

THE ESSENCE OF THE UMMAH PRINCIPLE: ISLAM AND THE FOUNDATION OF INCLUSIVE SOCIAL SYSTEMS

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Abstract

This article explores the essence of the *ummah* principle in the geopolitical dissemination of Islam during the time of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This is achieved through an analysis of Qur'anic verses related to human nature and worldview, alongside examining the resulting international social pattern of "Unity + Plurality" as reflected in the Sunnah, utilizing both inductive and deductive methodologies. The research yields three key conclusions: 1. The Qur'anic principle of "no compulsion in religion" is a fundamental policy guideline for Islamic countries and governments throughout history, fostering harmonious coexistence among diverse communities. 2. Islam provides a successful model of "human rights + social standards" through the dualism of "metaphysics + physics," integrating the spiritual and material dimensions of its teachings organically. 3. Islam constructs an inclusive social system rooted in justice, ensuring its functionality through the principles of "de-sectarianism," "de-clanalism," and "de-racism."

Keywords: Islam; human nature; worldview; *ummah*; social system.

Khulasah

Tujuan artikel ini adalah untuk meneroka intipati prinsip *ummah* dalam penyebaran geopolitik Islam

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pada zaman Nabi Muhammad (SAW). Kajian ini dilakukan melalui analisis ayat-ayat al-Qur'an yang berkaitan dengan fitrah manusia dan pandangan alam, serta kajian terhadap corak sosial antarabangsa yang dihasilkan, iaitu "Kesatuan + Kepelbagaian" seperti yang tercermin dalam Sunnah, dengan menggunakan metodologi induktif dan deduktif. Penyelidikan ini menghasilkan tiga kesimpulan utama: 1. Prinsip al-Quran tentang "tiada paksaan dalam agama" berfungsi sebagai garis panduan dasar asas bagi negara dan kerajaan Islam sepanjang sejarah, memupuk kewujudan harmoni dalam kalangan masyarakat yang pelbagai. 2. Islam menyediakan model kejayaan untuk "hak asasi manusia + piawaian sosial" melalui dualisme "metafizik + fizikal," yang secara organik mengintegrasikan dimensi rohani dan material dalam ajarannya. 3. Islam membentuk sistem sosial yang inklusif berasaskan keadilan, memastikan keberkesanannya melalui prinsip "anti-sektarianisme," "anti-tribalisme," dan "anti-perkauman."

Kata kunci: Islam; fitrah manusia; pandangan alam; ummah; system sosial.

Introduction

Today, whether it is the minority of successful individuals—Muslims and non-Muslims alike—thriving in the wave of market economy reforms or the majority of vulnerable groups worldwide, no social class in any country truly experiences a sense of genuine happiness, and entire nations lack a spiritual anchor.

In fact, humans have transitioned from an era of general material dissatisfaction to a widespread spiritual unease. Human society today has not yet established a rational order, even with the logic of capitalism or socialism, where independent individuals interact based on principles of mutual agreement. Today's failure of humanity is evident in the fact that many societies are on the verge of disintegration, manifesting as a widespread

crisis of trust. This crisis is visible between the rich and the poor, governments and civilians, public institutions, and even within families. Social phenomena are increasingly appalling and unimaginable, reaching unprecedented levels of mistrust and dysfunction in history. While there have been dark times and wars among people or nations, such widespread disintegration of family structures and rise in self-interest are new challenges. This has led to a lack of established law, social disorder, and opportunistic behaviors.

In the context of this societal backdrop, we fortunately observe renewed interest in Islam across various groups, including Islamic studies and the phenomenon of Islamic revival, which holds profound reasons and meaningful significance. According to Islam, the path to being truly human begins with recognizing one's own life and then understanding humanity's collective, more extraordinary life. Notably, Islam has been the fastest-growing religion in the world in recent decades, particularly in Europe and the Americas. With over 1.6 billion followers—accounting for approximately 23% of the global population—Islam is the second-largest religious group after Christianity. It is undeniable that any discussion about Islam is intrinsically linked to the concept of the *ummah* (the Muslim community with a shared future). From a historical perspective, the rapid growth and dissemination of Islam have been defining characteristics since its inception, shaped by a combination of geographical factors and political dynamics.

Studying and analyzing the "Unity + Plurality" of the international social pattern shaped by Islam during its geopolitical dissemination offers valuable insights into the principles and framework of the *ummah* in Islam, as well as the developmental trends of the Muslim world. Furthermore, such research enables scholars to critically examine and anticipate the Western world's strategic dynamics and political intentions, providing a foundation

for accurate judgments and timely recommendations. This can guide government decision-makers in adopting informed and prudent response measures free from external political pressures. However, it is important to note that the *ummah* principle, embodied in the "One Body with Two Wings" model, reflects the Islamic conception of human nature and worldview. This principle warrants deeper exploration and analysis, as outlined below.

The Human Nature in Islam

Strictly speaking, the Qur'an meaningfully describes Islam as *fitrah*, which refers to a religion that aligns with human nature and innate tendencies. As Allah the Almighty states: "So, set your face to the faith (i.e., Islam) uprightly, this faith being *fitrah* (i.e., the nature or instinct) designed by Allah on which He has created mankind. There is no change in Allah's creation. That is the straight faith, but most of the people do not know" (Surah al-Rum 30:30)¹. This implies that human nature is inherently endowed with the ability to discern truth from falsehood, goodness from evil, and beauty from ugliness, leading to the recognition of Allah's existence and awareness of His Attributes.

Furthermore, this emphasizes Allah's Oneness, Onlyness, and Uniqueness, asserting that human beings must strive to perceive and revere Allah, the Sole Creator of the heavens, the earth, and all living and inanimate beings in the universe. Therefore, Islam advocates that observing and understanding the existence of Allah and His unique attributes is an intrinsic characteristic of human nature. However, this innate characteristic may become obscured by acquired self-indulgence, the adverse impacts

¹ Please note that when citing the Qur'anic scriptures or verses in this article, the reference is made to: 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary* (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2005).

of hardship, or the influence of the surrounding environment, causing it to become blurred or suppressed.²

The Qur'an highlights the stages of spiritual growth and moral cultivation in human nature, describing a journey marked by three key stages. The first stage arises from environmental influences, as "the human soul certainly incites to evil" (Surah Yusuf 12:53). In the second stage, guided by "the self-reproaching conscience" (Surah al-Qiyamah 75:2), individuals begin to resist evil and its associated behaviors. Finally, in the third stage, they aspire to embody the "reassured soul" (Surah al-Fajr 89:27), the ultimate state where Islam calls human beings to return to their original nature. This final stage represents the achievement of true perfection, tranquility, and contentment.

According to Islamic principles, these three stages are crucial for individual development. Only through continuous self-cultivation can people recognize their true selves, reconnect with their innate goodness and beauty, and contribute as constructive members of society. Islam emphasizes that all virtuous words and actions constitute "merit cultivation," reflecting the values of one's faith. As the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated in a famous Hadith: "For Allah, work as if you had seen Him; although you cannot see Him, He is indeed looking at you."³ Furthermore,

² Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), 230 & 621.

³ Abu Bakr Ahmad bin al-Husayn bin 'Ali al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Sughra*, ed. Bahjah Yusuf Hamad Abu al-Tayyib, no. 9, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Jil, 1415/1995), 45-46. Please note that according to al-Bukhari, it is reported that: "You worship Allah as if you had seen him, even though you cannot see Him, He can indeed see you." See: Abu 'Abdillah Muhammad bin Isma'il bin Ibrahim al-Bukhari, *Sahih al-Bukhari* (Damascus and Beirut: Resalah Publishers, 1436/2015), no. 50, 205. Furthermore, according to Muslims, it is reported that: "You should revere Allah as if you had seen Him, even though you cannot see Him, He can indeed see you." See: Muslim, Abu al-Husayn

Islamic teachings closely associate a Muslim's actions with worship and reverence for Allah, encouraging them to become true believers. Consistent and persistent good deeds are regarded as the highest form of righteousness, underscoring the inseparable connection between faith and action.

However, it is worth noting that Islam is not confined to basic practices such as performing daily *salah* (i.e., prayer), fasting during Ramadan (i.e., the ninth month of the Hijri calendar), paying *zakah* (i.e., the obligatory tax given to the poor or needy), or completing *hajj* (i.e., pilgrimage in Mecca). Nor is it solely a matter of heartfelt belief. Instead, Islam is deeply reflected in various aspects of daily life, including interpersonal and social relationships, as well as interactions with other living beings and the natural world.

The Qur'an states: "Good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is best, and you will see that the one you had mutual enmity with will turn as if he is a close friend. And no one is blessed with this (attitude), but those who observe patience, and no one is blessed with this (attitude) but a man of great luck" (Surah Fussilat 41:34-35). Additionally, references to the faith of Islam in the Qur'an are consistently followed by the call for believers to perform righteous deeds. For instance, the Qur'an states: "Swear by the Time, human beings are indeed in a state of loss, except those who believed and did righteous deeds, and exhorted each other to follow truth, and exhorted each other to observe patience" (Surah al-'Asr 103:1-3)⁴.

In addition, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its two complementary international conventions—the International Covenant on Civil and

bin al-Hajjaj al-Qushayri al-Naysaburi, *Sahih Muslim* (Damascus and Beirut: Resalah Publishers, 1436/2015), no. 99, 79.

⁴ Please also refer to the Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah, the verses 112 and 195; Surah al-Ma'idah, the verse 93.

Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights—emphasize that human dignity is an equal and inalienable right of all world members. Similarly, the Qur'an solemnly declares: "And We (Allah) bestowed dignity on the descendants of Adam"⁵ (Surah Isra' 17:70), a theme repeated and elaborated upon in various chapters and verses. It is worth noting, however, that while human dignity serves as the spiritual pillar and key element of the current International Charter of Human Rights, its foundation in dominant modern Western secular philosophy has led to ongoing controversies regarding human nature and related issues, none of which have been definitively resolved.⁶

By contrast, Islam emphasizes that human nature inherently includes the right to moral self-discipline and freedom of choice and conscience. The Qur'an establishes an unparalleled principle: "There is no compulsion in faith (Islam)" (Surah al-Baqarah 2: 256), rejecting coercion in matters of religion entirely. Further, the Qur'an reminds humanity through the words of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH): "And say, 'The truth is from your Lord (Allah). Now, whoever so wills may believe, and whoever so wills may deny'" (Surah al-Kahf 18: 29).

Thus, human beings, endowed with the freedom of choice, are distinct from all other creations. While the heavens, the earth, and everything within them operates according to divine laws without deviation, human beings are granted the ability to choose freely between belief and unbelief, truth and falsehood, good and evil, beauty and

⁵ It is worth noting that the mention of "descendants of Adam" in this verse refers to all humans. In addition, regarding Mr. Ma Jian's translation of this verse as "I have indeed favored the descendants of Adam", I have reservations because the Arabic verb in the verse "كَرَّمْنَا" (*karramma*), as the initiator of behavior, has the significance of giving the recipient of the behavior a noble attribute.

⁶ Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 22-23.

ugliness, and right and wrong. In short, individuals may either follow the path of *Iblis* (i.e., the Demon or Satan) characterized by *kufr* (i.e., disbelief or intentional rejection of the truth) or strive to walk along *al-Sirat al-Mustaqim* (i.e., the Straight Path) using the abilities granted to them.⁷

Furthermore, Islam emphasizes that since human beings have been granted the right to make choices, they have, in principle, accepted *amanah* (trust), as the Qur'an clearly states: "We (Allah) did offer *amanah* (the Trust) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear its burden and were afraid of it, and human-being picked it up" (Surah al-Ahzab 33:72). This acceptance obliges humanity to strive for a wonderful life and to build a just and moral society.

In Islamic teachings, the *khalifah* (i.e., viceroys or deputies) appointed by Allah on earth are to be praised if they fulfill their responsibilities competently; otherwise, they are subject to condemnation. Human beings, however, are often easily excited by unexpected situations and tend to overestimate their abilities. They may not realize that trusts serve as a test of will, perseverance, integrity, and honesty, often pushing these qualities to their limits. Thus, the enormous challenge faced by humanity—and its potential for great achievements—lies in voluntarily acting as just and moral agents through conscious and free choices. The same verse continues: "Surely, he/she (i.e., human) has always proved to be a wrongdoer and foolishly ignorant" (Surah al-Ahzab 33:72).

However, if one fails to diligently suppress instinctive evil impulses and tendencies through sincere and determined effort (referred to as *jihad* in Islamic classical terminology), or if one does not strive to ascend the moral

⁷ Please refer to the Qur'an, Surah al-Fatihah 1:1-7.

and spiritual ladder toward the pinnacle of human perfection, this noble goal will remain difficult to achieve.⁸

According to Islamic teachings, although humans are not bound by the concept of "original sin," as emphasized in Christianity, they are still powerless and appear extremely fragile in many aspects. Consequently, there are instances where expectations cannot be fulfilled, and in moments of despair, human nature proves inherently unstable. Determination may quickly falter, leaving individuals disheartened and hopeless. The Qur'an aptly describes this condition:

"Human is never tired of praying for good things. And if evil touches him, then he is despaired, losing all hopes. And when We (Allah) give him a taste of mercy from Us after some adversity has touched him, he will certainly say: 'This is due to myself, and I do not think that the Hour (of Resurrection) will ever occur, and if I am returned to my Lord, indeed there will be the best reward with Him for me.' Thus, We will surely inform those who disbelieved all about what they ever did. And indeed We will make them taste of the severe punishment. And when We grant Our favor to the human, he turns away and distances himself, but when some evil touches him, he is full of lengthy and extensive prayers."⁹

⁸ It is worthy to note that in the long and difficult spiritual and moral journey of the human soul, as described in the Qur'an, the main milestones include the three stages as mentioned previously in the text.

⁹ It is also stated in the Qur'an that: "And if We (Allah) let the human to taste and enjoy Our favour, and then withhold it from him, he becomes desperate and ungrateful. And if We give him to taste Our blessings after adversity or hardship had afflicted him then he says: 'Bad times of ills has gone from me.' Indeed, he is arrogant and boastful. Except

(Surah Fussilat 41: 49–51)

In addition, humans are forgetful and prone to going astray. Most significantly, they are susceptible to arrogance (as exemplified by Pharaohs) and often fall victim to artificial gods of their own making. It is precisely due to Allah's enduring compassion and kindness toward humans, coupled with His profound understanding of their weaknesses and their innate thirst for goodness, virtue, and truth, that Allah the Almighty continuously provides guidance to help them lead moral and just lives. This divine assistance enables humans to fulfill their purpose in this world and attain redemption in the eternal life to come.

Moreover, among the countless blessings bestowed upon humanity by Allah without expectation of compensation are the abilities of sensory perception and abstract thinking. These form two essential lifelines for humans to strive toward moral survival and spiritual salvation through their efforts. The first of these lifelines is the sending of a series of Messengers and Prophets—transmitters of divine guidance from Allah the Almighty. Beginning with Adam, passing through Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), and 'Isa (Jesus), and culminating with Muhammad (PBUH), these Prophets and Messengers called people to return to their true nature and fundamental purpose. Through diverse yet complementary approaches, they persuaded humanity to follow the straight path, purify themselves, and establish a moral and just order on earth, thereby achieving success and happiness in this world and eternal bliss in the paradise of the hereafter.¹⁰

those who have the patience and do good, righteous deeds. Those will have forgiveness and a great reward" (Surah Hud 11:9-11).

¹⁰ The Qur'an repeatedly and solemnly declares that the core message of all Prophets and Messengers is a call for humanity to recognize and submit to the Only Ruler - Allah, that is, to become Muslims. Therefore, the Qur'an identifies the Messenger - Muhammad (PBUH) as the last or sealed Prophet (*Khatim al-Nabiyyin*). Strictly speaking,

The second important lifeline given by Allah to humanity is the unique attribute of human dignity. According to Islamic teachings, this dignity is embedded in human nature (*fitrah*) from the very beginning of their existence as conscious beings. It is important to note that this vital attribute is not a result of human accomplishments, nor is it earned through faith or good deeds; it is simply a fundamental aspect of being human. As the famous near-modern Iraqi Qur'anic commentator, Shihab al-Din Mahmud al-Alusi (1802–1854), stated: "Dignity, nobility, and glory are completely bestowed on everyone; among them, believers and non-believers, those in awe, and those who commit crimes are all equal" (i.e. all have equal status).¹¹

Therefore, in accordance with *Shari'ah* (Islamic law), all people, including criminals, are granted this noble treatment. Regarding the imposition of punishments on criminals, the contemporary Syrian Islamic jurist Wahbah al-Zuhayli (1932–2015) explained: "Punishing someone is to promote him/her to repent and start anew, not to insult or harm his/her dignity."¹² To protect and uphold this sacred grace from Allah, Islam has established a comprehensive system that intertwines the rights and obligations of Allah, humanity, and nature through its teachings and rules. Hence, to fully understand the significance of human

the role of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is only too perfect and to once again confirm the original information or message of his predecessors, i.e. "There is no god but Allah". All Prophets and Messengers (like heaven and earth, and everything between them or nature) are also referred to as Muslims in the Qur'an, who are submissive followers of Allah.

¹¹ Shihab al-Din Abu al-Thana' Mahmud bin 'Abdillah al-Husayni al-Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'ani fi Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim wa al-Sab' al-Mathani*, ed. 'Ali 'Abd al-Bari 'Atiyyah (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1415/1994), vol. 15, 117.

¹² Wahbah al-Zuhayli, *al-Fiqh al-Islami wa Adillatuh* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1409/1989), vol. 6, 720.

dignity and its role, it is essential to consider the worldview of Islam carefully.

The Worldview in Islam

The English term "worldview" corresponds to the German word *Weltanschauung*, first coined by the renowned German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) in his seminal 1790 work, *Kritik der Urteilsskraft* (*Critique of Judgment*)¹³, and which is a combination of the two German terms, "Welt" (world) and "Anschauung" (perception), specifically referring to one's perception of the world. Subsequently, other philosophers, sociologists, and aestheticians - such as Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911), Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) -, have widely used this term in various forms. In modern Western societies, worldview is generally understood as a specific philosophy, outlook on life, or a conceptual framework through which individuals or communities perceive and interpret the world.

In contrast, the contemporary Malaysian philosopher Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas pointed out:

"What is meant by 'worldview', according to the perspective of Islam, is then the vision of reality and truth that appears before our mind's eye revealing what existence is all about; for it is the world of existence in its totality that Islam is projecting."¹⁴

In fact, the Qur'anic term "*al-ghayb*" (the unseen-hidden things) refers to certain dimensions of existence that are typically beyond the ordinary range of human

¹³ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, ed. Otfried Höffe (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 61.

¹⁴ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), 2001), 2.

perception. Therefore, the Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that a steadfast belief in *al-ghayb* is a defining characteristic and attribute of *al-muttaqin* (those who fear and revere Allah the Almighty)¹⁵.

Furthermore, the Muslim worldview does not align with the conventional view that separates the material and spiritual realms, nor does it consider *al-dunya* (the present) and *al-akhirah* (the hereafter) as antagonistic or contradictory. Instead, the Islamic worldview, as a unified and continuous whole, encompasses both reality and various aspects of existence. More importantly, it views this world as a temporary stage for preparing for the eternal life to come (i.e., the hereafter). This perspective does not imply neglect or indifference toward this world.¹⁶ Additionally, Islam is not merely a type of culture but rather a profound insight into and understanding of reality and truth—a value system derived from its divine source. In other words, Islam is not rooted in purely cultural or philosophical principles supported by science. On the contrary, the source of Islam withstands rational analysis and can be verified through all effective means of human knowledge, including intuitive understanding and scientific research.¹⁷ Therefore, in addition to human nature, the two most important aspects of "existence" are, first, the relationship between humans and Allah, and second, the relationship between humans and the universe.

The word "Allah" is mentioned more than 2500 times in the Qur'an.¹⁸ Indeed, the most frequently recited chapter of the Qur'an by Muslims daily describes Allah as: "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, the

¹⁵ Please refer to the Qur'an, Surah al-Baqarah 2: 2-3 and Surah al-Mulk 67: 12.

¹⁶ Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas, "The Worldview of Islam: An Outline," in *Islam and the Challenges of Modernity*, ed. Sharifah Shifa al-Attas, (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1996), 26.

¹⁷ Al-Attas, "The Worldview of Islam: An Outline", 28.

¹⁸ Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, 985.

Absolute; He begets not, nor is He begotten; and there is none like unto Him" (Surah al-Ikhlās 112:1-4). The modern Polish-Jewish Muslim commentator of the Qur'an, Muhammad Asad (1900–1992), interpreted this chapter as emphasizing Allah's existence, which goes far beyond the scope of human understanding. This chapter excludes any inappropriate description or limitation of the Lord. Moreover, it explains why any depiction of Allah through visual representation or abstract symbolism is considered *kufur* (blasphemy and denial of truth) by Muslims.

If the ontological attributes of Allah are described as "He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Hidden, and He has full knowledge of all things" (Surah al-Hadid 57:3), then the concept of Allah cannot be fully grasped by human understanding. However, Allah's other attributes, such as being the Creator, Provider, Nurturer, and Protector of all beings, are more accessible to human comprehension. The Qur'an raises the logical question: "Were they created of nothing, or were they themselves the creators?" (Surah al-Tur 52:35). While humans can create or produce, such as giving birth or inventing machines, the Qur'an affirms the uniqueness of Allah's creative power: "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth; when He decrees a matter, He says to it: 'Be,' and it is" (Surah al-Baqarah [2]: 117) and "Verily, when He intends a thing, His command is: 'Be,' and it is." (Surah Yasin 36:82).

The Qur'an further reflects on creation: "Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before We (Allah) clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?" (Surah al-Anbiya' 21:30). After creating the earth, "He (Allah) set on the (earth) mountains standing firm, high above it, and bestowed blessings on the earth and measured therein all things to give them nourishment in due proportion." (Surah Fussilat 41:10). Also, "With power and skill did We (Allah)

construct the firmament, for it is We Who create the vastness of space. And We have spread out the (spacious) earth; how excellently We do spread out!" (Surah al-Dhariyat 51:47-48).

Regarding the nature of the universe, the Qur'an clearly affirms that it is an immensely vast and constantly expanding system. However, within this system, "(such is) the artistry of Allah, Who disposes of all things in perfect order" (Surah al-Naml 27:88). Furthermore, "You (human) will see nothing out of proportion in the creation of the All-Merciful (Allah). So, cast your eye again: do you see any rifts? Then cast your eye again and again, and your vision will return to you humbled and exhausted" (Surah al-Mulk 67:3-4). The Qur'an thus describes the universe as a meticulously organized structure that operates in a precise, orderly, and harmonious manner, governed by laws deeply embedded in it by Allah the Almighty. While the universe is autonomous in its function, it is not arbitrary or authoritarian. It has no control over its own existence and cannot explain itself, as it ultimately depends on the will and design of its Creator.¹⁹

At this point, the question that needs to be considered is how to explain the incredibly vast space, diverse species, intricate structures, and orderly operating systems of nature. Why does it exist? Does its existence have any significance or purpose? Or is the universe simply a vast and complex machine that mysteriously emerges from nothing without meaning or intention? Some scholars believe such questions are meaningless, arguing that nature or the universe should simply be regarded as an ordered fact to be treated accordingly. However, for such individuals, as described by the late professor at the University of Chicago, Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), nature or the universe is like a young child with toys given for some necessary reason.²⁰

¹⁹ Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 3.

²⁰ Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an*, 3.

In fact, such scholars fail to recognize and understand the problems indicated by nature beyond its own mechanical structure and laws, becoming entangled in the details of nature's operations and struggling to extricate themselves. In contrast, the Qur'an explicitly rejects the idea of the universe being created through playful or trivial actions with no serious intention: "We (Allah) did not create the heavens and the earth and what is between them in vain. That is the thinking of those who disbelieve. So, woe to the disbelievers because of the fire (they have to face)" (Surah Sad 38:27) and "So did you (humans) think that We (Allah) created you for nothing, and that you will not be brought back to Us?" (Surah al-Mu'minin 23:115).

According to the Qur'an, one of the purposes of the existence of nature or the universe is to stimulate human intelligence and awaken their instincts, so that they can realize the significance and meaning of the metaphysical aspects of nature and the ethical morality of human beings, and thus come to understand Allah the Almighty. The heavens and the earth, the human life cycle, the countless other species inhabiting the earth, the changes in the four seasons, the winds, clouds, rain, stars, the Milky Way, and all things beyond the galaxy are *ayat* (signs) that prove the existence of Allah the Almighty.

It is important to note that the term *ayah* and its plural *ayat* in the Qur'an refer not only to the Qur'anic scripture or verses themselves but also to the specific and situational attributes that point to one or more signs, pieces of information, or messages. From this perspective, the Qur'anic verses (*ayat*) and the signs of nature (*ayat*) complement each other in the process of human inspiration granted by the Divine. The primal state of human faith and reverence for Allah the Almighty will guide individuals to awaken their desire for enlightenment, ultimately pointing to the Infinite and Eternal Lord beyond all.

Therefore, Islamic teachings make it clear that the 'scriptures' of Allah's revelation and the 'scriptures' in nature or the universe speak the same language and express the same meaning: Allah is the Sole Creator, the Only Ruler, and the Unique Provider of the heavens, the earth, and all that lies between them. However, the Qur'an does not attempt to prove the existence of Allah through technological means or philosophical reasoning. Still, it seeks to awaken human nature (*fitrah*)—the primal or innate remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah the Almighty within human beings. Thus, the Qur'an continuously encourages human beings to see, observe, consider, and contemplate, so that they might become aware of the signs of Allah in the world around them:

“Surely, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, there are signs for the people of wisdom. Those who remember Allah standing, sitting, and (lying) on their sides ponder on the creation of the heavens and the earth (and say), ‘Our Lord, You have not created all this in vain. We proclaim Your purity. So, save us from the punishment of the Fire. Our Lord, whomever You admit into the Fire, he is disgraced by You indeed, and for the unjust, there are no supporters. Our Lord, we heard a herald calling towards faith (Islam): “Believe in your Lord.” So we believed. Our Lord, forgive our sins, erase our evil deeds, and make us die only when we have joined the righteous. Our Lord, give us what You have promised us through Your messengers, and do not put us to disgrace on the Day of Judgment. Surely, You do not go back on Your Promise.’ So, their Lord answered their prayer: ‘I do not allow the labor of any worker from among you,

male or female, to go to waste” (Surah Ali-‘Imran 3:191-195).

Therefore, when Allah asked the human souls: “Am I not your Lord?” they declared: “Of course, You are. We testify” (Surah al-A‘raf 7:172). In other words, the first part of the testimony of the Islamic faith, which states, “There is no god to be worshiped except Allah,” is a recognition of Allah’s unique attributes and a solemn declaration that excludes all those who are similar to Him in person, substance, or any other form. In this regard, Islamic doctrine stipulates that Allah does not condone the sin of associating partners with Him, but will forgive any sin other than that. Thus, Allah the Almighty describes Himself in the Qur’an through the following verses: “Surely, I Am Allah. There is no god but Myself, so worship Me, and establish salah for My remembrance” (Surah Taha 20:14), “Allah has not taken a son to Himself, nor was there any god with Him. Had there been so, every god would have taken away what he created, and each would have been aggressive against the other. Pure is Allah from what they describe” (Surah al-Mu‘minun 23:91), and “Surely, Allah does not forgive that a partner is ascribed to Him, and He forgives anything short of that for whomever He wills. Whoever ascribes a partner to Allah commits a terrible sin” (Surah al-Nisa’ 4:48).

Fundamentally speaking, the information described in the Qur’an is consistent with all the previous messages conveyed by the Prophets and Messengers, with the message conveyed by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as the pinnacle, directly pointing to human perceptual and rational knowledge. It is precisely because of this that forcing others to believe in a religion is explicitly excluded by the teachings and rules of Islam. The Qur’an clearly proclaims to the world: “There is no compulsion in faith (Islam)” (Surah al-Baqarah 2:256), which is, in fact, the essence of

Islamic principles, as individuals have the right to freedom of choice and are also responsible for their own choices.

Meanwhile, it should be noted that Islam exhibits its basic characteristics of providing concise and easy-to-understand information during its dissemination. This does not imply that believers possess shallow intelligence or actions but rather highlights their logical and clear thinking and cognition. Therefore, the information or messages disseminated by Islam align with the simple procedure for believers to join the faith. Unlike certain other religions, such as Christianity, which may require long-term preparations or special arrangements, Islam only requires participants to bear witness by solemnly declaring their beliefs. Specifically, it involves affirming one's belief in Allah the Almighty with His Unique Attributes, acknowledging Muhammad's Prophetic status, and witnessing him as the last Messenger sent by Allah to all humanity.

Following this declaration, Muslims are encouraged to improve their self-cultivation through continuous sincere practice and to share their faith and values with neighbors, relatives, and friends, ultimately aspiring to perfection. In summary, the "knowledge, faith, conduct, and sincerity" model is one of the primary factors behind Islam's great success in geopolitical dissemination. Historically, countless individuals from diverse backgrounds, including Jews, Christians, Catholics, Zoroastrians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others, have embraced Islam.

Naturally, new Muslims, regardless of their social status or background, may initially carry elements from their previous religious principles and customs. However, as they integrate into the Islamic community, continuous learning and understanding, coupled with the simplicity and clarity of Islamic teachings and principles, help ensure that erroneous ideas and superstitions incompatible with Islam are gradually eliminated.

At the same time, ideas, behaviors, and practices that do not conflict with Islamic teachings or principles are welcomed and often absorbed, reflecting the inclusive spirit of Islam. These elements may eventually integrate into Islamic societies' rich and diverse "Unity + Plurality" social system. Members of such societies often receive guidance and support from 'Ulama' (scholars) when needed, enabling them to develop a correct understanding of Islamic teachings and rules and strive to align their thoughts and actions with the spirit and principles of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Therefore, every Muslim, regardless of location, is encouraged to continually seek a higher level of spiritual enlightenment, moral integrity, honesty, aesthetic cultivation, and meticulous thinking. A Muslim should aspire to be a noble and civilized individual who harmonizes spiritual and material aspects, actively contributing to their society's positive development and progress.

The Ummah Principle in Islam

In 610 AD, during the early years of the Prophet Muḥammad's (PBUH) mission to promote Islam in Mecca, he and his followers faced severe persecution. As a result, they had no choice but to migrate to Medina in 622 AD. Upon arrival, the Prophet established the Charter of Medina²¹ (hereinafter referred to as the Charter) for the first time, marking the establishment of their own political foothold.

²¹ Huhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Isma'il Raqi al-Faruqi (US: North American Trust Publications, 1976), 180-183. For detailed information on the Medina Charter, please refer to: Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah (The Life of Muhammad)*, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985); Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983).

During the following ten years in Medina, as a religious and political leader, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used his extraordinary wisdom to strengthen the bond between the 'Aws and Khazraj tribes, who had already embraced Islam, and the Muslims who had migrated from Mecca. He promoted an unprecedented unity and societal plurality among all Muslims and other groups, guided by a mission rooted in morality and justice. This mission is embodied in the concept of the *ummah* — an international social system of community jointly constructed by Muslims with a shared future for humanity. The Qur'an clearly emphasizes this vision in the following verses:

- "There has to be an Ummah from among you who call towards the good, and bid the fair and forbid the unfair." (Surah Ali 'Imran 3:104)
- "You are the best Ummah ever raised for mankind. You bid the fair and forbid the unfair, and you believe in Allah." (Surah Ali 'Imran 3:110)
- "In the same way, We (Allah) made you a moderate (just) Ummah, so that you should be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger a witness to you." (Surah al-Baqarah 2:143).

1. The Formation and Development of the Ummah Principle

Specifically, to eliminate clanism or sectarianism and to strengthen unity and solidarity, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) first resolved the blood feud that had lasted over four centuries between the two tribes of Medina— 'Aus and Khazraj²², This reconciliation is highlighted in the Qur'an:

"O you who believe, fear Allah as He should be feared, and let not yourselves die save as Muslims. Hold fast, all of you, to the cord of Allah, and be not divided. Remember the

²² Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 179.

blessing of Allah upon you: when you were enemies to each other, and He brought your hearts together so that you became brothers through His blessing. You were at the brink of a pit of Fire, then He saved you from it. This is how Allah makes His signs clear to you so that you may take the right path.”

Surah Ali ‘Imran 3:102-103

In addition, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) fostered a strong, solid, and stable bond between the Muslims from Mecca and the local Muslims of Medina through the Charter. The Charter explicitly stated that the migrants from Mecca and the assistants from Medina together form the foundation of the *ummah*. Furthermore, it declared that Jews and Muslims constituted a unified *ummah*, clearly indicating, in my view, that Muslims can coexist peacefully with other races and communities in any time and place. Additionally, the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH) extended commitments to Christians, followers of other religions, and neighboring tribes, guaranteeing the safety of their lives, religions, properties, and dignity.²³

Under the leadership of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), Islam rapidly developed and flourished in Medina, attracting the participation of various tribes from the surrounding areas. Consequently, by the time of the Prophet’s demise in 632 AD, the Arabian Peninsula was almost entirely under his control. Simultaneously, Islam had begun to extend its influence beyond the peninsula, reaching the thresholds of two major empires: the Byzantine Empire in the north (the Eastern Roman Empire) and the Sassanian Dynasty (the Persian Empire) in the east.

To ensure that the *ummah* community—characterized by its international attributes and inclusiveness—could sustain its essential role over time, the Prophet Muḥammad

²³ Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, 180-183.

(PBUH) delivered a legally and morally significant message to all Muslims during his final sermon. He emphasized the equality of all people, saying: "Apart from reverence, Arabs are not superior to non-Arabs, nor are non-Arabs superior to Arabs. Neither are white people superior to black people, nor are black people superior to white people."²⁴

Ten years later, regions such as Palestine, Syria, and Egypt under the Byzantine Empire, as well as large territories like Iraq and Iran formerly under the Sassanid Dynasty, were conquered by the Arab Empire. By 732 AD (a century after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad - PBUH), the territory of Islam—commonly referred to as *Dar al-Islam* by classical Islamic jurists and historians (literally meaning "Islamic homeland" or "territory of the Islamic state")—spanned from Spain and southern France in the west, across West Asia and North Africa, to India and Central Asia near China's borders in the east.

In Western Europe, although Islam initially expanded rapidly, its progress was halted following the victory of Charles Martel (688–741) and his army in the Battle of Poitiers in 732 AD. Meanwhile, in Eastern Europe, the Byzantine Empire quickly lost much of its territories in West Asia and North Africa to Muslim forces, yet efforts by Muslim conquerors to overtake Anatolia and cross the Dardanelles Strait were thwarted. It was not until 1453 AD, under the leadership of Sultan Mohammed II (1432–1481, known as Fatih, meaning the Conqueror in ancient Turkish), that the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople—the capital of Byzantium—and renamed it Istanbul.

Subsequently, the territory of Islam expanded further, reaching the Atlantic coastline of West Africa, spanning the

²⁴ Muhammad Nasir Din al-Albani, *Silsilah al-Ahadith al-Sahihah wa Shay' min Fiqhiha wa Fawa'iduha* (Riyadh: Maktabah al-Ma'arif li al-Nashar wa al-Tawzi'ah, 1416/1996), no. 2700, vol. 6, 449.

Sahara and Sahel deserts, and extending to regions such as East Africa, the South Asian subcontinent, and the Malay Peninsula in Southeast Asia. Even in southern Chinese cities, international trade facilitated the rapid growth of Islam. Thus, it is worth noting that while the spread of Islam has experienced periods of rapid expansion, stagnation, and slower progress due to various factors, it has consistently maintained varying degrees of development in different parts of the world.²⁵

Regarding the early dissemination and development of Islam, the late Professor Gustave Edmund von Grunebaum (1909–1972) of the University of California noted that the astonishment and admiration expressed by both the Muslim world and the Western academic community regarding the remarkable success of Arab Muslims in establishing their empire—achieved through the defeat of major powers in just a few battles—has never waned.²⁶ It is worth noting that the sustained success of Islam’s dissemination and its ability to integrate diverse social elements were not solely due to the political, legal, economic, cultural, and other advantages that Muslims enjoyed at the time.

History has demonstrated that even during periods when Muslims were at a disadvantage or under the direct rule of invaders and colonialists, Islam continued to spread and influence the way of life for many people. For instance, in the late Middle Ages, a classic example of Islam’s remarkable adaptability and enduring integration was observed in 1258 AD. Despite the destruction of the Abbasid Caliphate by Mongol invaders led by Hulegu (also

²⁵ Please see for example: Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, vols. 1-3 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1974); I. M. Lepidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²⁶ Von Grunebaum, Gustave Edmund, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1962), 1.

spelled Hulagu, a grandson of Genghis Khan, 1217–1265) and the devastation of Baghdad, the conquered Muslims managed to domesticate the barbaric invaders. As described by Professor von Grunebaum, they successfully integrated the Mongols into Islamic civilization, allowing them to accept and adopt its values and culture.²⁷

Compared to other religious civilizations, Islam, with its foundation in the *ummah* community, has gained recognition among people of diverse ethnic origins and cultural backgrounds, fostering brotherhood and solidarity within society. Consequently, Islam has made significant and meaningful contributions to the progress of human civilization throughout history. In this context, the late Professor William Montgomery Watt (1909–2006) of the University of Edinburgh highlighted that studying Islam's remarkable achievements can offer valuable insights into how the integration of the international *ummah* community has occurred in a timely manner. Furthermore, it reminds us of the conscious efforts made by individuals to contribute constructively to this integration process.²⁸

2. The Effect of Those Who Have Practiced the *Ummah* Principle

History has clearly shown that the formation of the *ummah* concept and its framework in Islam led Christians in Syria and Egypt to welcome and support the Arab Muslim liberators, through whom they were freed from the long-term oppression of the Byzantines, who shared the same religion. Similarly, in Iraq, under the Sassanian Kingdom in the East, and among Jews in Western Spain who had long suffered oppression and discrimination by the Western Goths, the *ummah* principle promoted by Islam resulted in

²⁷ Thomas Walker Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: A History of the Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (London: Constable & Company LTD., 1913; London: Darf Publishers, 1986), 218-253.

²⁸ William Montgomery Watt, *Islam and the Integration of Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1961), 1.

comparable outcomes. In modern times, similar events have occurred in vastly different contexts and periods, yet they follow the same internal logical pattern. For instance, in Bangladesh, particularly in the peripheral areas of Hinduism, Muslims have been warmly welcomed by the indigenous lower social classes, who were marginalized and criticized by the Aryan rulers.²⁹

In fact, Islam has garnered active support from many people, especially the hardworking masses, because it advocates a noble belief in Allah the Almighty and a noble concept of brotherhood among humanity.³⁰ Similarly, among Africans who have been oppressed for a long time in mainland Africa, the Indian West across the Atlantic, and in the United States, many people are deeply moved and attracted by the concept of *ummah* advocated by Islam.

This phenomenon is clearly reflected in the work of Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912), the founder of the term "the African personality" and the father of Pan-Africanism. His keen observations and simple insights into the concept of *ummah* in Islam, along with his eloquent words, elucidate the significance and essence of this concept. Edward lived in Liberia for a long time as a priest and missionary (a member of the Presbyterian Church), and after years of firsthand experience, in-depth understanding, and careful observation, he believed that the true purpose of Christians coming to Africa was to rule the body, not save the soul.

In fact, he saw them displaying arrogance, ignorance, imperiousness, and self-righteousness, while lacking true spirituality and humility.³¹ In comparison, Islam's high

²⁹ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 279.

³⁰ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 280.

³¹ Robert W. July, "Nineteenth Century Negritude: Edward Blyden", *Journal of African History* V:I (1964), 81-82; Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004), 225-227.

respect for racial equality and human dignity made him envious. In his report to the church headquarters, he stated:

"The Mohammedan religion seeks for the real man, neglects the accidental for the essential, the adventitious for the integral. Hence it extinguishes all distinctions founded upon race, colour, or nationality. To the African... the religion of Islam furnishes the greatest solace and the greatest defence... The foreigner never fails to respect him when he presents himself with the badge of the faith of Mohammed."³²

Edward also bluntly criticized the negative role of Western Christianity in Africa. He emphasized that, if proof were needed, it could be seen in South Africa's policy of racial segregation between European and non-European people, as well as the so-called religious defense statements made. The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa believed that, according to the Old Testament, the descendants of Ham were destined by God to be "hewers of wood and drawers of water," meaning servants and slaves of the descendants of Shem. In this context, if white people (the descendants of Shem) intermarried with other races (the descendants of Ham) or engaged in any form of humanitarian interaction, it would be considered a criminal and illegal act, strongly condemned by both the Church and the State.

In contrast, in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and various regions of West Africa, especially in the Middle East, Edward carefully examined and studied Islam and Muslim society. He pointed out that Islam is not an imperialist religion rooted in Arab expansionism. The disseminators of Islam do not actively seek followers, nor do Muslim's plan

³² July, "Nineteenth Century Negritude: Edward Blyden", 81-82; July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 225-227.

for themselves as the first believers. Instead, they usually present the advantages of Islam to their neighbors and friends as traders, settlers, or through intermarriage. Islam always encourages the pursuit of knowledge, and its various central institutions have consistently attracted many scholars and wise, highly cultivated mentors. Islam teaches people to be cautious and simple, unites them with firm faith bonds and brotherly affection, and lays a solid foundation for economic development and progress, as well as for a political system capable of withstanding fierce enemy attacks.³³

It is worth noting that Edward, as an influential critic of Western Christianity in the 19th century, and one of the Christian black communities in the Western Hemisphere who expressed admiration for Islam, was by no means the only or unique figure. Other individuals who had a profound impact on the New Africanism on both sides of the Atlantic shared similar views and positions. One such representative figure is the Bishop of the African Methodist Church, Henry McNeal Turner (1834-1925). As a leader in missionary activities targeting African black people, Bishop Turner's work, like Edward's, spread throughout Sierra Leone and Liberia. In a report on missionary work in West Africa in 1880, he said:

"These black Mohammadan priests walking around here in their robes with so much dignity, majesty, and consciousness of their worth, are driving me into respect for them. Some came for hundreds of miles from the country - out of the bushes - better scholars than in America. What fools we are to suppose that these Africans are fools...!"³⁴

³³ July, "Nineteenth Century Negritude"; July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought*, 227.

³⁴ Richard Brent Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 60.

Again, for example, at the Congress of Africans held in Atlanta in 1895, John Henry Smyth (1844–1908), who served as the United States Consul General in Liberia in the 1880s stated:

“Africans cannot be influenced by aliens, who, however Christian seek to subvert their manhood... Of the foregoing Races [of Sierra Leone] there has been no acceptance of foreign influence. These races represent a very high and unique type o Mohammedanism and Arabic training... They are not controlled by the Arab, the Persian or the Turk, as to their conception of the Koran.³⁵”

Similarly, as a prominent figure of Pan-African nationalism, the leading American journalist and historian John Edward Bruce (1856–1924) also stated that:

“[The] white church of America... preaches and perverts the Gospel [and] by indirection and evasion denies the brotherhood of man... [and] makes the Black man who loves Jesus feel his inferiority and that he is a degree or two lower than the white Christian and a ward rather than an equal before God.³⁶”

Given the widespread disillusionment with Christianity in the United States, coupled with sincere admiration for Islam—particularly among those who had previously spread the Gospel of Christ in West Africa, such as Edward and Bishop Turner—many African American groups gradually embraced their Muslim identity in the early 20th century after firsthand experiences in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Among the first was the Moorish Science Temple of America, founded by Noble Drew Ali

³⁵ Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 60.

³⁶ Turner, *Islam in the African-American Experience*, 61.

(1886–1929) in 1913.³⁷ Since then, similar groups have gradually converted to Islam. Notably, within African American communities in the United States, the most prominent group is the Nation of Islam, though its opponents often refer to it as Black Muslims.³⁸

The Nation of Islam is a social organization founded by Wallace Fard Muhammad (1877–1934) in Detroit in 1930, with the aim of improving the spiritual, social, and economic conditions of African Americans. After Fard's disappearance in 1934, he was regarded by his followers as the Mahdi (or Savior).³⁹ Subsequently, the organization split, and Fard's assistant, Elijah Muhammad (1897–1975), led a group of followers to relocate the movement's center to Chicago, where he officially established the Nation of Islam for Black Americans.⁴⁰ Under Elijah Muhammad's leadership, the movement continued to grow, particularly through the efforts of his disciple, Malcolm X (1925–1965).⁴¹

The organization's core ideas gradually evolved with the participation of various societies and were primarily based on Elijah's "The Supreme Wisdom Lessons." Initially, the teachings promoted Fard as a prophet, later elevating him to "the Almighty God", while Elijah was

³⁷ Aminah Beverly McCloud, *African American Islam* (New York and London: n. p., 1995), 10.

³⁸ McCloud, *African American Islam*, 10-94.

³⁹ Erdmann Doane Beyon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants in Detroit," *American Journal of Sociology* 43(6) (1938), 894-907.

⁴⁰ Clegg III, Claude Andrew, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1997), 232.

⁴¹ Louis E. Lomax, *When the World is Given: A Report on Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and the Black Muslim World* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1963), 15-16; Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1965), 388-391; Bruce Perry, *Malcolm: The Life of a Man Who Changed Black America* (Barrytown, N. Y.: Station Hill, 1991), 230-252; Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 123, 436-437.

regarded as "the Messenger". Other central doctrines included the supremacy of Black people, the belief that the ancestor of humanity was Black, and the idea that African Americans are Allah's chosen people.⁴² It is worth noting that the establishment of similar organizations or societies reflects the African-American community's sense of being a lost nation. To restore a nation's cultural value, any society seeks to establish connections with its origins. For many in this context, Islam provides a means for the community to reclaim and solidify this connection.

This clearly demonstrates that the principles of such organizations or societies were, in essence, a response to the supremacism and oppression faced by African Americans in the United States. These principles were rooted in certain teachings of Islam and emerged as part of social movements against racial discrimination and oppression. Additionally, through his pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X personally experienced the spirit of unity and brotherhood among Muslims of all races and diverse cultural backgrounds. As a result, he abandoned his earlier ideas and severed ties with Elijah Muhammad in 1964.

From that point forward, Malcolm X began advocating for Islam as an international faith with a global moral mission that addresses all of humanity. Furthermore, after Elijah Muhammad's death in 1975, his son Wallace Deen Muhammad (1933–2008) assumed leadership, dismantled the ideas promoted by his father, and renamed the organization as the World Community of Islam in the West, later rebranding it as the American Society of Muslims. The

⁴² Marvin Perry & Fredrick M. Scheitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present* (US: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 213; Dawn-Marie Gibson, *A History of the Nation of Islam: Race, Islam, and the Quest for Freedom* (Calif, US: Praeger, 2012), 13, 21-22, 28-29; Elijah Muhammad, *Message to the Blackman in America* (US: Secretarius Mempo Publications, 2006).

organization's revised purpose and core ideas aligned closely with those championed by Malcolm X.⁴³

However, it should be noted that the opposition led by Louis Farrakhan (originally named Louis Eugene Walcott, 1933–2013) essentially continued the mixed faction or sect established by Elijah Muhammad in Detroit in 1930, retaining the organization's original name, "Nation of Islam." While all members of the sect are trained in genuine Islamic knowledge and support the core values of Islam, they continue to adhere to the earlier concepts and principles of racial segregation.

Additionally, the sect incorporates both the Bible and the Qur'an as guiding principles during missionary work and replaces fasting during Ramadan with the practice of fasting in December according to the Gregorian calendar. They also hold differing views on *zakah* and *salah*. Due to the fact that the ideas promoted by Elijah Muhammad and Louis Farrakhan contradict the fundamental teachings, principles, and rules of Islam, the Muslim world has not formally recognized this faction or sect as an Islamic one.

3. The Significant Role of the *Ummah* Principle in the Modern Time

Throughout history, many Asian and African countries and regions, from West Africa to the South Asian subcontinent in modern times, have been under Western colonial rule, and Muslims were no exception in experiencing brutal military and political persecution by Western colonialists. In the eyes of the colonialists, the Muslim world was nothing more than a vast entity composed of fragmented groups of people and cultures. Islam was neither considered a religion nor a way of life, and its followers were not seen as an entity deserving recognition in their own right.

⁴³ C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, ed. William B. (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 88-89, 218, 263 & 274; Steven Barboza, *American Jihad: Islam After Malcolm X* (New York: Image Books, 1994), 95-96.

Therefore, to render the Muslim world dependent and establish a material foundation for a Western-style society in Islamic countries and regions, Western powers deliberately introduced so-called 'fundamental principles' into Islam through a series of aggressive policies and measures. These efforts aimed to integrate Islamic governance into new social models, replacing what they deemed "unreasonable provisions" established by the *Shari'ah*, which they described as forms of "religious coercion."

Moreover, although Western colonial powers were gradually weakened and ultimately disintegrated after the two World Wars, neo-colonial democrats, in their efforts to balance or undermine the influence of their allies, supported colonial nationalist movements. This led to the rise of national liberation movements across the Muslim world, resulting in the establishment of various nation-states. Some newly independent Muslim countries exhibited a pronounced trend of Westernization, such as the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938). Other countries embraced extreme nationalism and secularism in their development, as seen in the Arab Republic of Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser (1918–1970). In this context, colonialists and nationalists promoted the view that Islam should be regarded as a component of individual nations or groups, leading to models such as the Turkish Model, Arab Style, North African Model, and South Asian Style.

Objectively speaking, neither of the above unjust and contradictory claims accurately understands Islam from the perspective of its holistic truth. For the global Muslim population, they exhibit both unity and diversity—two attributes that, in no way, conflict with or exclude one another. Thus, during both colonial and nationalist eras, aggressors and dictators underestimated the strength of the unified, diverse, and international principle of the *ummah*

by focusing solely on local and regional differences within the Muslim world.

Despite enduring oppression, slavery, and exploitation by Western powers and authoritarian regimes, Muslim populations in various regions and countries managed not only to preserve their faith but also to spread Islam and its civilization to areas previously untouched by it.⁴⁴ Furthermore, Islam resembles a mosaic or a symphony, where various components or tonal elements are evenly distributed, distinct, perfected, and seamlessly integrated with others to form a cohesive pattern and harmonious composition. This raises two fundamental questions worth considering: what is the pattern through which this extraordinary and ever-evolving harmony is arranged, and how was it formed or generated? Answering these questions requires a proper understanding of the following key points.

First, Islam does not have a church-like organization or a structured hierarchy emphasized by churches, nor does it possess long-standing missionaries or missionary associations similar to those found in various Christian denominations. In contrast, the spread of Islam has traditionally occurred naturally, facilitated by the personal actions and conduct of Muslim businessmen, teachers, doctors, and others in their ordinary daily lives. In recent years, although various regional or international institutions dedicated to Islamic Da'wah (i.e., invitation) have been established globally, their purpose is primarily to coordinate efforts and address conflicts or shortcomings inherent in traditional, person-to-person communication methods.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 218-253.

⁴⁵ Larry Poston, *Islamic Da'wah in the West* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Jorgen Nielsen, *Muslims in Western Europe* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992 and 1995).

Second, both individual and collective efforts have undeniably demonstrated that Islam has established and developed a diverse social system fundamentally committed to advocating various positive aspects of human nature. This system organically combines material and spiritual dimensions, rational and emotional elements, as well as individual and collective aspects. Consequently, Islam exhibits remarkable resilience and vitality, even in times of adversity. Moreover, these efforts have also affirmed that, under the guidance of the spirit of the *ummah* community, Islam has shown extraordinary influence, infectivity, and cohesion in continuously integrating diverse groups and individuals.

Last but not least, intermarriage and cohabitation have played a significant role in the spread of Islam and the development of the *ummah* system, which cannot be overlooked. As pioneers in spreading Islam, Muslim Arabs, adhering to the principles of the Qur'an and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH), did not place themselves above other ethnic groups or align themselves exclusively with privileged or aristocratic classes. Instead, they actively integrated with various ethnic groups worldwide through intermarriage, including the Spanish in Andalusia, the Berbers in North Africa, the Copts and Nubians in the Nile basin, the Levantine people in the eastern Mediterranean, and diverse groups across Central and South Asia.

On the one hand, Muslims of all ethnicities uphold Islamic teachings, striving to promote unity, harmony, and coexistence within their societies. On the other hand, they embody and demonstrate the rich traditions of Islam through travel, trade, and the pursuit or dissemination of knowledge. By traveling extensively, they often intermarry with others who share mutual understanding, particularly those united by Islam as a common faith and way of life. For instance, many Berbers and Tuareg people in North

Africa and the Sahara Desert continue to intermarry with the Wolof and Fulani people in West Africa, who in turn maintain intermarriage traditions with the Hausa and Borno peoples. This illustrates how diverse ethnic groups across North, West, Central, and East Africa have integrated into a cohesive and dynamic social system of the *ummah*, showcasing their collective value and significance. Furthermore, this phenomenon is equally evident in Muslim communities across East Africa, Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and other regions.

In summary, beyond purely religious, social, and personal factors, many non-Muslim men and women are initially drawn to Islam by its wisdom and value as a civilization and way of life. Subsequently, through ongoing personal experience, learning, and appreciation, these individuals ultimately embrace the fundamental principles and values of Islam, voluntarily adopting it as their personal faith.⁴⁶ Naturally, with the rapid advancement of social communication media and international tourism, this factor may become increasingly significant.

Conclusion

The formation of the *ummah* concept, principle, and framework as an international "Unity + Plurality" social system in the geopolitical dissemination of Islam is a phenomenon deserving serious academic study. Overall, there are significant differences and distinctions between this system and other systems (primarily Western ones). This system's unique highlight lies in its promotion of the integration of diverse ethnic groups. In other words, the construction of a harmonious society in Islamic countries is a profound expression of an ideal social order. It incorporates mechanisms for resolving social conflicts, emphasizes the openness of human thought in the pursuit

⁴⁶ Ismail R. al-Faruqi & Lois Lamya', *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1986).

of a better society, and offers practical possibilities for developing multi-mechanism models.

Moreover, the establishment of social order is not achieved by eliminating social norms through legal measures or by using formal methods of social control to suppress informal social behaviors. Regardless of the coercive measures employed, social norms, behaviors, or frameworks cannot be effectively or entirely eradicated. In light of this, the key to effective social governance lies in facilitating communication between different communities, managing controls appropriately, and addressing differences and conflicts. This approach is essential to solving the practical challenges that arise during social change.

Islam's fair attitude towards racial and religious issues throughout its long history has not only facilitated its rapid global spread but also enabled countless communities and groups to integrate into the international *ummah* system, ultimately characterized by the beauty of Islam. It is noteworthy that the Charter of Medina, as the foundation for governance during successive caliphate dynasties and an inspiration for imperial constitutions, did not abolish pre-existing tribal structures or agreements. Instead, it recognized their legitimacy and authority. The Charter's endorsement of tribal structures and alliance states aimed to promote public order, uphold good customs, and advance human ethics and morality within a new governmental framework. This approach did not perpetuate the arrogance of feudal racial hierarchies or sustain longstanding tribal conflicts.

Since the birth of Islam, the universal understanding of the concept and principle of *ummah* in the Muslim world has referred to a collective human destiny that transcends differences in status, race, ethnicity, culture, and religion. It is rooted in equality and justice as its principle, with global morality as its mission. This shared sense of humanity

reflects values of equality which, when acknowledged, foster integration rather than division between diverse communities. As contemporary Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (1931–) points out, the recognition of the equal value of different cultures is essential. Not only must their existence be permitted, but their value must also be acknowledged. A key reason why multi-ethnic societies may fragment is the inability of one group to receive recognition of its equal worth from others. Recognizing this equality can therefore promote harmony and mutual respect across diverse societies.⁴⁷

Islam is well known as a spiritual support for different ethnic minorities in any country. Owing to its inherent adaptability, Islam has continuously localized itself upon being introduced to new societies. However, those who embrace Islam do not lose or alter its fundamental principles, including the recognition of "the Uniqueness, Oneness, and Sole Sovereignty of the Real Lord—Allah" and the acknowledgment of Muḥammad (PBUH) as the last Prophet sent by Allah to all humanity. Instead, they gradually integrate into mainstream society with Islamic values, forming an undeniable social force in reality.

Accordingly, Muslims in any country play a significant role in ensuring border security, maintaining social stability, and contributing to economic development. As discussed in this article, Islam inherently possesses a social governance function that regulates Muslim speech and behavior. Its *ummah* principle unequivocally holds the value of uniting communities with diverse backgrounds, thereby demonstrating effectiveness and efficiency in resisting the infiltration of extremist ideologies. Thus, in the context of social governance, the *ummah* principle of "one body with two wings", as derived from the Qur'an and

⁴⁷ Charles Taylor, "Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Charles Taylor, et al. (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 64.

Sunnah, can serve as a positive factor in maintaining national security, fostering social stability, promoting economic development, and advancing the great rejuvenation of humanity.

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