of God is one who has embraced Islam.

Alusi, in his discussion of the aforementioned verse, cites with a sound chain of transmission the following statement of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family):

“The Book of God is the rope extended from heaven to earth.”

He also transmits from Zayd ibn Thabit that the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) said:

“Indeed, I am leaving among you two successors: the Book of God, the Mighty and Majestic, extended between heaven and earth, and my progeny, the members of my Household...”

Alusi then observes that this expression contains an extended metaphor. It likens the one who holds fast to the divine rope to a person who, having suspended himself from a lofty place, firmly grasps a reliable rope in order to avoid falling.

Similarly, Tantawi, in *Al-Jawahir fi Tafsir al-Qur’an*, explains that God addresses the believers through the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), honoring them through this direct address and commanding them to hold fast to the *rope of God*: “*And hold firmly, all together, to the rope of Allah...*” He likewise interprets the rope as a metaphor for religion and the Qur’an.

It appears that the general meaning of the verse revolves around one central principle: Muslims must adhere to one religion, one Messenger, and one Book. In order to firmly establish this truth in their minds and to demonstrate the benefits of holding fast to the rope of God, which result in unity and harmony among Muslims, God recalls the condition of the Arabs before Islam. They had been afflicted by conflict and division, but through the blessing of Islam they became brothers to one another.

b) “And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it...”

“*And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it...*”

(Al ‘Imran 3:103)

This passage constitutes the second part of verse 103 of Surah Al 'Imran. It presents unity and brotherhood as the only path to salvation: formerly, you stood at the edge of a pit of fire, liable at any moment to fall into it and have all that you possessed reduced to ashes. Yet God saved you and guided you away from that precipice toward a place of security and peace, namely the realm of brotherhood and affection.

In commenting on this part of the verse, Allameh Tabataba'i emphasizes that God calls all Muslims to hold fast to the divine Book and the Sunnah of the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his family). In his words:

"This verse concerns the ruling relating to the united community, as indicated by the words *jami'an* [all together] and *la tafarraqu* [do not be divided]."

He further stresses that this is a universal command:

"These verses command the Islamic community to hold fast to the Book and the Sunnah, just as they command the individual to do so."

From this, it may be inferred that establishing and preserving unity within Islamic society constitutes a manifestation of social and political piety, whereas creating tension and conflict stands in opposition to divine piety.

c) "Mankind was one community; then Allah sent the prophets..."

"Mankind was one community; then Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and warners, and He sent down with them the Book in truth, so that it might judge between people concerning that wherein they differed. None differed over it except those who had been given it, after clear proofs had come to them, out of mutual envy and transgression. Then Allah guided those who believed, by His permission, to the truth concerning that over which they had differed. And Allah guides whom He wills to a straight path."

(Al-Baqarah 2:213)

This verse is among the most important Qur'anic passages explaining the reason for the establishment of religion, the imposition of religious obligation upon humankind, and the causes of the disagreements that subsequently emerged within religious life.

Human beings, by virtue of their innate social nature, initially formed a single and homogeneous community. Later, however, differences arose among them, in accordance with their natural inclination to seek the advantages and benefits of life. Resolving such conflicts and disputes required the establishment of appropriate laws and social regulations. Therefore, God raised prophets and sent, through them, commandments and laws in the form of religion. He supplemented these laws with glad tidings and warnings, and perfected them through a series of devotional obligations.

Thereafter, disagreements emerged concerning religious teachings and matters related to the Origin and the Hereafter. Different groups and factions arose among people, and as a result, religious unity was disrupted. Sectarian disagreement then extended into other areas of life as well. According to the verse, this division emerged because of the transgression and rebellious conduct of those who possessed knowledge of the heavenly

Book, recognized its principles and teachings, and upon whom the proof had already been conclusively established.

Accordingly, the disagreements that arise among human beings may be viewed from two perspectives:

1. Disagreement concerning worldly affairs and the administration of society.

This is a natural form of disagreement: a divergence of opinion that emerges among ordinary people in understanding and resolving social problems. Such disagreement is not blameworthy in itself. Because human beings are incapable of resolving it independently, God, out of His grace and mercy, sends prophets to them with His laws and teachings.

2. Disagreement concerning religion

This does not occur among ordinary people as such; rather, it arises among the *bearers of the Book (hamalat al-kitab)*. Moreover, it does not arise in the sincere pursuit of truth, but after the truth has become known, the evidence has been witnessed, intentions have been exposed, and the proof has been conclusively established.

Such disagreement is inevitable and its occurrence among members of human societies is certain, because human creation involves diversity of underlying constitutive elements. Although all human beings share a common human form, and this formal unity produces, to some extent, a unity of thought and action, diversity in their underlying dispositions also entails differences in feelings, perceptions, and states. Thus, human beings are united in one respect and diverse in another.

Differences in feelings and perceptions lead to differences in aims and aspirations; differences in aims, in turn, produce differences in conduct. Such divergence in conduct can disrupt the order of society. It was the emergence of these disagreements that made humankind dependent upon the enactment of laws: universal laws whose observance would remove conflict and ensure that every person received his due right. For this reason, God, the Exalted, established religious laws and ordinances for humanity and made *tawhid*—the affirmation of divine unity—the foundation of those laws. Consequently, religious law reforms human beliefs, moral character, and conduct alike. Religious legislation and divine lawgiving are therefore founded solely upon knowledge.

It may thus be said that disagreements become blameworthy when they intensify division and hostility within a single community, provoke conflict among its groups, and cause fragmentation among nations.

After commanding believers to “*hold firmly to the rope of Allah*,” the Holy Qur’an enjoins them to adopt divine piety in the best possible manner and to remain steadfast upon the path of Islam until death. Accordingly, the Qur’an emphatically prohibits falling into the trap of division and discord, lest Muslims, like earlier communities, become afflicted by blameworthy disagreement and suffer the same calamity that befell them.

d) “And do not be like those who became divided and differed...”

"And do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them. For them is a tremendous punishment."

(Al 'Imran 3:105)

This verse once again addresses the question of unity and the need to avoid division and dissension. It warns Muslims against following the path of earlier communities, such as the Jews and Christians, by embracing division and disagreement and thereby bringing upon themselves a severe punishment. In effect, it calls them to study the history of previous peoples and to reflect upon the painful fate that resulted from their conflict and fragmentation.

The Qur'an's repeated and emphatic warnings in these verses against division and dissension suggest that such an event would arise in the future within the Muslim community itself. For whenever the Qur'an persistently warns against a particular danger, this serves as an indication of its likely occurrence and emergence.

2. Verses Presenting the Strength and Prestige of Muslims as Dependent upon Unity

a) "Obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute..."

"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute, lest you lose courage and your strength depart."

(Al-Anfal 8:46)

Before this verse, God addresses the believers with the following command:

b) "O you who believe, when you encounter a force, stand firm..."

"O you who believe, when you encounter a force, stand firm and remember Allah often, so that you may prosper."

(Al-Anfal 8:45)

In this verse, one of the most prominent signs of faith is identified as the steadfastness of Muslims in all circumstances, particularly in combat against the enemies of truth. God Almighty immediately expresses this requirement through the imperative *uthbutu* ("stand firm"), presenting steadfastness as a factor of victory. Immediately thereafter, He introduces sincerity through the statement *"and remember Allah often."* In other words, in addition to steadfast action, God identifies sincerity as an essential condition for success in jihad.

The element of sincerity in jihad is expressed through the phrase *"and remember Allah often."* This does not merely mean uttering phrases of glorification or declaring God's greatness; rather, jihad and combat themselves must be performed sincerely and exclusively for the sake of God. As Allameh Tabataba'i observes, the intended remembrance of God is both inward, within the heart, and outward, upon the tongue. This is especially evident because the command *"remember Allah"* is qualified by the term *"often"* (*kathiran*):

"The remembrance is qualified by abundance so that they may be renewed by the spirit of piety."

In reality, steadfastness and constant remembrance of God are regarded as two important spiritual causes of victory. God then immediately commands: *"And obey Allah and obey the Messenger."* Obedience to God and the Messenger—in times of war and peace alike, and in relation to both commands and prohibitions—is presented as one of the pillars of the Islamic Ummah's power and victory.

However, the prohibitive command *"and do not dispute, lest you lose courage and your strength depart"* indicates that disagreement and conflict among Muslims cause their weakness and undermine their dignity and authority. As Allameh Tabataba'i states:

"For the اختلاف of opinions disrupts unity and weakens strength."

3. Verses Containing the Expression "One Community"

It should be noted that certain verses containing the expression *ummah wahidah* ("one community") have been the subject of extensive scholarly debate. These verses may appear to suggest a coercive or deterministic divine will. Yet, in fact, they reject any notion that the realization of a unified community is to be imposed through compulsion. Rather, they indicate that God has willed for human beings to reach the condition of a single community through their own free choice and volition. For this reason, these verses require examination.

"Had your Lord willed, He could surely have made all people one community; yet they will continue to differ, except those upon whom your Lord has bestowed mercy. And for this [purpose] He created them."

(Hud 11:118–119)

Because of its linguistic and semantic complexities, this passage has given rise to a wide range of interpretations. One central question is: if God could have made humanity one community—namely, adherents of a single religion, Islam—why was this not realized in practice?

Abu al-Futuh al-Razi explains that the divine will mentioned here refers to a will of compulsion, coercion, and constraint. Had God willed, in an absolute and irresistible manner, to make people one community, He would have done so, for He certainly possesses the power to do so. However, He did not will it in that sense, because He granted human beings free choice, which is the very foundation of religious obligation.

Another linguistic question concerns the phrase *"wa li-dhalika khalaqahum"* ("and for that He created them"). Does the demonstrative pronoun *dhalika* refer to disagreement, or to mercy? That is, did God create people so that they would remain in perpetual disagreement, or so that He might bestow mercy upon them? Some have argued that because *rahmah* ("mercy") is grammatically feminine, if it were the intended referent, the verse should have used the feminine demonstrative pronoun *tilka* rather than *dhalika*.

Allameh Tabataba'i states that the demonstrative expression in *wa li-dhalika khalaqahum* ("and for that He created them") refers to the mercy indicated by the phrase *illa man rahima rabbuka* ("except those upon whom your Lord has bestowed mercy"). Although *rahmah* ("mercy") is grammatically feminine, this does not prevent a masculine demonstrative pronoun from referring to it, since both masculine and feminine agreement are permissible with the verbal noun *rahmah*. This is evidenced by the Qur'anic verse:

"Indeed, the mercy of Allah is near to the doers of good."

(Al-A'raf 7:56)

Shaykh al-Tusi points out another important consideration: even if *dhalika* is understood as referring to disagreement, the *lam* at the beginning of the expression is not a *lam of purpose* (*lam al-gharad*), but a *lam of consequence* (*lam al-'aqibah*). That is, human beings were created with free will, and the eventual consequence was that some of them, through their own choices and reasoning, would take the path of disagreement.

Allameh Tabataba'i further explains that the disagreement under discussion arises from the people's own *baghy* (transgression) and *ظلم* (*zulm*, injustice). It leads them to depart from the truth, conceal it, and present falsehood in the guise of truth. Such disagreement, therefore, cannot conceivably be the ultimate end of creation or the purpose intended by God Almighty in creating humankind.

Accordingly, it is untenable to claim that God created the human world in order to perpetuate oppression and injustice, efface the truth, and then destroy human beings for these very crimes, only to condemn them to everlasting punishment in Hell. The Qur'an, throughout its teachings, rejects such a possibility and affirms that what proceeds from God is solely mercy and guidance, whereas injustice and disagreement originate with human beings themselves.

In accordance with His immutable divine laws, God grants the blessing of *tawhid*, unity, and inclusion within the description of an *ummah wahidah* ("one community") to those who freely choose the path of growth and guidance through the means available to them: the exercise of reason and the guidance of the prophets. Such persons transcend the domain of outward appearances and multiplicity, attachment to which results in corruption, decline, and destruction. Through His mercy and grace, God saves them from corruption and division. Verses such as Al-Shura 42:8, Al-Ma'idah 5:48, and Al-Nahl 16:93 refer to this reality.

Pathology of Islamic Unity

Examining the factors, causes, and challenges that impede Muslim unity is an urgent and foundational necessity. Discord and internal conflict represent a form of social malady and abnormality. Any society afflicted by division and factionalism has deviated from its natural state and equilibrium, standing in dire need of remedy.

To treat social abnormalities, one must first diagnose their root causes and etiologies; more precisely, one must address the cause rather than merely fighting the symptom. Sectarian strife and conflict are outcomes produced by specific causes and factors. Until these

underlying causes are identified and eradicated, their effect—namely sectarian warfare and conflict—will not cease.

In general, the obstacles confronting social cohesion and unity fall into two broad categories:

A) Internal Obstacles

By “internal obstacles” to establishing and reinforcing Islamic unity, we mean the intellectual and theoretical pathologies originating from within the Islamic community itself that have subjected Muslims to division, tension, and fragmentation. The importance of this category lies in the fact that Islamic unity is fundamentally an intra-religious issue.

1. Forsaking the Principle of Tolerance (*Mudarat*)

The Holy Qur'an states:

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm against the disbelievers and merciful among themselves.”

(Al-Fath 48:29)

In this verse, firmness is reserved exclusively for belligerent disbelievers who understand nothing other than force and intransigence. Beyond them, others are entitled to Islamic forbearance, while believers and Muslims merit compassionate conduct. Indeed, this tolerance is broad enough to encompass adherents of other faiths as well. For this reason, Muslims and the followers of Muhammad must prioritize the principle of human tolerance in Islam over non-fraternal attitudes, never allowing disagreements to degenerate into sectarian violence.

Referring to this point, Gustave Le Bon writes:

“It is exceedingly regrettable for the followers of Christ that the religious tolerance—which is counted among all peoples as part of the law of chivalry—was taught to them by Muslims.”

2. The Lack of Practical Commitment to Religious Teachings by All Muslims

To elucidate this dimension, historical factors must be taken into account. Certain historical developments led to the emergence of currents of thought and doctrines among Muslims that ultimately eroded the central status of authentic Islamic teachings—such as the Glorious Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet of Islam—subordinating them to the ordinary opinions and human traditions of certain figures in Muslim societies.

For instance, although the Holy Qur'an explicitly summons all Muslims and its adherents to Islamic unity and brotherhood, the pronouncements and conduct of certain scholars, jurists, and hadith transmitters—who claim adherence to the Qur'an and Sunnah—nevertheless sow the seeds of division and discord. Through their writings, speeches, and actions, they fuel this anti-Qur'anic phenomenon that runs counter to the Prophetic Sunnah. This can be attributed to negligence, lack of discernment, misinterpretation,

authoritarianism in religious judgment, or carnal desires and the preservation of personal socio-political status.

3. Eschewing Violence and Promoting Islamic Mercy and Compassion

As noted earlier, the Qur'an commands Muslims to interact with believers through mercy, compassion, and mutual engagement rather than violence. Accordingly, the foundational ethos of Islam is mercy and benevolence. It is therefore most fitting that the Noble Prophet is titled "*a mercy to the worlds*" (*rahmatan lil-'alamin*), for his mission sought the expansion of mercy rather than its restriction to a specific group or denomination. The basis established by Islam for unity is faith in God (*tawhid*), a jewel latent within every human being.

Among the foremost verses pointing to this vital matter are verses 118 and 119 of Surah Hud:

"Had your Lord willed, He could surely have made all people one community; yet they will continue to differ, except those upon whom your Lord has bestowed mercy. And for this [purpose] He created them..."

(Hud 11:118–119)

This verse identifies the purpose of human creation as the bestowal of divine mercy, and considers the absence of discord among the Islamic community as one of the signs of God's mercy.

Furthermore, God Almighty states concerning His Noble Messenger: "*to the believers he is kind and merciful*" (*bi-l-mu'minina ra'ufun rahim*), explicitly affirming his tenderness and mercy. How, then, could this kind and compassionate Prophet be content to enjoy the bounties of Paradise and stroll peacefully through its gardens while a group of believers in his religion and prophetic mission—who were enamored with his virtues and merits—remain bound in chains in the depths of Hell, trapped beneath layers of fire? This is especially so when they confessed the Lordship of God, the messengership of the Messenger of Allah, and the truth of all he brought, with their sole offense being that ignorance overcame them, turning them into playthings of Satan such that they committed sins without exhibiting obstinacy or arrogance.

Finally, it is essential to emphasize that the verse:

"There is no compulsion in religion; truth stands out clear from error."

(Al-Baqarah 2:256)

explicitly declares that there is no coercion in faith, as the path of right guidance is distinct from misguidance. This ruling bars the path to violence, warfare, and bloodshed, leaving human beings completely free at this crossroads. Therefore, the perfection of religion resides in its intrinsic appeal and attraction rather than in intimidation; the true foundation of unity is precisely this mercy and spiritual allure, not coercion or violence.

4. Refraining from Slander and Reviling One Another's Sanctities

Islam in no way permits insults or abusive language toward others and condemns such conduct severely. The Holy Qur'an does not permit this even with regard to idols—which are thoroughly rejected by the Qur'an and against which Muhammad was sent to struggle. In this regard, the Qur'an states:

“And do not insult those whom they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah out of enmity without knowledge.”

(Al-An'am 6:108)

5. Avoiding Superficiality and Mere Outward Formalism

Differences between the Shi'a and Sunni traditions reside primarily within the two domains of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and theology (*kalam*), though the majority fall within theology. Yet, if we recognize the core of religion in the individual and social spheres to be *servitude* (*'ubudiyyah*) and *justice* (*'adalah*) respectively, little justification remains for fomenting division or obstinately dwelling on points of contention. Jurisprudential matters exist to elucidate acts of worship and related practical affairs, while theological inquiries address doctrinal and epistemological matters.

Thus, by emphasizing the two elements of servitude and justice, Muslims can steer clear of contentious peripheral issues and rely upon these two principles, which constitute the very soul of religion and religiosity. Shi'a and Sunni scholars and laypeople alike must also recognize that differences in secondary matters (*furu'*) must not be generalized or extended to foundational principles (*usul*), nor should divergences in jurisprudence and theology be misconstrued as disagreement on core tenets and taken as a guide for practical conduct.

B) External Obstacles

External obstacles arise from the deceptions, intrigues, and overt and covert conspiracies of the world's colonial powers. These powers regard Muslim unity and solidarity as painful and intolerable for themselves and therefore seek, by creating division, discord, and conflict among Muslim communities across the world, to prevent the formation of a monotheistic front and a unified Islamic community.

A study of Islamic history shows that Muslim lands gradually moved away from the unity established by the Noble Prophet in Medina through the institution of the bond of brotherhood and toward division and discord. Even the Rightly Guided Caliphs faced divisive forces, including tribalism. Later, although the Umayyads were the last rulers to govern the Islamic world as a whole, they too confronted forces of division, such as the polarization between Syrian and Khurasani armies, which reflected Persian-Arab rivalry.

The essential point is that the gradual weakening of the Islamic world and the imposition of Western colonialism created far deeper divisions and intensified the absence of unity throughout the Muslim world. They also generated forms of diversity and fragmentation that have persisted to the present day.

It is evident that the enemies of Islam have always plotted against Islam and Muslims through various methods. At times, these conspiracies have been overt and accompanied

by military and political intervention; at other times, their objectives have been pursued through infiltration within Muslim societies and the Islamic community itself.

At present, however, colonialism has undertaken two fundamental measures to prevent the revival of Muslim unity. The first has been the fragmentation of Islamic culture and civilization through the promotion of nationalism, racism, and ethnic particularism. Thus, we continually hear of Arab, Iranian, Turkish, Indian, and other cultures, whereas the culture that existed throughout the past thirteen centuries was, in essence, a single culture: Islamic culture.

The second measure has been the creation of division and discord through sectarian warfare.

God Almighty describes the fate of those who sow division and fail to uphold unity as follows:

"Their affair rests only with Allah; then He will inform them of what they used to do."

(Al-An'am 6:159)

In his commentary on this verse, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh explains that the sowing of division and the weakening of religious denominations and faith are among the machinations of foreign powers. These powers have sought to weaken the various Islamic groups by fomenting discord, embittering their hearts toward one another, distancing them from the authentic teachings of Islam, and planting the seeds of doubt among them. As a result, Muslims have been estranged from their true religion.

This policy of division has consequently turned Shi'a against Sunnis and Arabs against Turks and Muslim Persians. Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, a committed opponent of colonialism, called upon Muslims to unite and regarded their progress as dependent upon unity.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion of unity and solidarity yields the following conclusions:

1. **The meaning of human unity and solidarity** is not the elimination of intellectual, doctrinal, religious, or personal differences, nor the imposition of a single set of beliefs upon all people. Rather, it consists in preserving such differences while cultivating mutual empathy, respecting one another's rights, and safeguarding reciprocal interests.

Likewise, **Islamic unity and solidarity** does not mean that Islamic schools of thought must conceal or abandon their doctrinal and jurisprudential positions. Rather, it requires, first, that the various Islamic denominations acquire an accurate understanding of one another, become fully informed of one another's intellectual and doctrinal positions, and refrain from the kind of conflict prohibited by the Holy Qur'an in order to preserve the integrity of Islam. They must stand together as a single united force in defending the sanctity of the Qur'an and the established principles shared by Muslims.

In verse 103 of Surah Al 'Imran, the Holy Qur'an identifies *the rope (habl)* as one of the important means of establishing unity. Qur'anic commentators have interpreted this

“rope” as the Qur’an, the noble person of the Prophet of Islam, and the Ahl al-Bayt of Purity and Infallibility. These constitute the means through which the Islamic community can endure and continue. The outcome of religious brotherhood is nothing other than the dignity of the Islamic community and its liberation from collective and social humiliation in relation to other communities.

The removal of discord, the attainment of victory, the strengthening of Muslims, the establishment of a center of power for them in the world, and the creation of harmony with the followers of other religions are among the objectives of Islamic unity and solidarity.

The existence of internal and external sources of harm places an even greater responsibility upon Shi’i and Sunni scholars and intellectuals. They must promote and encourage unity and rapprochement more actively than before and oppose the misguided practices prevalent among the general population—practices that possess neither sound rational nor valid scriptural foundations.



The Practical Conduct of the Prophet as the Primary Foundation for Preserving the Unity and Cohesion of the Ummah

Unity and social cohesion constitute a rational imperative. In human societies, one does not normally seek elaborate proofs for fundamental, rational axioms, for such matters are self-evident. At times, however, one must articulate arguments even for evident truths to highlight their critical significance. The essential inquiry regarding unity is to ascertain what religious foundations and sources dictate concerning the solidarity and harmony of the Islamic community.

For example, in the Glorious Qur'an—the supreme, life-giving charter of Islamic and human existence—more than fifty verses address unity, cohesion, and methods for avoiding conflict and division. Furthermore, the practical conduct (*sirah*) of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, along with their prudential considerations for the public good (*maslahah*), clearly demonstrates that they constantly strived to safeguard the unity and cohesion of the Islamic Ummah. Even as they maintained their doctrinal principles and intellectual

convictions, their actions in no way compromised the realization of unity within the Islamic community. Thus, Muslim solidarity and cohesion constitute a strategic priority for Islamic society.

Kashif al-Ghita' observed that Islamic thought rests upon two pillars: *the word of tawhid* (the declaration of divine unity) and *the tawhid of the word* (the unity of the community). The first denotes the exclusive worship of the Lord, while the second signifies the principle of concord and solidarity across the Islamic community. Indeed, *tawhid* cannot be genuinely realized in the absence of unity. A community incapable of preserving its cohesion and unity will lack the capacity to establish *tawhid* upon the earth; the worship of God is realized in practice only when the Islamic Ummah is united and formidable enough to implement divine ordinances in the world.

Today, many forms of underdevelopment, poverty, fragmentation, insecurity, and adversity stem directly from the disunity and division of Islamic society. Whether we acknowledge it or not, disbelief stands united in opposition to Islam. In contemporary Western and European societies, deliberate efforts are made to establish federations or continental unions because reason dictates that only through unity and cohesion can societies consolidate their resources and achieve their collective objectives.

There are numerous paths toward achieving unity—methods that are well-known and recognized by virtually everyone, yet regrettably neglected.

One primary approach to realizing unity is recognizing and emphasizing the common ground shared among Islamic schools of thought. As long as Muslims remain unaware of these shared foundations, they may perceive one another as adversaries, distant and fundamentally divided. When they examine and understand these shared tenets, however, they discover that Muslims—whether Shi'i or Sunni, Hanafi or Zaydi, Shafi'i or others—share immense commonalities. All face the same Qibla in prayer, revere the same Scripture, follow the same Prophet, and share identical views on more than ninety percent of practical rulings and jurisprudential matters.

The Iraqi scholar and researcher Husayn Mahfouz observed that upon thorough examination, Muslims share complete, hundred-percent agreement in ethics (*akhlaq*), complete agreement in mysticism and spirituality (*'irfan*), and diverge only slightly in doctrinal matters—a minor divergence in the broader scheme. Can any rational person justify dismantling such extensive common ground over a small fraction of secondary differences?

The question of commonalities has received substantial scholarly attention in theological and jurisprudential discourse. When Muslims bow alike in the daily prayers, prostrate alike, and raise their hands in supplication (*qunut*) alike, there is no justifiable reason to exacerbate trivial differences.

Another fundamental path toward achieving unity is holding fast to the divine rope (*al-habl al-ilahi*). This is the explicit counsel of the Qur'an, which instructs believers to avoid division, reminding them of their shared condition, that they stood at the brink of an abyss of fire and God delivered them. Some commentators identify the divine rope as the Holy

Qur'an, while others interpret it as the Ahl al-Bayt. In reality, both interpretations converge, for the Prophet of Islam affirmed that these two shall never separate. Muslims must therefore recognize the presence of this divine rope and consider themselves bound to act in accordance with it.

Following authentic leadership represents another core strategy for realizing unity and cohesion. Humanity's misfortunes began when it parted from its genuine leaders and failed to follow the Prophet. During the Major Occultation (*al-ghaybah al-kubra*) of the Imam of the Age, one must examine the guidance of righteous leaders. Today, one should consider the perspective of the Supreme Leader on Muslim division and solidarity, as well as the stance of Grand Ayatollah Sistani, who famously advised: "Do not say to the Sunnis 'our brothers,' rather say 'our own selves'." Muslims must follow these leaders on the basis of wisdom and sound reason to avoid falling into misguidance.

An additional strategy for consolidating unity is the reform of the economic conditions of Muslims. If social justice is realized in the economic domain, systemic disparities will be eliminated, putting an end to economic injustice across Muslim societies. Islamic societies must not degenerate into a state where ordinary believers are urged toward patience and humility while an elite amasses exorbitant wealth. The strength of early Islam was grounded in the fact that its leaders and prominent figures stood alongside ordinary people in the same rank. However, when certain later leaders accumulated such vast wealth that gold had to be divided with axes upon their demise, society disintegrated. To achieve genuine unity, severe class stratification must be eliminated; as Imam Ali observed, wherever a palace is erected, a ruined hovel is inevitably found beside it.

Fostering a culture of dialogue is another essential strategy. The tradition of Islam and the Qur'an inherently encourages dialogue, encompassing the dialogue of civilizations, religions, and intra-Islamic exchange. The Prophet himself pioneered and led this path, consistently inviting others to reasoned discourse. Islamic societies must endeavor to establish dialogue at all levels; after all, the resolution of every war ultimately lies in negotiation and dialogue, so it should be pursued from the outset.

Strengthening the spirit of servitude to God (*'ubudiyyah*) serves as another strategic pillar. A society devoted to God that places the divine command above all else acts out of religious duty. Human primordial nature (*fitrah*) is inclined toward fulfilling the divine will in the most upright manner. The prophets were sent to revive human interiority, a transformation achieved through devotional submission. When man returns to his primordial nature, he returns to essential human values—values upheld by all divine religions and traditions. The prophets were sent precisely to ensure that divine commands are observed and human values realized.

Promoting the spirit of brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*) is another vital means of reinforcing unity. While contemporary religions aspire to the ideal of fraternity, Muslims already share a single overarching faith and religion; thus, they are all the more called to pursue brotherhood, which is the foundational motto of Islam.

A further path toward unity is emphasizing moral and ethical principles. The supreme moral exemplar in Islam is the Prophet, who declared that his central mission was the perfection

of noble character in society. To insult the beliefs and sanctities of others is fundamentally antithetical to morality.

The greatest challenge confronting unity remains prejudice, bigotry (*ta'assub*), and the suspension of rational discernment. The Qur'an warns the followers of Islam against reverting to the chauvinism of the age of ignorance (*hamiyyat al-jahiliyyah*). Sound reason demonstrates that contemporary backwardness in the Islamic world is the direct outcome of division and fragmentation. As long as Muslims do not unite to establish a cohesive Islamic system, a common Islamic market, a unified military and security framework, and a coordinated media and communication apparatus, they must be certain that hostile incursions and conspiracies will continue to keep Muslim societies divided.



The Character of the Prophet of Islam from the Perspective of Orientalists and Western Thinkers

The Character of the Prophet of Islam from the Perspective of The Noble Prophet possesses such an exalted persona that his luminous radiance has traversed both East and West, commanding the attention of inquiring minds and moving them to laud his noble character. This does not imply, however, that prominent world figures have never propagated polemics against Islam and its Prophet. Indeed, even today in certain so-called civilized countries, derogatory and unworthy claims are periodically leveled against the Prophet of Islam, laying bare long-standing animosities.

Despite such unfairness, the sun of truth has never remained eclipsed behind clouds; distinguished thinkers throughout history have continually unveiled the noble countenance of truth to others. Undoubtedly, the Prophet Muhammad is a universal figure belonging to no single ethnic group or nation. Every observer is free to evaluate such a persona from their own vantage point and portray him as they perceive him.

The Messenger of Allah is the purest, finest, and most precious pearl in the oyster of existence, and the foremost exemplar in the realm of contingent being—an exalted being whose station and sublime virtues remain unmatched by any other, and whose profound merits, uniquely qualifying him for such a divine mission, have known no equal.

Inquiry into the persona of the Noble Prophet has engaged thinkers throughout history. How Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, was raised in the heart of an endless desert within a society far removed from civilization and learning, and how he emerged embodying the highest human virtues while presenting the most profound precepts for cultivating human morality and conduct, have remained enduring subjects of exploration for perceptive analysts.

The least among the achievements of the advent of the Final Prophet and the delivery of his ultimate message—which commenced with the imperative to read and write—was the global flourishing of sciences across the Islamic world and their subsequent transmission to Spain, Italy, Germany, England, and other European nations, and eventually to the world at large. Historical evidence for this undeniable reality is vast. Notable among these proofs is the repeated acknowledgment by Muslim and, in particular, non-Muslim and European scholars of the profound fact that the character of the Noble Prophet was that of an exalted human being endowed with sublime understanding, intellect, and morality.

Truth-seeking authors, scholars, and researchers not only recognize the Prophet of Islam as one of the preeminent figures of religious civilization, but have also explicitly affirmed the globalization of Islam due to its manifold intrinsic merits.

The following selected testimonies from various international figures, recorded across scholarly works, articulate the persona of the Final Prophet from the perspective of external observers:

1. Encyclopaedia Britannica describes the Prophet of Islam as follows:

A vast portion of the details found in early sources demonstrates that he was an honest and upright man who won the respect and loyalty of others who were likewise truthful and righteous.

2. Professor Will Durant, the renowned American historian, writes:

“If we judge of greatness by influence, he was one of the giants of history. He undertook to raise the spiritual and moral level of a people plunged into the barbarism of heat and arid desolation, and in this he succeeded far beyond any other reformer in history. Seldom has any man so fully realized all his aspirations in the cause of religion, for he was a true believer in his faith.

From scattered, idolatrous desert tribes, he forged a single nation. Surpassing the religion of the Jews, of the Christians, and of ancient Arabia, he established a simple, clear, and powerful faith whose spiritual tenets were grounded in national courage and nobility. Within a single generation, this faith triumphed in a hundred military campaigns, built a vast and mighty empire within a century, and remains in our time a formidable force exerting influence across half the world.”

3. Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, the Russian author and novelist:

“The noble person of the Prophet of Islam deserves the utmost reverence and honor. The religious law of the Prophet of Islam will encompass the entire world in the future, owing to its harmony with reason and wisdom.”

4. Voltaire, the French author and philosopher:

“Muhammad the Prophet was unquestionably a very great man. He was a capable conqueror, a wise legislator, a just ruler, and a pious prophet. He played the greatest role that could possibly be enacted on earth before the eyes of ordinary men.”

5. George Bernard Shaw, the Irish author and playwright:

“In my opinion, Islam is the only religion that possesses the capacity to adapt to the changing phases of human existence through the ages. I predict of the faith of Muhammad that it will be accepted by the Europe of tomorrow, just as it has begun to be acceptable to the Europe of today.

The medieval Church, either out of ignorance or bigotry, painted Islam in dark and obscure colors. They made it seem as though Muhammad were an Antichrist, thus fostering among Christians a deep hatred for the religion of Islam.

I have studied the life and work of Muhammad; in my view, far from being an Antichrist, he must be called the savior of humanity. I believe that if a man like Muhammad were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in resolving its problems in a way that would bring about the much-needed peace and harmony.”

6. Edward Gibbon, the English writer and historian:

“Muhammad’s beliefs are free from doubt and ambiguity, and the Qur’an is a magnificent witness to the oneness of God. The Prophet of Mecca rejected the worship of idols, human beings, and stars, based on the rational principle that anything which has a beginning, and subsequently a decline and death, is not worthy of worship.”

7. Alphonse de Lamartine, the renowned 19th-century French author, poet, and politician, states in his book **History of Turkey**:

“If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria for human genius, who would dare to compare any great man in modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men founded only armies, laws, and empires. They established nothing more than material power, which often crumbled before their very eyes. This man not only set in motion armies, laws, empires, nations, and governments, but also transformed millions of people in one-third of the then-inhabited world—and, more than that, he transformed altars, gods, religions, beliefs, and souls.”

8. Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish philosopher, satirist, essayist, and historian, wrote in his book **On Heroes and Hero-Worship** regarding Muhammad:

“It is very shameful for anyone to listen to the accusation that Islam is a lie and that Muhammad was an impostor or a deceiver. We have seen that he remained steadfast in his principles with firm resolve, kindness, generosity, compassion, detachment, piety, genuine manliness, diligence, and sincerity. In addition to all these qualities, he was tolerant, patient, kind, and pleasant in his dealings with others, and he would even jest with his companions. He was just, truthful, intelligent, pure, noble, and quick-witted. His face was so radiant that it seemed as if he held a lamp within himself to illuminate the darkest nights; he was a great man, characterized by the fact that he had not attended a school nor been raised by a teacher, for he needed none of these.”

9. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

“We Europeans, with all our concepts and achievements, cannot reach what Muhammad achieved, nor will anyone ever surpass him. I searched history for an exemplar for humanity, and I found it to be Muhammad, for he must be recognized as a manifest truth. Indeed,

Muhammad succeeded in subjecting the entire world to the doctrine of monotheism (*tawhid*)."'

10. Edward Gibbon, historian and Member of the British Parliament, and Simon Ockley, British Orientalist, in **The History of the Saracens** [History of the Muslim Empires]:

"'I believe in one God, and Mahomet the Apostle of God,' is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honours of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue."

11. Mahatma Gandhi, the leader of India, writes regarding the persona of Muhammad in **Young India**:

"I wanted to know the best of one who holds today undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind. I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life.

It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet, the scrupulous regard for his pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepid

ity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission; these—and not the sword—carried everything before them and surmounted every obstacle. When I closed the second volume [of the biography], I was sorry there was not more for me to read of that great life.

12. Annie Besant, the British sociologist, mystic, women's rights activist, and writer, states in her book **The Life and Teachings of Muhammad**:

"It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme."

13. Dr. Gustav Weil, the German Orientalist, writes in **History of the Islamic Peoples**:

"Muhammad was a shining exemplar for his people. His character was pure and unblemished. His house, his dress, and his food were characterized by a rare simplicity. He was so unassuming that he accepted no special mark of reverence from his companions, nor would he accept from his servant any service that he could perform for himself. He was accessible to everyone at all times. He visited the sick and was full of sympathy for all. His benevolence and generosity were boundless, as was his earnest concern and goodwill for the welfare of the community."

14. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

Upon becoming acquainted with Islam and the bearer of this monotheistic faith, the celebrated German poet Goethe composed a poem titled **Mahomets Gesang** ("Mahomet's Song") in honor of the Noble Prophet. This poem is voiced through the perspective of the Prophet's closest kin—namely, Imam Ali and Lady Fatimah. Through vivid imagery, allegory, and symbolism, Goethe portrays every stage and milestone of the Messenger's prophetic call and guidance among humankind.

Goethe's poem centers on articulating the exalted persona of the Prophet through the voices of these two cherished figures of Islamic history. In doing so, it highlights the

historical trajectory of the Prophet and the global expansion of Islam. The poem culminates in the German poet's affirmation of the hereafter and eternal existence, as well as his conviction in the ultimate triumph of the Noble Prophet's mission. It is perhaps this deep fascination with the life and faith of the Prophet that drew a Western European thinker—amidst the surrounding onslaught of conflicting philosophical currents—to the elevated spiritual concepts of Islam.

Below is an excerpt from the poem **Mahomet's Song**:

- > **"See the rock-spring,**
- > **Clear as joy,**
- > **Like a star glancing!**
- > **Above the clouds**
- > **His youth was nourished**
- > **By good spirits...**
- > **And with leader-like majesty,**
- > **He sweeps along with him**
- > **All the brother-springs.**
- > **Down in the valley**
- > **Flowers sprout beneath his footsteps,**
- > **And the meadow**
- > **Wakes to life from his fragrant breath...'"**

.15 John L. Esposito :

“ He must be called the savior of humanity. I believe that if a man like him were to assume leadership in the modern era, he would resolve its problems through peace and goodwill. He was the most extraordinary man ever to walk the earth. He preached a religion, founded a civilization, built a nation, institutionalized morality, and created a dynamic, formidable community to translate his teachings into practice—thoroughly and permanently revolutionizing the realm of human thought and behavior. His name is ‘Muhammad.’ Born in Arabia in 570CE, he commenced his mission to proclaim the true faith (Islam) at the age of forty, and departed this world in his sixty-third year. During the brief twenty-three years of his prophethood, he guided humanity to the worship of the One God. He emancipated people from tribal warfare and strife, leading them to national unity and solidarity. Throughout this period, he guided them from debauchery and drunkenness to temperance and piety, from lawlessness to an ordered society, and from moral corruption to the highest standards of ethical excellence. Human history has known no such complete transformation wrought by a single individual, in any place, either before the Prophet of Islam or after him. Envisioning all these incredible wonders accomplished within those initial two decades is truly astounding”.

.16Alphonse de Lamartine :

The renowned historian Lamartine states :

“ If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astounding results are the three criteria of human genius, who would dare to compare any great man of modern history with Muhammad? The most famous men created only armies, laws, and empires. If we do not say that what they founded was nothing, we must admit that they created nothing more than material powers, which often crumbled in the blink of an eye .

This man moved not only armies, legislation, empires, peoples, and dynasties, but millions of men—one-third of the then-inhabited world—and even more than that. He transformed altars, gods, religions, ideas, beliefs, and souls. His patience in victory, his ambition entirely devoted to an idea and in no way striving for an empire, his endless prayers, his mystic conversations with God, his death, and his triumph after death—all bear witness to an unshakeable faith. Muhammad was a religious teacher, a social reformer, a moral and spiritual leader, a great administrative force, a faithful friend, a delightful companion, a devoted husband, and an affectionate father. He united all these roles within himself. There is no other man in history who surpasses or equals him in each of these diverse dimensions of life. Only that philanthropic persona could combine such incredible perfections”.

17. Karen Armstrong:

Karen Armstrong is a prominent British non-Muslim author and scholar. Following September 11, 2001, she authored a biography of the Prophet of Islam that became one of the best-selling books in America and Europe. Her primary motivation in writing the work was to defend Islam and enlighten the minds of Western Christians regarding the Prophet of Islam. In the introduction to her book, she writes:

“Most of the Prophet’s efforts were dedicated to preventing brutal confrontations; for the word *Islam*, which denotes submission to God, is etymologically related to *salam*, meaning ‘peace.’ Muhammad was a man of jihad, but he was also a genuine peacemaker; during the peace negotiations with Mecca, he put the lives and faith of his closest companions at stake so that this reconciliation could be achieved without bloodshed. Instead of carnage and massacre, his focus was on negotiation and peace. Knowing the true story of Muhammad’s life at this perilous juncture in human history is essential, and obstinate extremists must not be allowed to exploit the Prophet’s life to their own ends by distorting it. From the account of his life, modern Western humanity has far more important lessons to learn for guidance in this rapidly changing world.”

18. Karl Marx:

“The undeniable truth is that Muhammad was sent to bring a message to the world that encapsulated and surpassed all previous revelations.”

19. Alexandre Dumas:

“Muhammad was the miracle of the East, for his religion contained sublime teachings. His character was outstanding and his conduct exemplary.

This Prophet, whose mission inaugurated an age of learning, light, and knowledge, deserves to have all his words and actions compiled systematically and scientifically. Through his heavenly teachings, he was tasked with purging all the irrational elements,

illusions, and superstitions that ignorant individuals and learned scholars alike had interpolated into prior faiths.

Muhammad was a man who arose with an iron resolve from the midst of an idolatrous people, summoned them to monotheism, and planted within their hearts an immortal spirit. Therefore, he should not only be counted among the great and prominent figures of history, but we ought rightly to acknowledge his prophethood and declare from the depths of our hearts and souls that he is the Messenger of God."

20. Alfred Guillaume:

"Muhammad was one of the greatest historical figures, profoundly immersed in faith in the existence of the One God."

21. Leo Tolstoy:

"There is no doubt that Muhammad is among the greatest men and reformers who rendered a truly monumental service to humanity."

22. Washington Irving:

"He was quick of apprehension, of strong memory, of great shrewdness, and rich in natural talent."

23. Jean-Jacques Rousseau:

"Muhammad had very sound views, and thoroughly unified his political system."

24. Thomas Carlyle:

The Scottish biographical scholar and thinker Carlyle observed regarding the Prophet of Islam in his book **On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History**:

"They called him a Prophet, you say? Why, he stood there face to face with them; bare, not enshrined in any mystery; visibly clouting his own cloak, cobbling his own shoes; fighting, counselling, ordering in the midst of them: they must have seen what kind of a man he was, let him be called what you like! No emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clouting. During three-and-twenty years of rough actual trial, I find something of a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself."

25. John Davenport:

The noted English Islamicist John Davenport wrote in his book **An Apology for Mohammed and the Koran** (London, 1869):

"Writers who, blindly misled by bigotry, have cast obloquy upon the character of the restorer of the worship of the True God, have not only proved that they were destitute of that spirit of Christian charity which they profess to admire, but have also committed a grave error in judgment. With a little reflection, they might have perceived that the Prophet and his teachings ought not to be judged from a Christian standpoint or through European modes of thought, but rather from an Oriental point of view. In other words, Muhammad should be studied and examined as a religious reformer and a legislator appearing in Asia during the seventh Christian century.

In that case, we should undoubtedly commit a great injustice were we not to rank him among the rarest minds and purest geniuses that the world has ever produced, and

acknowledge him as the greatest and most singular figure of whom the continent of Asia may justly boast.

When we consider the condition of the Arabs prior to Muhammad's mission and compare it with their state after his rise, and when we reflect upon the flame of devotion kindled in the hearts of his followers—which has burned with unabated fervor down to our own day—we feel that it would be the height of unfairness to withhold our tribute of praise and veneration from so great and extraordinary a man.”

26. General Sir Percy Sykes:

The noted English writer states in **A History of Persia**:

“In my personal opinion, Muhammad was among the greatest of humankind who, with an exalted purpose, devoted his entire being to demolishing polytheism and idolatry from human minds and establishing the sublime ideals of Islam in their place. The immense and conspicuous service he rendered to humanity through this path is a service that I sincerely praise and before which I bow in deep reverence.”

27. Jawaharlal Nehru:

The former Prime Minister of India writes in his book **Glimpses of World History**:

“Muhammad was in no hurry to publish his message; he lived quietly for a considerable time. He won the wonder and confidence of his fellow citizens, who bestowed upon him the title **al-Amin** (‘the Trustworthy’). He possessed complete faith in himself and in his prophetic mission, and with this profound faith and self-reliance, he provided his people with the instruments of power, honor, and dignity, transforming them from a desert race into masters who conquered half the known world of their day.”

28. Hamilton A. R. Gibb:

Professor Hamilton Gibb of the University of London and Oxford University writes:

“Yet more astonishing than the speed of the conquests was their orderly character through years of warfare. There must have been destruction, but on the whole, the Arabs left few traces of ruin behind them and paved the way for the integration of peoples and cultures.

The structure of law and government that Muhammad bequeathed to his successors, the Caliphs, proved its worth in organizing and controlling the activities of this nomadic army.

Islam did not penetrate the civilized external world as the crude superstition of predatory tribes, but was presented as a moral force commanding universal respect, and as a coherent doctrine capable of challenging Byzantine Christianity and Persian Zoroastrianism—each on its own native soil.”

29. Professor Annemarie Schimmel:

The contemporary German scholar of Islam wrote:

“It is this ideal of emulating Muhammad that has endowed Muslims, from Morocco to Indonesia, with such remarkable uniformity of conduct. Wherever one may be, one knows how to behave upon entering a home, which polite formulas to utter, what to avoid in social company, how to eat, how to travel...

For centuries, Muslim children have been raised in accordance with these customs, and it is only in recent times that this traditional world has begun to disintegrate under the onslaught of modern technological culture.”

30. Reverend Reginald Bosworth Smith, of Harrow School and Oxford University, states:

“Muhammad was both ruler and religious leader; he was Pope and Caesar in one. But he was Pope without Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar: without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a palace, without a fixed public revenue. If ever any man had the right to say that he ruled by a right Divine, it was Mohammed, for he had all the power without its instruments and without its supports.”

31. K. S. Ramakrishna Rao, Indian Professor of Philosophy, states:

“It is exceedingly difficult to grasp the full truth of Muhammad's personality. I can only catch a glimpse of it. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes! There is Muhammad the Prophet, Muhammad the Warrior, Muhammad the Businessman, Muhammad the Statesman, Muhammad the Orator, Muhammad the Reformer, Muhammad the Refuge of Orphans, the Protector of Slaves and the Emancipator of Women, Muhammad the Judge, Muhammad the Saint. In all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is alike, a hero.”

32. Diwan Chand Sharma, the Indian scholar, states in his book **The Prophets of the East** (p. 12):

“Muhammad was the very spirit of kindness, and his influence was felt and never forgotten by those around him. He was neither more nor less than a human being; but he was a person with a sacred mission, whose purpose was to unite humanity in monotheism—the worship of the One and Only God—and to teach the path of humanity and upright faith at the highest plane of life, steadfastly grounded in the commandments of God. He consistently regarded himself as the servant and messenger of God, and all his actions were performed for God.”

33. Michael H. Hart, astrophysicist, author, and historian of science, writes:

“My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.”

34. John B. Noss, the renowned historian of religions, observes:

“Across the entire Islamic world, foundational principles and moral laws are drawn directly from the source of the Qur’an. Muhammad reflected deeply upon the conduct and demeanor of his followers, establishing for them a legal framework that moves clearly and explicitly toward a singular objective: raising their moral and ethical standard. In doing so, he elevated the Arabs from the ancient realm of tribal discord and factionalism to a broad plane of universal brotherhood. Consequently, the conduct of every Muslim, man and woman alike, is directed toward that goal from birth unto death. The ordinances promulgated by the Prophet prohibiting wine and gambling, as well as the laws governing marital relations, constitute rules for social life that elevated the status of women to an exalted station; from the moment of their inception, this great Lawgiver wrought a profound transformation in the lives of his followers.”

35. William Muir, the Scottish scholar and historian, states in his work on the life of Muhammad:

“Muhammad, through the clarity of his message and the ease of his law, stands preeminent among the world’s great figures. Through his monumental achievements, he astonished human minds. History knows no reformer comparable to him who, within so brief a span,

awakened a slumbering humanity, fostered noble character, and endowed knowledge and virtue with such profound value.”

36. Edward Gibbon, the preeminent English historian, states:

“The greatest factor in the Prophet’s success throughout his life and mission was the power of his sincere spiritual connection, not the force of arms or the blow of the sword.”

37. General Konstantin Virgil Gheorghiu [and military commentators] state:

“Contrary to the views of some scholars, from the standpoint of a military specialist, Muhammad was not defeated at the Battle of Uhud; for the Quraysh army neither succeeded in destroying Muhammad’s forces nor managed to occupy Medina, both of which are the primary prerequisites of decisive victory. Rather, Muhammad returned to Medina with an organized force and maintained complete command of the city.

Furthermore, Muhammad’s tactical strategy in the Battle of the Trench (*Khandaq*) astounds not only lay observers but military specialists as well, who marvel at how the Prophet of Islam conceived and executed that battle tactic at the exact opportune moment. In warfare, merely conceiving a tactic is not itself the sole mark of genius; there are many who sit at home drawing battle plans on paper and destroying imaginary foes through tactical maneuvers, yet prove entirely unable to implement any of them in the field when the critical moment arrives.

38. Annie Besant, prominent leader and president of the Indian National Congress, writes:

“It is impossible for anyone who studies the life and character of the great Prophet of Arabia, who knows how he taught and how he lived, to feel anything but reverence for that mighty Prophet, one of the great messengers of the Supreme. I feel what I say; whenever I study him, I find something new to revere, and every time I read about this great Arabian teacher, I feel a fresh admiration rising within me.”



Unity: The Doctrine and Strategy of a Healthy, Developed Society

Unity Week has served, and continues to serve, as an occasion and a framework for revisiting and reflecting—once again, and from a fresh and dynamic perspective—on the fundamental issue of unity within society and the Muslim community as a whole, across religious, sectarian, ethnic, racial, cultural, and even civilizational spheres, and on a macro level.

The auspicious and blessed births of the Seal of the Prophets, Muhammad al-Mustafa (PBUH), and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (PBUH), occurring during this period and coinciding with such a process, further enhance the grandeur, luminosity, and sanctity of this vital subject.

The mission of this eminent Prophet represented the continuation and perpetuation of the monotheistic and humanizing movement initiated by all the great figures of history and the divine prophets. Indeed, it completed their message and heralded humanity's complete liberation from the snares of ignorance, negligence, and oppression. Likewise, the Imamate of Imam al-Sadiq (PBUH) follows the same path of perfection established by that Messenger and constitutes an inexhaustible source of knowledge, wisdom, mysticism, and philosophy, as well as a guide to life, growth, perfection, and development.

Thinkers from both East and West, representing all religions, sects, and civilizations—such as Ibn Khaldun, al-Mufid, al-Tusi, al-Tabrisi, al-Majlisi, Will Durant, Ibn Rushd, Gustave Le

Bon, and others—have spoken of the philosophy, necessity, and comprehensiveness of the aforementioned thesis: a comprehensive and reciprocal doctrine with a single essential center, rooted in divinity and humanity.

Setting aside certain peripheral embellishments and extremes, it must be acknowledged that the energy of all societies, religions, and civilizations derives from truth and reality, and that their orientation and direction are toward humanism in its authentic, genuine, and pure sense.

From the fundamental perspective of religion, science, culture, and the world's intellectual and cultural elites, and from a transreligious, transsectarian, and transcultural standpoint, all people are monotheists before they belong to any sect, religion, school of thought, or civilization; and before the matter of divine oneness and being monotheistic, they are human beings.

The shared humanity of all people, their descent from Adam, the father of humankind (PBUH), and the placement of all creatures, from every part of the world, on a single path toward one sublime human objective are by no means incompatible with the requirements of such an approach, including diverse tastes, methods, competitions, resources, capacities, differences, and mutual assistance.

What gives rise to concern and anxiety is ignorance, negligence, failure to recognize one's enemies, falling into the traps of devils, divisive forces, and opportunists, and, on the other hand, neutralizing one's own energy and disregarding one's immense human and strategic potential.

The divine religions, and especially the noble religion of Islam and the Holy Qur'an, have kept open the path of mutual understanding, dialogue, and active, dynamic diplomacy, except in exceptional circumstances such as the aggression of foreign powers and oppressors, threats to the foundations of unity, territorial integrity, human dignity and honor, and policies of enslavement and exploitation.

The sending of messengers and the revelation of scriptures—whose complete and final manifestation is found in the person of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and in the Qur'an, which elucidates all things—have been and remain aimed at guidance, truth, the eradication of darkness, ignorance, and injustice, the establishment of justice, fairness, and love of truth, the purification of souls, teaching and learning, and human flourishing.

Breaking the chains of ignorance and backwardness from the hands, feet, minds, and hearts of individuals; connecting earth and heaven; gaining access to the inner reality and essence of things and realms of the unseen; transforming this world into the promised paradise; and giving substantive rather than merely formal attention to the developmental dimensions of human life, whose ultimate and final aspect is the Hereafter and the Day of Resurrection—all constitute elements of the prophets' transformative and elevating mission, and, after them, that of the Imams and of peace-loving, reformist, humanitarian, and knowledge-seeking people.

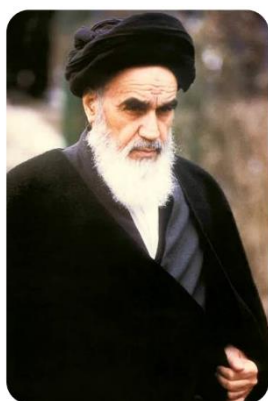
One of the aims and motivations of the prophets and the guiding Imams—including the noble Messenger of Islam (PBUH) and Imam al-Sadiq (PBUH)—was for human beings to become aware of, and attain, the treasure that God has placed within their inner nature and innate disposition. It is therefore no coincidence that the teachings of that Messenger of Mercy, the Holy Qur'an, and the school and university of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (PBUH)

are replete with sciences, knowledge, and wisdom, and indeed were far ahead of their centuries and eras.

The conquest of hearts throughout the world, the spread of Islam and Qur'anic teachings to the farthest corners of the globe, the attraction and devotion of figures such as René Guénon, Gorgio, Gustave Le Bon, and Annemarie Schimmel toward the Prophet and the Qur'an, and the Western scholars' belief that "Muhammad is a prophet who must be rediscovered" all attest to this truth.

Likewise, regarding the greatness and eminence of Imam al-Sadiq (PBUH), the renowned historian Ibn Khallikan writes: "He was one of the Twelve Imams in the Imamiyyah school and among the leading figures of the Prophet's family (PBUH). Because of the truthfulness and integrity of his speech, he was called al-Sadiq. His merit and greatness are too well known to require explanation. Among the Imams, Imam al-Sadiq (PBUH) was unparalleled in his age. ... At that time, an unprecedented intellectual enthusiasm had emerged in Islamic society, and various disciplines had developed, including Islamic sciences such as Qur'anic recitation, exegesis, hadith, jurisprudence, and theology, as well as human sciences such as medicine, philosophy, astronomy, mathematics, and others."

It is hoped that human societies—especially the monotheistic and Muslim community, as well as the dear people of Iran—will witness a genuine and enduring unity, accompanied by growth, development, and perfection across all societies.



The Unity of the Islamic World from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini (RA)

Introduction

Although centuries have passed since the height of Islamic civilization's grandeur, majesty, and glory, many Western thinkers credit Western growth and development to the influence of Islam. Regarding the golden age of Islamic civilization, Martin Kramer notes: "In the year 1000, if one did not know Arabic, one could not claim to possess true knowledge... There is no doubt that Islamic dynasties were the political, military, and economic superpowers of that era. Had there been Nobel Prizes in the year 1000, almost all of them would have gone exclusively to Muslims" (Fuller, 2004: 1). Yet, for a long time, this bright beacon of Islamic civilization has ceased to shine. Are the factors and underlying causes of this decline internal, or have external factors been responsible for the weakening of the Islamic world? Will Islamic civilization remain dormant, or will it awaken?

Arnold Toynbee, the renowned English historian, posits in his book *Civilization on Trial*: "Pan-Islamism is dormant, but if the oppressed of the world rebel against Western domination and unite under a single leadership, this dormant force will awaken. The echoes of such a revolt could prove effective in stirring the Islamic military spirit, and Islam might rise once more to fulfill its historical role" (Velayati, 2005: 217).

Toynbee considers liberation from subjugation and Western domination, along with unified leadership in the Islamic world, as the prerequisites for the revival of this great civilization—a task that can only be achieved through the unity of Muslims. From the perspective of Imam Khomeini (RA), "unity" is both the existential philosophy and the ultimate goal of governments. "The formation of a government is intended to preserve the

order and unity of Muslims; as Hazrat Zahra (AS) states in her sermon, the Imamate exists to preserve order and transform the division of Muslims into unity.” Avoiding discord and adhering to Muslim unity and solidarity are of such paramount importance to Imam Khomeini (RA) that he issued a fatwa stating: “Regarding the two stations [in the Hajj pilgrimage], following the rulings of the Sunni brothers’ judges is necessary and sufficient, even if you are certain that it contradicts your own position” (Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 10, p. 62). From the perspective of Imam Khomeini (RA), “If Islamic governments unite, in the shadow of that unity, they will have no need for anything or any power” (Statements of Imam Khomeini (RA), 1981/12/29).

Section One: The Geographic and Demographic Profile of the Islamic World

Today, the Islamic world consists of approximately sixty independent countries where Muslims comprise more than fifty percent of the population, alongside Muslim minorities in other states, distributed across the globe (Raja, 2011: 40). Out of 192 nations worldwide, Islamic countries currently account for 57 states. In Europe, prior to the breakup of Yugoslavia, Albania was the only Muslim-majority European state. Over 70 percent of its population is Muslim, and owing to its distinct geographic, economic, and political position, it has historically drawn the attention of various colonial powers and major states (Amirdehi, 2005: 142). Following the dissolution of Yugoslavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a population of 4.5 million—44 percent of whom are Muslim—became the second European Muslim country (Goli Zavareh, 1993: 518).

In Asia, out of 39 Asian countries, 21 are considered Islamic states. The largest and most populous Asian Islamic country is Indonesia, with a population of 222 million and an area of 2,042,024 square kilometers (Naseri Davoodi, 2005), while the smallest is the Maldives, with an area of 289 square kilometers. The total area of Islamic countries in Asia stands at 10,163,965 square kilometers, which increases to 14,231,960 square kilometers when including the newly independent states of Central Asia. In Africa, out of 58 African countries, aside from Egypt—which gained independence in 1922—19 other nations achieved independence during the 1950s and 1960s. The total land area of these 20 African nations is 15,678,191 square kilometers, with the Comoros being the smallest at 1,797 square kilometers and Sudan the largest at 2,505,812 square kilometers. Consequently, the Islamic world covers a substantial portion of the globe geographically. It spans roughly 11,000 kilometers longitudinally from the westernmost point in North Africa to the Indonesian island of Java, and approximately 6,000 kilometers latitudinally from northern Kazakhstan to southern Sudan (Asgari, 2008).

Islamic lands lie between 20 degrees West (from the Greenwich Meridian) and 140 degrees East longitude, and between 10 degrees South and 50 degrees North latitude relative to the Equator. The westernmost Islamic country is Senegal in West Africa, while the easternmost is Indonesia in Southeast Asia. There is a time difference of more than ten hours between the westernmost and easternmost Muslim nations. Turkey and Albania are the northernmost Muslim states, whereas Indonesia is the southernmost, as well as the only Asian Islamic country situated largely in the Southern Hemisphere. Among Islamic nations, countries such as Indonesia, Bahrain, Malaysia, the Maldives, and the Comoros possess insular or archipelagic geography. In contrast, states such as Afghanistan, Burkina

Faso, Chad, and Mauritania are landlocked without direct access to the sea. The total surface area of the Islamic world exceeds 26 million square kilometers (Goli Zavareh, 1993: 61).

Among the world's major landmasses, Asia accounts for 65 percent of the global Muslim population. Twenty-five percent of Muslims reside in Arab nations, and 10 percent in Africa. Indonesia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan alone make up more than 40 percent of the Islamic world's inhabitants (ibid., 69). Indonesia is the most populous Islamic country, while the Maldives has the smallest population. The average population density of Islamic countries is approximately 103 people per square kilometer, with the highest in Bangladesh at 774 people per square kilometer and the lowest in the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (ibid., 69). The total population of the Islamic world is estimated at more than 1.2 billion people (Asgari, 2008).

Section Two: Unity in Islam

A) The Concept of Unity in the Qur'an

The "unity" of the Islamic community means the realization of Islamic solidarity across the entirety of the Ummah and throughout the Muslim world, such that it ultimately heralds the formation of a single Islamic community: "And indeed, this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so fear Me" (Surah Al-Mu'minun, Verse 52).

In religious thought, unity never implies setting aside different schools of thought. Rather, Islamic unity entails employing the instruments necessary to realize a single Ummah as an ultimate ideal across Muslim societies and throughout the Islamic world: "And hold fast to Allah; He is your protector—an excellent protector and an excellent helper" (Surah Al-Hajj, Verse 78). Therefore, conceptually, in terms of methodology and implementation, Islamic unity encompasses all decision-making, policymaking, adoption of unified approaches, utilization of shared capacities, and strategies whose ultimate outcome is the realization of solidarity within the Islamic Ummah. For this reason, God states: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided" (Surah Al 'Imran, Verse 103).

From the perspective of Qur'anic verses, the solidarity of the Islamic Ummah is a religious and Islamic unity, serving as the method and means for realizing divine purposes and religious objectives. Furthermore, the Qur'an regards division and discord in religion, along with the disintegration of the Ummah's cohesion, as fundamentally incompatible with establishing the true faith and the monotheistic order, proclaiming: "Establish the religion and do not become divided therein" (Surah Ash-Shura, Verse 13). On the other hand, it severely reproaches and condemns those who sow discord or fail to foster unity among the Islamic community, likening them to earlier nations that reverted to division after receiving divine guidance and thereby deserved great punishment: "And do not be like those who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them; for those there will be a great punishment" (Surah Al 'Imran, Verse 105).

Accordingly, unity is a deeply desirable imperative from a religious standpoint, repeatedly emphasized and enjoined, such that the very establishment of religion depends upon the

cohesion of the Islamic Ummah. Within the realm of Islamic governance, Muslim societies, and Islamic nations, this cohesion is termed "political unity" (Fooladi, 2008: 77–78).

B) Islamic Unity from the Perspective of Imam Khomeini (RA)

Imam Khomeini (RA) explains the meaning of Islamic unity and the possibility of its realization as follows: when the adherents of capitalism and communism unite despite their profound contradictions, and when Jews and Christians overlook their minor differences, then you too must stand in a single rank to defend your Islam (see: Sahifeh-ye Imam).

Imam Khomeini (RA) regards unity as a "source of power" and division as a cause for the "weakening of the foundations of faith," warning that "the current division among Muslim nations stems either from the betrayal of the leaders of Islamic states or from their ignorance and lack of awareness" (see: *ibid.*, Vol. 4, pp. 232–233). "Sunni and Shi'a are not the issue in Islam; Kurd and Persian are not the issue; in Islam, we are all brothers together" (*ibid.*, Vol. 9, pp. 419–420). "One group of Muslims is Shi'a and another is Sunni; one group is Hanafi, another Hanbali, and another Akhbari... In a society where everyone seeks to serve Islam and exist for Islam, these matters should not be raised. We are all brothers and we stand together; ... these are not grounds for division. We must not have disputes or conflicts with one another. Shi'a and Sunni brothers must avoid any discord. Today, division among us benefits only those who believe neither in the Shi'a school nor in the Hanafi school nor in any other denomination; they want neither this nor that to exist, and they see the path to this goal in sowing discord between you and us. We must bear in mind that we are all Muslims, all people of the Qur'an and monotheism, and we must strive and serve for the sake of the Qur'an and monotheism" (*ibid.*, Vol. 13, p. 54).

Elsewhere, he states: "Muslims must act in accordance with Islamic teachings, preserve their solidarity, and abandon the discord and conflict that lead to their defeat" (*ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 323). According to Imam Khomeini (RA), "The day this unity is lost will mark the death of us all, the forfeiture of all sacred sanctities, and the destruction of all the labors of the prophets (peace be upon them) regarding our own country and other nations" (*ibid.*, Vol. 17, p. 406).

"If, God willing, that unity among Muslims and the governments of Islamic states—which God Almighty and His exalted Messenger have demanded, commanded, and emphasized—is achieved, Islamic governments, backed by their nations, can possess a trained reserve defense force of over one hundred million and an active standing army of tens of millions under their banner, thereby attaining the greatest power in the world" (*ibid.*, Vol. 18, p. 94). In his view, "We are in need of unity across long years, always. The Glorious Qur'an, which commanded us and commanded all Muslims to unite, did not do so for one year, ten years, or a hundred years; it is for the entire world throughout all history. And we must practically realize this unity" (*ibid.*, Vol. 19, p. 436). "It is religious unity that creates this immense and cohesive gathering. If you care for the independence of Iran, maintain religious unity" (*ibid.*, Vol. 1, p. 248).

The importance of unity for Imam Khomeini (RA) is so paramount that he declared: "We are ready under all circumstances to defend Islam, Islamic nations, and the independence

of Islamic states. Our program is the program of Islam: the solidarity of Muslims, the union of Islamic countries, brotherhood with all Muslim denominations across the world, and alliance with all Islamic governments throughout the globe" (ibid., p. 336).

"The rulers of Islam bear an immense responsibility, perhaps greater than all other classes. Islam has now been entrusted—by the existential decree of God, Blessed and Exalted—into the hands of this class, and they are responsible for preserving Islam, preserving the solidarity of Islam, safeguarding Islamic rulings, and presenting Islam to the world" (ibid., Vol. 2, p. 30). The only path to reclaiming the grandeur, dignity, and glory of the Islamic worldview and Muslims, and the duty of safeguarding unity and religious brotherhood, is the sole guarantor of the independence of Islamic territories (see: Sahifeh-ye Imam). According to the Imam, "The secret of the Muslims' victory in early Islam was unity of expression and unity of faith" (see: ibid., Vol. 8, p. 444).

Obstacles to the Realization of Islamic Unity

1 .Distancing from Pure Islam

Imam Khomeini (RA) identifies the core challenges of the Islamic world as estrangement from authentic Islam, disregard for Qur'anic teachings, the infiltration of colonialist culture, the subjugation of Islamic states and their rulers, alienation from Islamic realities and practical religious observance, the lack of international understanding among Muslim nations, the subservience of Muslim governments, and the intervention of major world powers. If Muslim states and nations overcome these obstacles and crises, they will be able to forge a formidable global power known as the Islamic world—an entity that can only come into being through unity (Isania, 2006: 106). This requires unity and brotherhood with diverse Muslim groups and denominations alongside Islamic governments to combat global imperialist regimes and Zionist Israel (Dastani, 2001: 57).

According to the Imam (RA), the root cause of the Islamic world's manifold crises is that we do not practice Islam, and the Muslim world fails to implement its teachings (In Search of the Path from the Imam's Words, Vol. 15, 1983: 6). Thus, the only path to the Islamic world's salvation is practical adherence to Islam. From his perspective, "The greatest affliction of Muslim societies is that they have not yet grasped the true philosophy of many divine rulings, and the Hajj pilgrimage, with all its profound mystery and grandeur, has remained a dry ritual and a sterile, fruitless endeavor" (ibid., 67). Imam Khomeini (RA) attributes the misfortune of the Islamic world to the fact that these Islamic states consider themselves followers of Islam, yet there is no trace of the true faith—an Islam whose Qur'an explicitly forbids the world's hegemonic powers and disbelievers from dominating Muslims (ibid., 62). "...Nations must return to early Islam; if governments return alongside their peoples, there will be no issue, but if they do not, nations must separate their path from these regimes" (ibid., 20–21).

From Imam Khomeini's perspective, the sole remedy for the afflictions of Muslim societies is the revival of "Pure Muhammadan Islam." Pure Islam unifies Muslims regardless of race, language, or ethnicity. "Pure Muhammadan Islam is the Islam of the suffering poor, the barefoot, the oppressed throughout the bitter and shameful history of deprivation; the destroyer of modern capitalism and bloodthirsty communism; the annihilator of the Islam

of luxury and affluence, eclectic Islam, the Islam of compromise and degradation, the Islam of the indifferent wealthy—in a word, American Islam" (In Search of the Path from the Imam's Words, Vol. 14, 1983: 340). In Imam Khomeini's thought, Pure Islam is a comprehensive theoretical and practical framework endowed with absolute richness, offering precise and exhaustive programs for human life (Collected Works of the Conference on Imam Khomeini's Jurisprudential Foundations, Vol. 13, 1995: 45).

2 .Autocratic, Despotic, and Dependent Governments in Muslim Nations

Despotic regimes and governments in Muslim countries subvert freedom, conflict with the interests of the people, and—being dependent and anti-popular—constitute the primary barrier to unified, alignment-seeking movements that serve the welfare of the Islamic world. Consequently, liberation from the yoke of oppressive regimes is a fundamental pillar of Imam Khomeini's political theory of unity. "Overthrowing the Taghut—the illegitimate powers established across the Islamic homeland—is the duty of us all. Tyrannical and anti-popular state apparatuses must yield to public service institutions administered in accordance with Islamic law, thereby steadily establishing Islamic governance" (In Search of the Path from the Imam's Words, Vol. 1, 1983: 186).

According to Imam Khomeini (RA), because these governments are not elected by the people, they show no regard for the principle of unity, since "if the rulers of Islamic countries were true representatives of the faithful and executors of Islamic ordinances, they would set aside petty differences, desist from sabotage and divisiveness, and stand united as a single hand." Due to their estrangement from their own populations, autocratic governments routinely rely on foreign hegemonies to consolidate their domestic power; hence, rather than serving their people, they serve their foreign patrons.

Relying on foreign powers and trusting them leads to humiliation, inflames ethnic and racial chauvinism, and results in domestic strife (Mavathaqi, 1999: 309).

The existence of autocratic regimes and the absence of modern and traditional democratic institutions have paved the way for the rise of violent Salafi movements in the Islamic world, particularly in recent decades. The autocracies of Kemal Atatürk in Turkey, Reza Khan in Iran, Ayub Khan in Pakistan, Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt, the House of Saud in Saudi Arabia, and Sukarno in Indonesia are examples of despotism that have heightened the appeal of radical and fundamentalist paths (Houshang, 2010: 195). Most countries in the Islamic world, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, suffer from a lack of political legitimacy. The ruling elites' lack of trust and reliance on their own populations on the one hand, coupled with suspicion toward their Muslim neighbors on the other, has driven these leaders to resort to extra-regional and global powers to ensure their political survival. This political dependence has generated numerous bilateral and multilateral pacts between these countries and global hegemonic powers—treaties and alliances that entail binding commitments. These very constraints and obligations have deprived Muslim nations of the capacity for autonomous political and economic decision-making. Consequently, Muslim states adopt disparate political trajectories toward international issues and fail to reach consensus on shared political concerns, including the unity of the Islamic world. Overall, the diverse dependencies of Islamic governments on

world powers, both past and present, have provided fertile ground for foreign intervention, the widening of rifts, and the fragmentation of the Islamic world, fostering instability, conflict, rivalry, and an increasing reliance on non-Muslim states (Hafeznia and Zarghani, 2012: 150).

Drawing upon the concept of the "balance of power," Richard Little (1985) outlines three types of states: 1) integrated; 2) fragmented; and 3) chaotic or anarchic. Integrated states are relatively strong polities where power is legitimately and exclusively maintained with popular support, or at least without active opposition. Fragmented states base their power on domination rather than consensus. Finally, the chaotic state is extremely weak, characterized by fragmented power and severely ineffective legitimacy, such that no group can exercise control over the central government, effectively placing these countries in a state of civil war (Buzan, 1983: 21–22).

In the wake of September 11 and the formulation of the U.S. National Security Strategy in September 2002, the concept of "failed states" came into sharp focus for the U.S. government, which designated them a threat to the United States (Carment, 2003: 407). Currently, U.S. security strategy remains focused on failed states; therefore, these nations will continue to serve as focal points of crisis across the Islamic world, with additional states potentially sliding into this security abyss.

In practice, this evokes a new face of imperialist tendencies in the foreign policy behavior of the United States after September 11, 2001 (Bilgin and Morton, 2002: 89)—an effort designed to portray America as a "benevolent empire" whose sole aim is to preserve the interests of the international order (Kagan, 1998: 24–34). Consequently, the pursuit of these policies by the United States will perpetuate divergence across the Islamic world. Today, the political, social, and cultural environment of these regimes has given rise to crises in whose deliberate escalation the West plays an active role (Eivazi, 2008: 171–172).

In terms of democracy, the Islamic world remains in a precarious condition. According to the 2008 Economist Democracy Index, only Malaysia and Indonesia ranked among the top seventy democratic countries. Singapore ranked 82nd, while Palestine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Turkey ranked 85th, 86th, and 87th, respectively. Pakistan stood at 109, Egypt at 119, Afghanistan at 138, Sudan at 146, and Saudi Arabia at 161 out of 167 evaluated nations—a particularly striking reality in the cases of Egypt and Saudi Arabia (Economist, 2008).

3 .Internal Conflicts within Muslim Countries

Another challenge confronting the Islamic world is the emergence of internal disputes. These conflicts can be broadly categorized into three groups:

- .1Ethnic, tribal, and sectarian conflicts;
- .2Disputes arising from the presence of religious, racial, and linguistic minorities;
- .3Political and ideological conflicts.

Regarding this issue, the Supreme Leader states:

"Today in the Muslim world, the greatest danger threatening us is division... This is precisely the point where the Zionists and Americans suffer harm, and they have directed all their efforts against it. Ethnic, religious, sectarian, political, and territorial disputes are all instigated by enemies. The underlying grounds for such disputes existed among ourselves, but we showed negligence and failed to eradicate those grounds; they then capitalized on the Muslim Ummah's negligence, exacerbating these differences and setting us against one another."

(Address in a meeting with participants of the Islamic World Conference, December 23, 1997)

A major portion of territorial and border disputes across the Islamic world is the sinister legacy of the era of colonial domination, remaining like a festering wound that prevents political healing. The existence of these political wounds across the Middle East and North Africa steadily drains the vitality of Muslim nations.

Owing to the decisive role of colonial powers in demarcating the borders of Muslim states and the imposed nature of most of these boundaries, many Islamic nations find themselves locked in territorial and border disputes with one another.

The Persian Gulf region, as the most sensitive part of the Islamic world, faces numerous such issues. The maritime borders of most countries in the region remain undefined and unfinalized. Territorial and border disputes between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the UAE and Oman, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Yemen, among others, continue unresolved (Jafari Valdani, 1995: 13).

Some of these disputes are utilized to distract public opinion and undermine efforts toward solidarity. The territorial ambitions of the United Arab Emirates regarding parts of Iranian soil (the three islands) fall into this category, generating unrealistic rhetoric and destroying the grounds for convergence in bilateral and regional relations. The United Arab Emirates has territorial and border disputes with most of its neighbors (Asgari, 2003: 190).

Notable territorial disputes include the conflict between Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Abu Dhabi over the Buraimi Oasis, Iraq's past claims regarding Kuwait, and the UAE's claims to the three Iranian islands. Other examples include disputes among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq over the utilization of the Euphrates River waters; riparian conflicts in the Jordan River basin involving Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the occupying regime of Jerusalem over water resources; and Egypt's disputes with Sudan and Ethiopia in the Nile basin. Accordingly, the persistence of border and territorial disputes remains a significant driver of divergence and disunity across the Islamic world (Hafeznia and Zarghani, 2012: 148).

4 .Extreme Nationalism

The secular ideology of nationalism succeeded in compartmentalizing and dividing the Islamic world, yet achieved nothing in creating authentic identity and meaning for the detached nations. As Hisham Sharabi observed, "the idea of nationalism refers to a set of non-religious values and political goals opposed to Islamism and Ottomanism" (Sharabi, 1990: 120). According to Sharabi, purely non-religious nationalism, due to its rigid

insistence on secular principles, "remained outside the mainstream of political life" (ibid., 122)

Many key Turkish and Arab nationalist leaders had no ties to Islam or faith in Islamic doctrine; Turkish nationalists were often Russian Jews or non-Muslim Turks from Russia, just as the proponents of ethnic and linguistic nationalism in Arab lands were Lebanese Christians opposed to Islamic unity. Exploiting these figures, colonial powers erected walls of nationalism around Muslim states. By reviving and glorifying ancient pre-Islamic civilizations—such as the Pharaonic heritage in Egypt, Phoenician and Assyrian roots in Iraq and Syria, Turanian myths in Turkey, Arab tribalism in Arabic-speaking lands, and ancient Persian identity in Iran—and by promoting various sects and ideologies such as Marxism, Freemasonry, Qadianism, Baha'ism, Kasravism, Shaykhism, and Wahhabism, they fueled the flames of discord among Muslim countries, shattering their cohesion through internal conflict (Hafeznia and Zarghani, 2012: 146).

Nationalism became one of the decisive factors obstructing the unity of the Islamic world. In essence, nationalism is a conceptual framework within a political community formed on the basis of shared culture, language, customs, traditions, and blood, racial, or tribal affiliations. At times, nationalism is rooted in racial and ethnic supremacy—termed chauvinism or ultranationalism—which can give rise to deviant nations, but also division and discord among Arab countries themselves (Velayati and Saeid Mohammadi, 2010: 172). With the defeat of Pan-Arabism in the 1967 War and the waning influence of nationalist and leftist ideologies across Muslim lands, Islamism emerged as a powerful alternative across Middle Eastern and Arab public opinion (Attarzadeh, 2012: dismantle it).

After World War II, while transnational tendencies were growing among European states, Islamic countries sought to strengthen nationalism and mobilize domestic forces to counter colonialism. This spurred the decolonization process across Asia and Africa, leading to the rise of independent nation-states. Unlike the first trend toward unity and deeper convergence, the second was separatist and independence-oriented due to excessive nationalism, ultimately undermining the process of integration (Moghtader, 1991: 74–82).

Most Middle Eastern Arab states fell into this trap under the alluring banner of Arab nationalism. The outcome was not only the exclusion of non-Arab Muslim nations, but also division and discord among Arab countries themselves (Velayati and Saeid Mohammadi, 2010: 172). With the defeat of Pan-Arabism in the 1967 War and the waning influence of nationalist and leftist ideologies across Muslim lands, Islamism emerged as a powerful alternative across Middle Eastern and Arab public opinion (Attarzadeh, 2012: 156). Inspired by the Islamic Revolution of Iran, alternative Islamic movements gained a wave of self-confidence, realizing they could act as a potent force to confront adversaries and establish state power (Ahmadi, 2002). The rise of Islamist groups alongside the decline of Pan-Arabism brought them to the regional forefront while alienating the United States from these movements. The developments of the 1960s and 1970s disillusioned American policymakers regarding Islamists and led to the U.S. double standard on democracy across Muslim states, confronting Washington with the paradox of democracy (Gerges, 1999).

5 .Western Hostility toward Islam

In January 1996, Ellen C. Cillino, in an article published in The New York Times entitled “The Red Danger Is Gone; the Islamic Danger Has Arrived,” warned readers to view Islam as a “green threat” endangering Arab interests (Said, 2008: 19). In Fukuyama’s words:

“Islam is a systematic and lucid ideology, possessing ethical principles and a distinct worldview concerning political and social justice. Islam potentially has universal appeal because, from the perspective of this religion, all human beings are equal. Indeed, Islam has defeated liberal democracy in much of its own world and constitutes a new threat to liberal systems, even within countries where Islam does not occupy the apex of political power.”

(Marden, 2000: 24)

Huntington argues:

“So long as Islam remains Islam—which it will—and the West remains the West—which is more doubtful—the fundamental conflict between these two civilizations and ways of life will continue to define their future relations, as it has done for the past fourteen centuries.”

(Berger, 2001: 129)

According to Huntington’s logic, international relations in the future will no longer be structured around the current nation-state model, but rather around relations among cultures and civilizations. Instead of approximately two hundred contemporary political units, there will be seven or eight cultural blocs: Western, Hindu, Confucian, Japanese, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and possibly African (Eftekhari, 2007: 23–24).

The cultural confrontation, particularly between the West and Muslims, intensified and accelerated following the events of September 11, 2001. Seeking a cultural “other” and a threat through which it could pursue its interests and security calculations in critical regions of the world, the West repeatedly promoted the notions of Islamism and Islamic fundamentalism. This trend was advanced through the framework of “Islamic fundamentalism” and even more inflammatory labels, such as “Islamic terrorism,” in order to portray the struggle against the Islamic world and Islamic fundamentalism as a more tangible necessity for confronting a threat to the interests of the capitalist order and the process of globalization.

Cheryl Benard, a researcher at the National Security Research Division of the RAND Corporation, classifies Islamic groups into four distinct categories:

.1Fundamentalists: They are regarded as the West’s most uncompromising enemies, especially of the United States, and are alleged to seek the destruction of democratic modernity. Any occasional Western support for them is not a strategic option but merely a temporary tactical consideration.

.2Traditionalists: They are described as holding moderate attitudes and perspectives. Nevertheless, substantial differences exist among the various traditionalist groups. Some are closer to the fundamentalists, but none are considered to possess a deep commitment to modern democracy, modern culture, or the values of modernity. Even under the most

optimistic assessment, engagement with them can only proceed as a cautious and troubling step.

.3Modernists: In terms of values and political orientation, they are viewed as the group closest to the West.

.4Secularists: Like modernists, they are considered the closest group to the West in terms of values and policy orientations. However, their position is weaker than that of other groups because they lack a strong social base, financial resources, effective institutional infrastructure, and a coherent overarching strategy.

Secularists are not always accepted even as allies with the capacity to foster broad ideological acceptance; moreover, they have an uneasy and strained relationship with the traditional segment of Muslim audiences (p. 63).

D) Strategies for Fostering Unity among Muslims

1. Focusing on Common Grounds

According to Imam Khomeini:

"One group of Muslims is Shia and another is Sunni; one group is Hanafi, another is Hanbali, and yet another is Akhbari. Essentially, raising this issue from the outset was incorrect. In a society where everyone seeks to serve Islam and exist for Islam, these matters should not be brought forward. We are all brothers and stand together; it is merely that your scholars issued decrees on certain matters and you followed your scholars, thereby becoming Hanafi, while another group acted upon the decrees of al-Shafi'i, and another group acted upon the decrees of Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) and thus became Shia. These are not grounds for division. We must not have discord or opposition among ourselves; we are all brothers. Shia and Sunni brothers must avoid any form of division. Today, discord among us benefits only those who believe neither in the Shia school nor in the Hanafi school, and so forth. They desire neither this nor that to exist, and they see the means to achieve this in fomenting discord between you and us. We must recognize that we are all Muslims, all adherents of the Quran and people of Tawhid (monotheism), and we must strive and labor for the Quran and Tawhid."

(*Sahifeh-ye Imam*, Vol. 13, p. 54)

Imam Khomeini further states:

"If these Islamic governments—governments that possess everything, governments endowed with abundant resources—were to unite with one another, under the shadow of unity they would have no need for anything, any country, or any foreign power. Need arises only when they are fragmented as they are now, when countries are isolated from one another. Why should countries that possess such immense support—namely the Noble Quran, cherished Islam, and God Almighty—why should they cause division in the face of cherished Islam, when such support constantly invites them to unity and forbids them from factionalism and discord?"

(*Dar Jostojou-ye Rah az Kalam-e Imam*, Vol. 15, 1983: 41–42)

2. Unity in Diversity

Imam Khomeini does not advocate for the physical merger or dissolution of sovereign states; rather, he maintains that each country, while preserving its territorial integrity and sovereign borders, must strive toward the unification of purpose and voice (Tawhid al-Kalimah):

..." They should extend the hand of brotherhood, preserve their borders and frontiers, and safeguard their sovereign limits; however, within the overarching Islamic community shared by all, in the creed of Tawhid shared by all, and in the Islamic interests shared by all, they must achieve unity of word. If they unite in purpose, the Zionists will no longer covet Palestine, nor will Hindu extremists covet Kashmir... If there is unity of word, how could this handful of plundering Zionists wrest your Palestine from your hands?"

(Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 3, p. 44)

Elsewhere, he remarked:

" Let each maintain its sovereign borders intact, yet stand united in word against that external enemy that inflicts such harm upon you."

(Ibid.)

3. Establishment of an Islamic Government

The establishment of an Islamic government constitutes one of the practical measures toward creating unity and solidarity. In this regard, Imam Khomeini states:

" To secure the unity of the Islamic Ummah, and to liberate the homeland of Islam from the control and influence of imperialists and their puppet regimes, we have no alternative but to establish a government. In order to realize the unity and liberation of Muslim nations, we must overthrow tyrannical and puppet regimes, and subsequently establish a just Islamic government at the service of the people. The establishment of governance is intended to maintain order and preserve the unity of Muslims, just as Lady Fatimah al-Zahra (s.a.) declared in her sermon that leadership (Imamah) is established to safeguard order and transform the disunity of Muslims into cohesion."

(Imam Khomeini, Velayat-e Faqih: 27; Saadat, 2008: 171)

4. Emphasizing the Role of Nations in Achieving Unity

Following disillusionment with ruling regimes, the second approach in Imam Khomeini's strategy was anchored in the centrality of the popular masses. In this phase, the Imam emphasized the potent power of the people. The most prominent feature of this approach lay in shifting the overarching strategy from "reformist" to "revolutionary." Imam Khomeini reached the conviction that reformist struggle had to be transformed into revolutionary struggle, wherein the masses would assume the primary role:

" The nations must take the initiative for Islam themselves. We have lost hope in the vast majority of the rulers of Muslims; however, the nations themselves must take action, and we are not hopeless regarding them."

(Dar Jostojou-ye Rah az Kalam-e Imam, Vol. 15, 1983: 179)

" I advise Muslim nations to take inspiration from the government of the Islamic Republic and the striving nation of Iran, and to put their tyrannical regimes firmly in their place if they refuse to bow to the will of the people... For the root of Muslims' misfortunes lies in governments subservient to the East and the West."

(Imam Khomeini, The Last Will and Testament: 13)

5. Focus on the Issue of al-Quds and Palestine

By designating the last Friday of the holy month of Ramadan as "International Quds Day" and the "Day of Islam," Imam Khomeini demonstrated his particular concern for the affairs of Muslims and established a pivotal turning point for unity among the Muslims of the world—a commemoration whose stature and majesty continue to grow year after year.

Regarding this, he stated:

" Quds Day is the Day of Islam. Quds Day is the day on which Islam must be revived, and we must revive it, and the laws of Islam must be implemented across Islamic countries. Quds Day is the day we must warn all superpowers that Islam will no longer remain under your hegemony through the agency of your corrupt minions."

(Sahifeh-ye Imam, Vol. 9, p. 277)

Fathi Shafaqi, a prominent Palestinian leader, stated that it was the Iranian Revolution that opened a new era for the Palestinian movement, causing the Palestinian cause to be viewed exclusively through an Islamic lens (Ebrahim Shafaqi, 1992: 123). The Islamic Revolution fostered a renewed understanding of Islam and the Quran throughout the world, across Islamic societies, and within the predominantly Sunni society of Palestine. It intensified opposition to corrupt and oppressive regimes, stimulated open struggle against imposed anti-religious doctrines, invigorated efforts toward social equality and justice, expanded the Muslim response against Western dominance and Westernization, and dispelled the despair of the late 1970s from the arena of struggle. In essence, the Iranian Revolution transmitted the reality that Islam is the solution and jihad is the primary vehicle to lands resisting arrogance, particularly Muslim nations (Kadivar, 1995: 97).

Conclusion

At present, the Islamic world possesses a set of heterogeneous geopolitical characteristics. If the challenges confronting the unity of the Islamic world are properly managed, controlled, and mitigated, it could lead to the revival of the past glory and grandeur of Islamic civilization within the global geometry of power. Although the dependency of these regimes on the West currently constitutes the most significant obstacle to Islamic unity, one must not overlook the major and prominent role of certain regional powers, such as the Islamic Republic of Iran, in strengthening Islamic unity.

Similarly, although Saudi Arabia has adopted policies that go beyond rivalry and even into conflict with the Islamic Revolution in order to prevent the Islamic Republic of Iran from becoming the preeminent regional power—an objective concretely manifested in comprehensive financial and military support for Salafi and Takfiri groups in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and elsewhere—it seems that, in the long run, due to its failure to achieve this goal, it will moderate some of its policies. Due to its regional standing and influence, as well as the presence of the holy sanctuaries of Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia commands special attention across the Islamic world; if its hostile policies toward the Islamic Republic of Iran continue, divergence within the Islamic world will intensify, leading to its polarization or fragmentation. The role of the Islamic world's intellectual, political, and governmental elites in altering this unholy trajectory—which merely serves Zionist interests—is undeniable. The Saudis themselves must realize that fostering extremist Takfiri movements will not remain confined to insecurity in other Muslim nations and the massacre of Shias; rather, the repercussions of this insecurity will soon engulf allied states and even Saudi Arabia itself. Another challenge facing the Islamic world in realizing unity is the absence of unified leadership, as vividly demonstrated by the disparate and contradictory stances of the leaders of Islamic countries regarding regional and international developments.

It appears that the time has come to establish an Islamic theorization center, centered on the Islamic Republic of Iran and in cooperation with the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), to formulate Islamic and indigenous models aimed at addressing the needs of Islamic nations, strengthening convergence, and fostering Islamic unity by drawing upon academic, religious, and seminary elites. At present, Western models and foundations of development still prevail across Islamic countries. The Islamic Revolution of Iran, which called the foundations of Western development into question, introduced a new paradigm of development: namely, that social development does not necessitate recourse to Western models. In the words of Giddens, whereas the overarching global trajectory was moving toward secularization and the marginalization of religion, with the Islamic Revolution of Iran we are witnessing the exact opposite: the global trend has reversed course and is moving toward religionization (Giddens, 1995: 75). Consequently, the Middle East is now recognized more as the "Islamic World" than by designations such as the "Eastern World" or the "Developing World".

The Islamic Revolution introduced the discourse of the "Islamic World" into the global geometry of power, to the extent that the term "Islamic World" has also become commonplace in Western political literature, whereas two or three decades ago, it was a forgotten concept within secular political discourse (Mahdaviadegan, 2005: 208). To safeguard its identity, the Islamic world has no alternative but to unite and turn toward the "universal principles and doctrines of Islam," which take precedence over nationalism. The foundation of unity for the Islamic Ummah is neither a common enemy nor the West, but rather "Islam" itself (Khan-Mohammadi, 2006: 16).



Mirza Khalil Kamareh-i and the Model of Islamic Convergence

Undoubtedly, while Islam rejects blood and racial ties as the criteria for unity among human societies and establishes the foundation of unity upon the principle of Tawhid (monotheism), fragmentation and division arising from geographic expanse, territorial diversity, sectarianism, divergent rational, theological, jurisprudential, and mystical opinions among scholars, local cultures and traditions, and unprecedented confrontations with secularism and foreign consumerist cultures have inflicted excessive ruin upon the body of Muslim societies.

Nevertheless, every Muslim aspires to see the flames of war and hypocrisy extinguished among them, and to attain power and dignity under the banner of Islamic unity. Accordingly, formulating a theory of unity and presenting a model for its realization is of strategic importance. Theorizing for Islamic unity is, in reality, theorizing for the attainment of development, Islamic identity, and the restoration of the sovereignty of Islam. One of the central issues engaging most of these theorists has been analyzing the causes of Western hegemony, the relations of foreign powers with Islamic countries, foreign economic and financial penetration, and ways to prevent this dominance.

The importance of theorization in the domain of unity becomes even more evident when considering modern scholarship, where works such as Aziz al-Azmeh's *Islams and Modernities* (1993) are regarded among intellectuals as deconstructive; such studies altogether deny the role of Islam, or even its capacity, as a unifying doctrine.

Al-Azmeh refuses to recognize Islam as a unifying category in historical or cultural terms. In his view, such a notion is grounded in an essentialist discourse that fosters assumptions of fixed Oriental characteristics, as essentialism has permeated Islamic studies.

In contrast to foreign efforts or sectarian elements that have fueled division among Muslims, reformers across the Islamic world have demonstrated a keen commitment to Muslim convergence. Although the convergence models they advanced differed and yielded diverse outcomes, unity theorists can be categorized according to their modeling approaches into several groups:

- *The Comprehensive Political Model*: The prominent exemplar of this trend is Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi (al-Afghani) and his disciple, Sheikh Muhammad Abduh. This theory posits that the awakening of Muslims, the achievement of unity, and the acquisition of political power depend on dismantling despotism within Islamic lands and fostering convergence in their political affairs within international interactions.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi must be regarded as one of the pioneers of convergence in the Islamic world over the past century. He took the initial step through the publication of *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa* and subsequent measures by articulating the issue of Islamic union (*Ittihad-e Islam*), after which other models emerged. A central question confronted all of them: What is the unifying factor in the Islamic world? In other words, what factor causes the Islamic community and the *Dar al-Islam* (Abode of Islam)—despite political fragmentation, theological disputes, and ethnic distinctions—to exhibit a pronounced conception of the unity of the Islamic Ummah in Muslim minds and conduct?

According to Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi, the decline of Muslim societies is a historical and internal phenomenon, with imperialism serving as the sustaining cause (*'illat-i mubqiyah*) of this decline rather than its originating cause (*'illat-i mujidah*). He identified internal despotism and foreign imperialism as the most fundamental afflictions of the Islamic world, actively combating both. He cautioned Muslims against turning to Western doctrines while championing the preservation and dissemination of Islamic religious and moral values. He identified superstition, sectarian division, and Western penetration as the primary ills of his era. He advocated equipping society with modern sciences and technologies, returning to early Islam, holding firm faith in the Islamic creed, upholding human dignity, and rejecting blind obedience, ancestral imitation, and detached abstract speculation.

Sayyid Jamal maintained that the very survival of Eastern nations depended on the acquisition of knowledge. He urged the Khedive of Egypt to involve the people in governance and hold general elections. In *Al-Urwah al-Wuthqa*, he repeatedly criticized the ruling regimes of Iran, the Ottoman Empire, and Egypt.

When Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asadabadi formed an association of Iranian and non-Iranian Shia clerics and scholars with the agreement of the Ottoman Sultan Abdul Hamid II to realize the idea of Islamic unity, he drew upon Mirza Aqa Khan Kermani, Sheikh Ahmad Ruhi Kermani, and Mirza Hasan Khabir al-Molk to propagate the notion of solidarity.

He dispatched treatises authored by these three figures addressed to the ulema of the Islamic world across cities such as Tehran, Karbala, Najaf, Mashhad, Isfahan, Basra, and beyond, calling upon them to unite after delineating the prevailing conditions of Islam and Muslim territories. Within this association, around four hundred letters and treatises were sent throughout Muslim lands inhabited by Shias. He also invited Prince Abolhasan Mirza—known as Sheikh al-Ra'is, a grandson of the Qajar ruler Fath-Ali Shah—into this circle; the treatise *Ittihad-e Islam* (The Union of Islam) by Sheikh al-Ra'is Qajar is among the texts composed in the wake of this initiative, penned during his stay in Bombay.

Alongside this major undertaking, Sayyid Jamal al-Din held meetings with freedom fighters and activists from Egypt, Syria, India, Iran, Iraq, Albania, and the Tatars of Russia, urging them to aid him in this critical movement. To realize his objectives, Sayyid focused on harmonizing the perspectives of Islamic scholars.

The Union of Islam movement sought to organize a committee to support the Ottomans. Yet, Sayyid Jamal reaped no institutional success from this extensive endeavor. He fell victim to the suspicions and deceitful maneuvers of the Ottomans surrounding the Union of Islam initiative and Pan-Islamism, as well as the machinations of Sultan Abdul Hamid II. In 1314 AH, he met his martyrdom in exile, while Turkey progressively lost its central standing within the Islamic world.

- *The Religious Thought Revival Model*: Islamic thinkers have advanced various frameworks under the model of reviving religious thought, among which one may cite the approaches of Allama Muhammad Iqbal (Lahori), Said Nursi (Badi'uzzaman), and Muhammad Husayn Kashif al-Ghita. Among these, Iqbal represents a resonant voice that cannot be overlooked.

In his view, Islam proved capable of harnessing the power of religion toward the development of the grand institution of society. He recognized the West and its impasses, exposing them clearly. He directly sensed the presence of Russian and British colonialism within Muslim societies and could not tolerate the slumber of Muslims. A critic of Muslim lifestyles, he strove for the awakening of Islamic society to reconstruct the dimensions of Islamic thought—which throughout history had been fragmented and fractured by political deceit or contradictory tendencies—and articulated this vision in his masterpiece, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*. His objective was self-realization, self-reliance, and finding a way out of the prevailing state of Islamic society. At the same time, Iqbal dreaded a reactionary regression toward religious dictatorship, despotism, inquisitions, intellectual stagnation, and the captivity of knowledge among Muslims—as experienced particularly during the Ottoman era. He maintained that sanctifying past history offered no remedy. In his view, ideas can never regain vitality among members of a nation that has exhausted them, concluding:

"It is living individuals who can reveal the depth of life. Such individuals are nurtured by an Islamic worldview—a worldview that inherently combines beauty, majesty, and dynamic force all at once."

Iqbal likewise considered organizational structures based purely on the demands of political institutions to be ineffective, maintaining:

"The ultimate fate of a nation depends far more on the values governing its people than on organization."

According to him, in an excessively organized society, the individual is crushed and rendered ineffective; for this reason, articulating the essence of Islam becomes a difficult task.

**The Jurisprudential Model: The methodological approach of the jurisprudential school of Ayatollah Boroujerdi and select Sunni jurists, such as Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, is predicated on returning to the shared foundational sources of both the Sunnis (al-Ammah) and the Shias (al-Khasah*)—a methodology capable of fostering substantial mutual understanding and convergence among Muslims.*

Ayatollah Boroujerdi maintained:

"Shia jurisprudence developed in dialogue with Sunni jurisprudence."

He would further state:

"The jurisprudence of our early jurists was formulated with direct reference to the jurisprudence of the Ahl al-Sunnah and the *Ammah*."

This fundamental premise led to fruitful engagement with the scholarly community of Al-Azhar and culminated in the historic fatwa issued by Sheikh Shaltout.

Ayatollah Boroujerdi considered Hadith narrations to be directly contextualized by the legal questions and scholarly opinions prevalent at the time of their pronouncement. To ensure a correct hermeneutical understanding, he deemed it indispensable to study the decrees (*fatawa*) of the Sunni majority during those periods—especially rulings that enjoyed widespread currency and were practiced by the public. He regarded consulting Sunni legal rulings as an essential prerequisite for jurisprudence, noting:

"Our early jurists had memorized the comparative disputations (*masa'il al-khilaf*)."

For this purpose, he published Sheikh al-Tusi's *Kitab al-Khilaf* for the first time, accompanied by marginalia and a concise introduction.

It has been noted that he inherited this intellectual orientation from the Seminary of Isfahan and his master, Sayyid Mohammad Baqir Dorchei. The roots of this school of thought in Isfahan trace back to the Safavid era.

The ideal of unity and sustained attention to Sunni jurisprudence persisted in the Seminary of Isfahan until recent times, with figures such as Haj Agha Rahim Arbab upholding this conviction. It appears that Shari'at Isfahani, another master of Ayatollah Boroujerdi, held an identical view, arguing that the society of that early era was governed by Islamic rule and dominated by the rulings of state-sanctioned muftis, such as Malik, Abu Hanifa, al-Awza'i, and Ibn Abi Layla. The companions of the Imams (a.s.) grew up in that very society and moved within its scholarly circles; the narrators and companions framed their inquiries to the Imams in light of those prevailing Sunni fatwas, and the Imams, in turn, addressed them with full cognizance of those opinions.

The first piece of evidence supporting this premise is that Shia narrations predominantly take the form of structured inquiries posed to the Imams. It is evident that ordinary laymen could not have formulated such a vast corpus of intricate legal questions. Clearly, the interrogators were scholars who heard these legal issues from Sunni jurists and subsequently posed them to the Imams of their era.

Another supporting piece of evidence is that al-Kashshi, in his biographical work (*Rijal*), lists Zurarah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, and several other prominent jurists among the companions of the *Sadiqayn* (Imams Muhammad al-Baqir and Ja'far al-Sadiq, a.s.) as having formerly been companions of Abu Hanifa and adherents of the Sunni tradition, who subsequently embraced the Shia path under the guidance of the two venerable Imams.

Ayatollah Boroujerdi believed that in the jurisprudential deduction (*istinbat*) of any secondary ruling (*far'*), whenever the supporting evidence is a Hadith, the historical period of the text's pronouncement must be scrutinized precisely with regard to the presence and rulings of Sunni jurists—particularly in Medina—as well as the specific legal conceptions held by the companions and interrogators that prompted the question to the Imam in the first place. Furthermore, this investigation must be traced systematically through the treatises of early jurists down through successive eras. Such a hermeneutical foundation requires extensive research into the scholarly views and explicit expressions of the Sunni legal tradition, as well as a precise chronological contextualization of these opinions, especially during the era of the *Sadiqayn* (a.s.).

One of Ayatollah Boroujerdi's students relates:

"It is as clear as day to me that at times, Sunni jurisprudence was more deeply ingrained in the minds of the Imams' companions than Shia jurisprudence, compelling the Imams to exert great effort to instill the correct understanding into the minds of their followers. For instance, Zurarah had learned the laws of inheritance in accordance with Sunni jurisprudence and considered himself so proficient in the ordinances of inheritance that he felt no need whatsoever to consult the Imams on these matters. When he initially heard the Imam's ruling, he disregarded it because it contradicted his prior knowledge. The Imam became upset with Zurarah, stating: 'I presented the rules of inheritance to you directly from the book of the Commander of the Faithful (Ali, a.s.).' Only then did Zurarah awaken from his slumber of negligence, realizing that his knowledge regarding inheritance was unfounded and that he needed to learn the laws of inheritance anew. This narration is recorded in *al-Kafi* and apparently in *al-Tahdhib* as well."

In another narration, Muhammad ibn Muslim asked Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) regarding the travel distance that necessitates shortening prayers (*qasr*): "He said: I asked him about shortening [prayers], and he replied: 'In a *barid*.' I asked: 'In a *barid*?'"

Ayatollah Boroujerdi discussed in detail why Muhammad ibn Muslim asked the Imam with astonishment whether one *barid* constitutes the threshold for *taqsir*. He attributed this surprise to the fact that Muhammad ibn Muslim resided in Kufa, where prevailing Sunni jurisprudence established the threshold for *taqsir* at "two stages" (*marhalatan*)—that is, sixteen *farsakhs*. When the Imam stated four *farsakhs* (one *barid*), it naturally elicited surprise and inquiry. The Imam then clarified: "I meant one *barid* outward and one *barid* return, which totals eight *farsakhs*."

The second dimension is the discernment of narrations issued under precautionary dissimulation (*taqiyyah*). Dissimulation was not exclusively directed toward Sunni jurisprudence and its jurists; rather, it was sometimes practiced vis-à-vis state rulers and judges. For example, most Sunni jurists consider *nabidh* (fermented date/grape drink) prohibited; however, because rulers drank it, if we encounter a narration permitting *nabidh*, it must be understood as an instance of dissimulation before corrupt rulers.

Ayatollah Boroujerdi was not only thoroughly versed in the legal rulings and treatises of the four Sunni Imams, but he also commanded a comprehensive mastery over the views of the Companions (*Sahabah*) and other early jurists, such as al-Awza'i, al-Thawri, and al-Layth, and knew their precise points of divergence on any given legal issue. His mastery was such that a number of Sunni scholars, upon meeting him, found him more versed in the sayings and doctrines of Sunni scholars than they were themselves.

In presenting legal issues from a historical perspective, he would first elucidate the views of the Companions, the Successors (*Tabi'un*), and subsequent jurists in detail before addressing the positions of Shia scholars. It seemed as though jurisprudence, history, and their supporting proofs were like soft wax in his hands. When discussing the rules of prayer in the Four Holy Sites, he would expound at length upon the precise boundaries of the *Ha'ir* and the tragic historical tribulations of that sacred shrine during the Abbasid caliphate. He possessed not only an extensive grasp of general Islamic history, but also complete mastery over the history of theology (*Kalam*), the history of Hadith, and the history of jurisprudence.

The Historical Model: We may regard Mirza Khalil Kamare'i among the founders of this model. He believed in modernizing the historical achievements and traditions of Islam, aspiring to reignite that very spirit which breathed across the arid sands of the Hijaz fourteen centuries ago and galvanized that silent desert, reawakening the slumbering society of his own era. He sought to demonstrate that Islam, despite all prevailing negligence and distortions, could still serve as the catalyst for societal resurgence. "Historical structuralism" is an apt designation for the framework proposed by Mirza Khalil Kamare'i. His model points to the historical structures of the Islamic system and emanates from his profound scholarship in Islamic history.

Nevertheless, during his era, many contemporary impediments and structural dysfunctions were not yet visible, and many modern questions had not yet crystallized. For this reason, it remains ambiguous what concrete formulations Mirza Khalil Kamare'i could offer regarding the fragmented state of cultural diversity within the Islamic world through his model, what resolutions he envisioned for this dilemma, how transnational relations among cultures within the cultural cluster of the Islamic world would function, or which pan-Islamic institutions would oversee such initiatives.

The viability of his model is contingent upon implementing multicultural education across Islamic society to accommodate cultural diversity, alongside establishing clear regulatory frameworks governing engagement with local folk cultures (*culture folk*) and cultural pluralism (*multiculturalism*), as delineating these boundaries is no simple task.

Who is Mirza Khalil Kamare'i?

Prior to examining the perspectives of Allameh Kamare'i, it is essential to become acquainted with the personality, scholarly stature, and cultural milieu in which Allameh Mirza Khalil (1898–1984 / 1277–1363 SH) was raised and flourished:

Allameh Mirza Khalil was born in the village of Fernaq, a district of Khomeyn in the Kamareh region. His father, Mashhadi Abu Talib, was a farmer, and his mother, Bibi Khatun Jan, was a homemaker. At around six years of age, he learned reading and writing under his uncle and subsequently attended the local village traditional school (*maktab-khaneh*). Around the age of twelve, he set out for Japalaq, Khomeyn, and later Khansar to pursue further

education, acquiring literary sciences and introductory Arabic under Mullah Mohammad Bidhendi, Sayyid Ahmad Bidhendi, Aqa Sayyid Ahmad Jadeh'i, and other masters.

Around 1917 (1296 SH), Mirza Khalil moved to the Sepahdar School in the Seminary of Arak (Soltanabad) to continue his education, mastering jurisprudence (*Fiqh*), legal theory (*Usul al-Fiqh*), logic (*Mantiq*), and elements of wisdom and philosophy. He also attended the advanced post-graduate seminars (*Kharij*) in jurisprudence and legal theory delivered by Haj Sheikh Abdul-Karim Ha'eri Yazdi and other prominent scholars. In 1920 (1299 SH), he relocated to Qom, where he remained engaged in learning and teaching at the Seminary of Qom until approximately 1935 (1314 SH). His primary masters in Qom included Haj Sheikh Abdul-Karim Ha'eri Yazdi (founder of the Qom Seminary), Mirza Ali Akbar Modarres Yazdi (known as *Hakim*), Mir Sayyid Ali Yasrebi Kashani, and Mirza Javad Maleki Tabrizi. After completing these stages and acquiring religious sciences, Mirza Khalil undertook the teaching of intermediate texts (*Sutuh*), Quranic exegesis (*Tafsir*), philosophy, as well as classical astronomy (*Hay'ah*), *Tashrih al-Aflak*, Euclidean geometry, and Sheikh Baha'i's *Khulasat al-Hisab*.

Among the notable figures who attended his classes in Qom were Sayyid Morteza Askari, Morteza Ha'eri Yazdi, Sayyid Morteza Borqa'i, Haj Sheikh Ali Asghar Salehi Kermani, and Sayyid Mahmoud Taleghani. Most of these figures were regarded as his students in the rational disciplines (*Ma'qul*).

Mirza Khalil possessed a precise and detailed familiarity with the theories of classical philosophers.

Among his most renowned works are *Ofogh-e Vahy* (The Horizon of Revelation), *Asman va Jahan* (The Heavens and the World), *Qebelah-ye Islam: Ka'bah ya Masjed al-Haram* (The Qiblah of Islam: The Kaaba or the Sacred Mosque), *Ali va al-Zahra: Sarcheshmeh-ye Ab-e Hayat* (Ali and al-Zahra: The Fountain of the Water of Life), *Onsor-e Shoja'at ya Hafdad-o-Do Tan va Yek Tan* (The Element of Courage, or The Seventy-Two and the One), *Bayt al-Maqdis va Tahavvol-e Qebelah* (Jerusalem and the Transformation of the Qiblah), and *Fatawa-ye Sahabi-ye Kabir Salman-e Farsi* (The Legal Decrees of the Great Companion, Salman the Persian).

Efforts toward Islamic Convergence

The most significant and prominent endeavor of Kamare'i throughout his life was his persistent strive toward the unity of the world's Muslims—termed in his own words as "the unification of the word for the Word of Tawhid" (*Tawhid al-Kalimah li-Kalimat al-Tawhid*). Mirza Khalil maintained that the fundamental duty of the clergy was attending to spiritual affairs; hence, he cannot be categorized as a conventional politician or political activist, even though several of his activities assumed socio-political dimensions.

Kamare'i seized every available opportunity to foster Muslim solidarity. This astute opportunism is evident in the account of his first Hajj pilgrimage in 1958 (1337 SH). During an incidental meeting with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, he raised the grievances and tribulations endured by Iranian pilgrims in the Hijaz.

Furthermore, in a letter dated 16 Sha'ban 1384 AH (December 1964) addressed to King Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the monarch of Saudi Arabia, he highlighted critical matters and urged him to issue a decree authorizing the instruction of Ja'fari jurisprudence at the Islamic University of Madinah.

In this letter, he identified three dynamics as the drivers behind the catastrophe of disunity:

1. The contradictory upbringing and education of the rising generation;
2. The chauvinistic clamor of ethno-nationalism and racial rhetoric propagated by rulers and monarchs;
3. Sectarian disputes originating primarily from jurists (*fuqaha*).

Alongside these intellectual efforts, Mirza Khalil did not neglect practical initiatives. In 1952 (1331 SH), accompanied by Sayyid Mahmoud Taleghani, Haj Aqa Reza Zanjani, and Sayyid Sadr al-Din Balaghi, he participated in the International Conference of Muslim Peoples (*Mu'tamar Shu'ub al-Muslimin*) in Karachi. On one of the conference days, he was elected to preside over the assembly, delivering a keynote address on international Islamic unity and sovereign Muslim nations. In 1959 (1338 SH), at the invitation of the World Muslim Congress (*Mu'tamar al-Alam al-Islami*) convened in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, he traveled to Jordan alongside Sayyid Mahmoud Taleghani. It was there that he expressed gratitude to Sheikh Mahmoud Shaltout, Grand Mufti and Rector of Al-Azhar University, for his historic fatwa declaring adherence to the Twelver Shia Ja'fari school of jurisprudence legally permissible in Islam. During this voyage, he also traveled to Jerusalem (*Bayt al-Maqdis*) and visited its sacred sanctuaries.

In 1964 (1343 SH), Mirza Khalil Kamare'i dispatched a message to King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, expressing grave concern over ethnic and racial divisiveness and requesting him to facilitate mutual understanding and rapprochement among the jurists of the various Islamic schools of thought.

He authored an Arabic treatise entitled *Ard al-Nubuwwah Jisr Azim* ("The Land of Prophethood Is a Great Bridge") and presented it to King Faisal, striving to elucidate the monarch's responsibility in consolidating the foundations of Muslim solidarity and persuading him that building this grand bridge must not neglect the intellectual heritage and teachings of Imam Ali (a.s.).

In that same year, in response to queries from the Sunni scholars of Iranian Kurdistan, Mirza Khalil examined the eras and governance of the three Rashidun Caliphs, concluding that they were prominent Companions and associates of the Prophet of Islam, and that the Prophet never insulted them. Accordingly, he declared reviling or insulting the three Rashidun Caliphs impermissible.

He also responded to correspondence from Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, India. This institution had been founded by Shibli Nomani (1857–1914), who was himself influenced by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (1817–1898); the letter had been penned by Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi, the institution's Secretary-General, on the occasion of its 85th anniversary in Shawwal 1395 AH / October 1975 (1354 SH). Addressing the Secretary-General of the All India Muslim Educational Conference in Lucknow during a commemorative convention honoring Allameh Sayyid Abbas Razavi in Rajab 1395 AH (1354 SH), he emphasized:

"The utmost care must be dedicated to the unity of the word, ensuring that no fissure develops in the protective outer shell of Islamic society through which pathogens might enter. Division paves the way for foreign intervention and invites external exploitation."

In the summer of 1969 (1348 SH), Mirza Khalil addressed an open letter entitled "Conquest Without Arrogance" to Richard Nixon, the incumbent President of the United States. Congratulating him on the lunar landing and the fulfillment of Quranic prophecy, he urged Nixon—as an act of gratitude for this celestial conquest occurring during his administration—to permit the world's starving and displaced populations in general, and specifically the two million displaced Arab Muslims in the Middle East who had been dispossessed and wandering for twenty years, to return to their ancestral homes and hearths, thereby rendering the conquest of the celestial fortress truly comprehensive.

At the close of that year and the beginning of Farvardin 1349 SH (March 1970), while participating in the Sheikh Tusi Millennium World Congress in Mashhad, Mirza Khalil summarized his devotion and insistence on Islamic ecumenism with this statement: "Today, every Shia is a Sunni, and every Sunni is a Shia."

Kamare'i held numerous meetings with figures such as Sayyid Ja'far Ra'ed, Sayyid Hamza Ghawth (diplomatic attachés of Saudi Arabia), and Sheikh Hassan ibn Abdullah Al ash-Sheikh, the Saudi cabinet minister. On April 4, 1972 (1351/01/15 SH), he met with Sheikh Muhammad ibn Nasir al-Aboudi, Secretary-General of the Islamic University of Madinah, in Tehran. In his message to the Muslim World League in Mecca, as well as during congresses in Cairo and Alexandria, he declared:

"The anomalous situation prevailing among Islamic states has reached such a pitch that they adopt vengeful policies toward one another. This fosters an atmosphere exploited by foreign powers, whose ultimate objective is the disintegration of the Islamic world."

The imperative of safeguarding unity was paramount to him; in his treatise *Risalati ila al-Shaykh al-Akbar Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Mufti al-A'zam al-Akbar*—published by the Muslim World League and whose Persian translation appeared within *Khams Rasa'il fi al-Hajj wa al-Qiblah*—he raised the necessity of an open intellectual symposium (*iqtirah*) on this issue. He also proposed this symposium to Mawlana Abdul Majid, editor of *The Islamic Review*, at the Woking Mosque in London for publication in his journal.

Mirza Khalil paid close attention to uncovering the historical roots of schisms and discord, particularly the confrontations from the Safavid era through the reign of Nader Shah between Iran and the Ottoman Empire, remaining keenly aware of the enduring impact of these historical clashes on contemporary perceptions. He spoke of the countless adversaries confronting Muslims everywhere and their vital need for unity in light of historical lessons. In his analysis, diversity within the Islamic world stems from several factors:

- The differentiation among *Shariah* (exoteric law), *Tariqah* (spiritual path), and *Haqiqah* (inner reality);
- The Sunnism–Shiism divide;
- Rational and theological disputes, given that Islam has generated one of the richest rational discourses in the world over many centuries;
- Orthodoxy versus heterodoxy;
- Distinct cultural zones: Arab, Persian, African, Turkic, the Indian Subcontinent, Malay, as well as regions such as China, Europe, and the Americas.

During Nowruz of 1977 (1356 SH), at the invitation of Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro, the Grand Mufti of Syria, he traveled to Damascus and delivered an address on the unity of the world's Muslims at the Abu al-Nur Mosque (*Jami' Abi al-Nur*).

At the onset of the Islamic Revolution, he marched alongside Sayyid Mahmoud Taleghani in the massive Tasu'a demonstration to realize the revolution's core aspirations and slogans: "Independence, Freedom, Islamic Republic."

In September 1980 (Shahrivar 1359 SH), following Saddam Hussein's outbreak of war and the military invasion of "the sacred soil of the homeland," Mirza Khalil published an extensive treatise in *Ettela'at* newspaper entitled "Where Will the Arabs Bear This Shame?", defending Iran's rightful cause.

Mirza Khalil unceasingly sounded the alarm, recounting the tribulations of the Islamic world. He was profoundly distressed that amid this immense vortex ensnaring Muslims, some failed to recognize the primary enemy and its devastating machinations, choosing instead to stoke minor sectarian divisions and pave the way for imperialist powers.

Kamare'i and the Model of Islamic Convergence

While affirming the presence of an evident underlying unity within Islamic civilization, Kamare'i elucidated the political predicament of Muslim countries in his era and proposed that, under such troubling circumstances, the sole axis capable of realizing unity for Muslims is upholding the two primary foundations of unity: the Quran and the Sunnah. These two sources firmly emphasize the core tenets and essential elements of religion: Tawhid (monotheism), Prophethood, and the Resurrection (*Ma'ad*).

Alongside these two foundational factors, he placed great emphasis on the *Shariah* and religious rituals across the Islamic world, maintaining that these shared rituals are vital to securing societal unity. He also regarded the element of the *Qiblah* as crucial in securing solidarity, noting that this endeavor necessitates the active backing of Muslim rulers, who must perceive their own collective existence as the life of a single, unified Ummah (*Ummatan Wahidah*).

According to Mirza Khalil Kamare'i, the multiplicity of flags among Islamic nations does not harm the cause of unity; rather, it is advantageous, provided they reinforce and assist one another:

"For a single flag represents merely one vote and counts as a single voice, offering little leverage within the international community of nations, regardless of the sheer population gathered beneath it."

He drew upon the prophetic tradition in this regard:

"Indeed, I shall boast of your great numbers before other nations."

Thus, numerous flags reflect a multiplicity of voices and collective weight. The objective is that foundational origins must be unified and governing principles must possess unity; however, the plurality of elements, colors, languages, races, and nationalities remains entirely compatible with Islamic unity.

He called upon the Islamic Ummah to examine the status of Muslim nations during the early era—how the Noble Prophet forged unity among them by calling them to obedience and mutual affection, thereby multiplying blessings among them. Through this historical lens, Muslims can discern the true causes of their dignity and prosperity, as well as the sources of their division and decline.

His immediate solution for achieving unity was the combined utilization of political power (Muslim rulers) and spiritual authority (scholars and jurists) to resolve disputes and dispel misconceptions.

He considered travel across Islamic lands and reciprocal visits among jurists as the primary path to mutual understanding among legal scholars. He proposed student and seminary exchange programs for the study of comparative jurisprudence to dismantle sectarian differences. In his view, this measure would mitigate mutual prejudice and apprehension, demonstrating that Islamic jurisprudence across all schools is derived directly from the Book and the Sunnah.

Kamare'i's model of Islamic unity is derived from the core unifiers of Islamic thought—encompassing the doctrines of Tawhid, Prophethood, and Resurrection, alongside shared religious symbols and rituals such as the Hajj, the Qiblah, and the Adhan—as well as a return to Islamic history and the revival of the hallmarks of unity from early Islam and the Prophetic era.

He maintained that returning to historical foundations will restrain Muslims from extremes of excess (*ifrat*) and neglect (*tafrit*), creating the genuine conditions under which true unity can take shape.

In his paradigm, the Islamic world is conceived as an integrated, unified reality. Nevertheless, internal differences are regarded as natural, while the true drivers of division are identified as the aggression of foreign political powers and the domestic mismanagement of political and cultural systems.

According to him, the roots of Islamic dignity must be sought in the Hajj and the Qiblah. These two represent monumental divine blessings facilitating the grand gathering of the Islamic Ummah. Daily, Muslims prepare themselves to join the ranks of the Qiblah and the Hajj, aligning under the banner of Muhammad (s.a.w.) and demonstrating their disciplined alignment toward global peace under his command and teachings. For this reason, proxy representation (*niyabah*) in facing the Qiblah is invalid so long as an accountable individual (*mukallaf*) is alive; each person must fulfill this duty individually.

Mecca and Medina constitute the beating heart of Islamic vitality and Muslim solidarity. Accordingly, he proposed erecting commemorative markers and informative plaques across all historical sites in these two cities to remind Muslims of their shared past. Without these historical markers, pilgrims from diverse lands would perceive the mountains and deserts of these holy cities as indistinguishable from the landscapes of their own native lands, failing to appreciate their sacred historical distinctiveness.

He specifically proposed erecting memorial plaques around the Baqi cemetery to commemorate the glory and exalted stature of those interred there. Guided by these plaques, Muslims would avoid both extremes of excess (*ifrat*) and neglect (*tafrit*). The role of these plaques would be to ensure that this sacred precinct fulfills its revelatory mission

across the entire globe, as God designated the Sacred House as a sanctuary of resurgence and stability for humanity.

He formulated this concept during the Hajj of 1382 AH (1963). Reflecting upon these two holy cities, he concluded that preserving their historical legacy holds the key to global and societal peace, fostering mutual empathy and reciprocal support among Islamic forces. Neglecting this duty would inevitably result in decay across the affairs of Muslims. The profound significance of these two cities lies in their living reservoir of historical memory.

The rays of revelation must emanate from the Sacred House of God (*Bayt Allah al-Haram*) to all corners of the earth, adorning the Kaaba with a celestial mantle so that the land of revelation—like its heavens—remains an enduring wellspring of inspiration and unity. If the Qiblah and Mecca fail to project their latent spiritual radiance, the world will not achieve peace. Therefore, the realm of revelation—its mountains, dunes, living inhabitants, deceased luminaries, earth, and sky—must find its voice so that pilgrims carry this profound bond to the farthest reaches of the earth.

The central importance of this model in his thought led him to dedicate several scholarly works specifically to Mecca, Medina, the Qiblah, and the rituals of the Hajj:

- *Qeblah-ye Islam* (The Qiblah of Islam)
- *Ka'bah ya Masjed al-Haram* (The Kaaba or the Sacred Mosque)
- *Bayt al-Maqdis va Tahavvol-e Qeblah* (Jerusalem and the Transformation of the Qiblah)
- *Afaq-e Ka'bah* (Horizons of the Kaaba)
- *Nahib-e Peyghambar (s) be Moluk va Omara va Foqaha va Olama az Kheyf-e Mina* (The Prophet's Exhortation to Kings, Rulers, Jurists, and Scholars from the Khayf Mosque in Mina)
- *Kelid-e Amn-e Jahan* (The Key to World Peace: Commentary on the Farewell Pilgrimage Sermon; Supplement: *The Key to Global Security*)
- *Resaleh-ye Manasik va Masa'el-e Hajj va Umrah* (Treatise on the Rites and Jurisprudential Rules of Hajj and Umrah)
- *Neda'i az Sarzamin-e Bayt al-Maqdis* (A Voice from the Land of Jerusalem: The Author's Travelogue to the Islamic Congress of Jordan)
- *Ejtema' Piramoun-e Khaneh-ye Taqaddos* (Gathering Around the House of Sanctity: An Article in *Din dar Arseh-ye Danesh* Journal)

The Secrets of Hajj

He reminded Muslim rulers of an evident yet neglected truth: the House of God is far more worthy and qualified than the United Nations to foster true unity. The Qiblah of Muslims can serve as a secure sanctuary for nations and states alike, where all human beings—by holding fast to this orientation—enjoy equal rights, rendering racial, gender, or sectarian discrimination entirely meaningless; indeed, God willed the dissemination of such a universal ideal from this very House.

He noted that the Prophet, addressing the Ansar from Mount Safa, declared: "*Al-mahya mahyakum wa al-mamat mamatukum*" ("My life is your life, and my death is your death"). He deemed the people worthy of such profound grace. This statement was so electrifying that it unleashed a storm of emotion among them; the Prophet opened his arms to embrace them, and they were all moved to tears. The Prophet, whose gaze was set upon the paradise of the Divine Encounter (*jannat al-liqa*), expressed such deep affection for the people of Medina, desiring to live and die among them.

Kamare'i considered this the most sublime spiritual state, recommending that such fervor and devotion be actively felt and observed during visits to Medina. Otherwise, the government of the Hijaz does an injustice to the future of Muslims by seeking to extinguish these radiant sparks.

He further recalled the Day of the Conquest of Mecca, recounting how the Prophet asked the Quraysh to speak their hearts, pardoned them despite their past cruelties, and transformed a battlefield of slaughter and confrontation into a realm of communion and reconciliation, casting a mantle of love and purity over Mecca and the Sacred Mosque. In that sacred land, Salman the Persian—from Ramhormoz or Jay—stood united alongside Bilal the Ethiopian and Suhayb the Roman.

He concluded that the Qiblah holds a profound mystery, signifying that human beings must receive a divine command and voice their aspirations in this sacred space. The Beloved resides there. The orientation of the Qiblah is the universal axis from inception to the end of life: human remains are washed facing it, and the deceased is laid to rest directed toward it:

"And We did not make the Qiblah which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger." (Quran 2:143)

In Mirza Khalil's view regarding the Qiblah, the focus of reverence is not the physical structure itself, but rather the sacred sanctuary (*Haram*) and the Secure City (*al-Balad al-Amin*), oriented toward the Kaaba. The ultimate destination is neither stone nor clay, but the mystical secret enshrined within it. What is intended is the divinely legislated cosmic order and the statutes of peace and security instituted by the divine teacher of humanity. The Qiblah is fundamentally our intentional action (*amal*), not merely the name of a edifice; however, because the physical act of worship must be oriented toward the Sacred House of God (*Bayt Allah al-Haram*), the name of the act gradually came to denote the physical House itself.

Thus, the Qiblah is a conscious posture and orientation toward an object, executed with acute mental presence.

The Qiblah represents a fully conscious and vigilant act involving every limb and organ of the human body.

Hence, the Qiblah signifies turning (*iqbal*) toward an ultimate reality, wherein mental presence (*hudur al-dhihn*) is an indispensable prerequisite.

It is an inspiring source, an origin of divine illumination, and the wellspring of revelation (*Surush*). Five times daily, it calls the roll of its devoted community, aligning them with pure

sincerity in a spiritual parade and imparting to them all the spiritual light it holds. The adherents of the school of the Qiblah perpetuate this rite, and this continuous expansion will ultimately bring the world into submission before that divine sovereignty, turning all into the "Party of the Qiblah." Thus, the mystery of the Qiblah is immense. A silent war is waged between the Kaaba and imperial courts: each diminishes the other to augment itself, while humanity remains caught in the gravitational pull between these two opposing forces. Social chains drag man toward perdition, while the magnetism of the House of God delivers him. Nations without a Qiblah were swept away in their conflicts against Islam, yet Islam endured because it possessed the Qiblah:

"Allah has made the Kaaba, the Sacred House, an asylum of security and resurgence for humanity..." (Quran 5:97)

True resurgence (*qiyam*) must be derived from the Kaaba; authentic resurgence resides here.

The overarching ethical oversight exerted by the Qiblah over trees, wildlife, sacrificial slaughter, the property of orphans and the vulnerable, as well as its oversight over the collective resurgence of mankind and the logic of the "Secure City" (*al-Balad al-Amin*) over lands plagued by insecurity, constitute profound subjects of reflection.

To provide an overarching synthesis of this discourse, various paradigms for Islamic unity have been advanced. Among them is the historical model formulated by Mirza Khalil Kamare'i. In his view, unity is achievable by drawing upon the historical precedents of early Islam. Grounded in meticulous textual and historical documentation, this model is poised for broad acceptance because it is neither speculative nor utopian, but tangible and grounded in historical reality. Although he transcends historical conservatism through critical inquiry in presenting his model and skillfully employs his faculties of independent juristic reasoning (*ijtihad*), he nonetheless did not systematically examine or critique alternative theories. For instance, it would have been pertinent to address the thought of his contemporary, Allameh Iqbal Lahori, on the subject of unity—especially since Iqbal rejects excessive veneration of the past, viewing overly rigid structures as the byproduct of historicism and arguing that this runs contrary to the dynamic internal impulses of Islam. According to Kamare'i, holding fast to the Divine Cord (*al-Habl al-Ilahi*) yields two profound outcomes: the invulnerability and immunity of the Muslim social fabric, and the establishment of brotherhood, affection, and genuine solidarity.

Conclusion

The four models of Islamic unity have been examined, elucidating the depth and impact of each paradigm alongside the perspectives of theorists concerned with Western hegemony over the Islamic world. In doing so, the insightful ideas of one of the architects of the historical model of unity have been placed before researchers and practitioners in the field of Islamic ecumenism. We maintain that, despite existing distortions and negligence, the spirit that breathed over the arid sands of the Hijaz fourteen centuries ago and galvanized that silent desert remains capable today of awakening slumbering societies, uniting Muslims into a single rank, and severing the reach of imperialist powers.