

UNITY IN ISLAMIC WORLD: A REFLECTION

Inayatullah Magsi¹, Hiba Abdul Naeem², Yasir Arfat²

Abstract

Caliphs successfully spread Islam after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). The Prophet (S.A.W) always guided the Ummah to be united, as He (S.A.W) knew that unity is very important to achieve the strongest position in the World. With the passage of time, Muslims lost their unity; that's why they were divided into different sectarian groups, which further led to bias, hatred, intolerance, belief prejudices, lust for power, etc. The purpose of this study is to briefly study the Muslim world's unity, know the reasons behind disunity among the Muslim world, and analyse the results of the disunity. The study is designed to be qualitative, wherein ten face-to-face interviews with a semi-structured questionnaire are conducted, and secondary data are also used to analyse the themes. For data analysis, the thematic method has been employed. The study reveals that due to disunity among the Muslim world, enemies of Islam pronged out towards taking advantage, as they are aware that the more Muslims are disunited, the weaker they become. Increasing conflicts, sectarian division, diplomatic relationships, abundance of natural resources, and unawareness of the notions of unity as given in the Holy Quran and Hadith are the reasons behind the disunity. Additionally, disunity has created a gap among the Muslim world. The disunity leads them towards misguidance and misconceptions. The economic conditions of Muslim countries are going to be very weak due to the disunity. Social and cultural conditions are also affected due to the disunity in the Muslim nations. They are in armed fights with each other, and cold wars and hot wars, such as between Iran and Saudi Arabia, are revealing. Civil wars have also resulted among the Muslim nations due to their disunity.

Keywords: Islam, Muslims, Unity, Sectarianism.

Introduction

The Caliphate system was established after the demise of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W). Having command in economic matters and trade, the caliphs succeeded in conquering different parts of the world (Arnold, 2016), through which Islam spread from Mecca to the Atlantic and Pacific, notably Southeast Asia (Haghnavaaz, 2013). Moreover, there are more than fifty countries with a Muslim majority; this whole range of countries is referred to as the unified Islamic Community/ Ummah and is called the Muslim World (Hassan, 2015). In 622, the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) migrated to Medina as soon as he transferred his residence and transformed the conditions of Muslims in every aspect of life with the sole guidance of Allah Almighty; whatever he did, Allah Almighty wanted him to do so (Ahmed & Khan, 2018; Gambhir, 2014; Deukmejian, 1995; Margoliouth, 1905).

He established brotherly relations among Muslims and believed that Muslims should have a brotherly and strong relationship based on faith. The unity among Muslims was important, through which they could achieve whatever they wanted. The best example is of the Battle of Badar; with supreme unity and firm faith on Allah (Ahmed & Khan, 2018) only 313 Muslims defeated 1000 army of the Quraish, and soon the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) became the head of Muslim State [the State of Medina] where Muslims became a religious and political community (Photocornik, 2006; Pickthall & Pickthall, 1998).

¹ Lecturer, Department of Allied Subjects, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi. Corresponding Author Email: inayat.magsi@smiu.edu.pk

² Research Scholar, Department of Accounting, Banking and Finance, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi.

² Research Scholar, Department of Business Administration, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi.

It is obligatory upon every Muslim to follow each rule and guidance of Allah. In this regard, Allah stated, “*O ‘who believes! Enter into Islam wholeheartedly and follow not the footsteps of evil ones, for he is to you an avowed enemy*” (Al-Qur‘an, 2, 208).

Therefore, Allah commanded Muslims to value and follow unity, in fact Allah ordered His mankind in his holy book “*and hold fast altogether by the rope which Allah stretches out for you for ye were enemies and he joined your heart in love so that by grace ye become brethren; and ye were on the brink of the pit of fire and he saved you from it, thus doth Allah make his signs clear for you: that ye may be guided*” (Al-Qur‘an, 3, 103).

In addition, the Prophet (S.A.W) refers to the Muslims as a human body. He (S.A.W) said: “*the similitude of believers in regard to mutual love, affection and fellow feeling is the one body; when any limb of it aches because of sleeplessness and fever*” (Al-Qushayrī, 2004). Hence, every Muslim is associated with each other.

Problem Statement

Islam is the religion of peace, unity, justice, and equality (Kaufman, 2016). All Muslims are equal; no one is greater than others based on caste, colour, or creed (Bhatti et al., 2015). Unity is very important for every nation. All religions, including Islam, teach us to live in unity. Once our Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) said about unity: “*All Muslim Ummah is like one body, if any part of the body is in pain, then the whole body is also in pain*” (Al-Bukhari, 2004).

Whereas the Holy Quran tells us to be united. Allah the Almighty also orders Muslims to maintain patience and hold unity among them by following the basic principles of faithfulness and brotherhood (Hassan, 2015). It is possible only when Muslims are united in the world. At the same time, it is the major responsibility of Muslim leaders to play a positive and effective role in this situation. Unity plays a major role in developing any nation and achieving its higher objectives. Muslim’s unity is a patent problem of the time. Currently, the Muslim world is facing many problems. The basic reasons behind these troubles are bias, hatred, belief prejudices, power, intolerance, etc. All these things contribute to the fall of Muslims, which might deprive them of their honour, pride, and authority (Altwaijri, 2014; Hassan, 2015; Knysh, 2016; Nathan & Kamali, 2005). That is why our enemies are fully aware of our weakness. They have engaged all the Muslim countries in different problems; hence, they do not want Muslims united on one platform. Historically, it is proven that the Muslims’ disunity is very old and an effective tool exploited by Jews and Christians (Hassan, 2015).

Research Methodology

Aware of the above, a reflective study of the unity of the Muslim ummah is important enough to be studied. This essay conducts an analysis of unity in the Islamic world. The study is qualitative in nature. With a purposive sampling technique, a total of 10 face-to-face interviews with a semi-structured questionnaire were conducted with religious scholars, intellectuals, members of civil society, and teachers in Karachi. Besides, as a preliminary framework in this article, we tried to discuss some basic examples as a secondary source, considering the words of the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) and the Caliphs, and discussed the current situation of the Muslim Ummah from published documents.

The data have been analyzed through a thematic method. Therefore, the following are the themes that have been extracted both from the transcribed face-to-face interviews and from secondary data.

- The Muslim World and Unity
- Reasons behind Disunity among the Muslim worlds
- Outcomes of Disunity

Findings and Discussions

Three major themes were identified from the interviews and the secondary data. These themes show the forms of the Muslim world and its unity, what are the reasons behind the disunity among the Muslim world, and what are the main results of this disunity. The detailed discussion of the related themes is given as following:

The Muslim World and Unity

The Hajj is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim, which depicts a unified Ummah, where Muslims from every corner of the world come to Mecca without any discrimination of colour, caste, and creed; they worship one Allah without knowing each other just based on faith and perform the pilgrimage together (Denny, 2015; Rashid, 2018). This is the real picture, which shows indivisible unity among Muslims. Moreover, when Zionist extremists attacked Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem on September 21, 1969, the whole Muslim Ummah raised its voice to defend the honour and dignity (Halim & Salleh, 2012). As a result, the Muslim community strongly felt the need to have such a platform from where they could speak with one voice to safeguard the interests of the Muslims and secure the progress and well-being of their people. Finally, the most active Muslim organization with the aim to strengthen Islamic solidarity among the member states, as well as the action to safeguard the holy places, was established in Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco) on September 25, 1969 (12th Rajab 1389 Hijra) (Al Ahsan, 1988). Furthermore, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) (formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference) decided to pool its resources together to strengthen cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, and scientific fields (Kung & Kung, 2019). It is working to create a favourable atmosphere for the promotion of cooperation and understanding among member states and other countries (General & Muslims, 2014). In 1970, OIC resolved the clash between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization and successfully concluded the conflict. Likewise, in 1974, when Pakistan refused to recognize Bangladesh, and both countries were having clashes, once again the OIC played a significant role in resolving all the issues and maintaining peace between both countries (Al-Ahsan, 2004; Kung & Kung, 2019). We have a list of events when the OIC played an important role in binding the whole community.

Today, the OIC has lost its momentum, US-Iraq war, US attack on Afghanistan, Palestine's, and the cancer killings of Muslims throughout the Arab States. Libya and many more ridiculous things are happening in the Muslim World, but OIC is just a silent spectator, it does not even try to solve the issues and does not move forward to even take notice of what is happening (Fisk, 2017). Even though France is supporting Rebels in Libya as well as the US is supporting NATO in Afghanistan and OIC is yet just a spectator (Mezran & Varvelli, 2017).

Reasons behind disunity among the Muslim worlds

The challenges confronting the OIC, the symbol of brotherhood among the Muslim world, are due to an increased collision among the community. If we talk about the obstacles behind this deprivation, sectarian division is one of the biggest hurdles, which restricts Muslims from uniting as a community. For example, Saudi Arabia is a conservative Sunni absolute monarchy, whereas Iran is a Shia Islamic republic and is commonly believed to be the root cause of disunity among Muslim countries for decades (Finnbogason et al., 2019). As we all know, the USA supports Israel in Palestine and NATO in Afghanistan, but still, for the sake of a good bilateral relationship, Saudi Arabia, being a dominantly Muslim country, is neither raising its voice against the USA nor taking any step against it (Armitage et al., 2010; Shadid, 2018). Iran shares a bitter relationship with the USA, which has led to clashes between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Hinnebusch, 2010; Salavatian et al., 2015). Moreover, to show hatred, Iran always maintains bilateral relations with the rival of the USA, Russia. This biased international politics is a very serious issue of the Muslim world (Jordet, 2002; Tzemprin et al., 2015; Zelikow & Zoellick, 1998). The Muslim world is blessed with many minerals, most importantly oil and gas; that is why western block and enemies of Islam took a keen interest in the Muslim world, and their interference led to disunity among the Muslim world (Altwaijri, 2014). Muslims are less aware of those factors that lead them away from unity, and they [Muslims] are least aware of the Islamic principles that the Quran says and what the Hadith explains; they do not know they are following those illiterate humans who have hypocrite intentions (Asad, 1961; Eickelman, 2007; Gabriel & Smith, 2017).

Outcomes of Disunity

The enemies of Muslims are taking advantage of disunity among the Muslims; they are even using different ways to enlarge the gap between the Muslims. As we all know, nowadays, social media is an effective tool through which we can make revolutions; therefore, using it as a weapon against the Muslims, our enemies are playing their games to achieve their mission (Oboler, 2016). They know Muslims are unaware and they lack knowledge; thus, this weak point of the Ummah is the point for them. In fact, they are misguiding the Muslims in a way so they will fight with each other; it is

easy to break the stick, but it is difficult to break the bundle of sticks (Ahmed & Khan, 2018). As a result, we can see bloodshed and oppressed, depressed conditions of Muslim countries along with weak, pathetic economic conditions. Although Muslim countries are blessed with mineral resources, they are still unable to utilize them properly to uplift the economy; others are taking advantage of these resources. Moreover, there is an extreme collision between Muslim countries; this ultimately leads to an increase in terrorism, that's why whole the world recognizes Muslims as terrorists (Ergül, 2017 & Gabriel, 2002). Although Islam teaches us peace and love. When Pakistan joined as a major non-NATO ally in 2004 to eradicate terrorism from Afghanistan, at that time the Taliban organization invested in the FATA regions and started conspiracies of terrorism in Pakistan, and due to their ruthless activities, the territorial conflict between both Muslim countries resulted in great loss of many innocent Muslims in Pakistan (Baloch, 2016; Rohde, 2004). Today, the world recognizes Muslims as terrorists and the Muslim countries as associations of terrorism only because of these ruthless militants' activities.

According to Kenner (2010), King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia told Herve' Morin, the defence minister of France, that two countries that do not deserve to exist are Israel and Iran. Moreover, both countries have different political ideologies; in addition, they both have bitter relations. The lust for power makes them fight with each other; both countries are indulging in rivalry to rule over the Islamic world, meanwhile Saudi Arabia is the leader of the Sunni Muslim world, and Iran is the leader of the Shia Muslim world. They both are players of great games and always in preparation for the next step on the Middle East chessboard (Modebadze, 2018). There are a series of cold wars and hot wars between Iran and Saudi Arabia throughout the Middle East. In Bahrain, the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, Iran is supporting the Shia community, who threatened Saudi Arabia in 2011. Saudi Arabia sent its troops to Bahrain to stop the Shia uprising, and, as in Yemen, where 35 percent of the population is Shia and Iran is strategically very much interested in Yemen, as Yemen could serve a potential platform for Iran's rivalry (Grumet, 2015; Modebadze, 2018; Panaite, 2017). Nowadays, Yemen is a playground where Saudi Arabia and Iran are playing their rivalry game, as Saudi Arabia knows that access to Yemen means easy access to Saudi Arabia; the feeble government in Yemen is unable to stop this daily bloodshed game.

The allies of both countries even share a bitter relationship; day-by-day chaos throughout the Muslim country is increasing within the countries and outside the countries too. Since Spring 2011, the series of pro-democracy is an uprising that enveloped many Muslim countries in Tunisia, Morocco, Syria, Libya, Egypt, and Bahrain is why these situations are known as the Arab Spring (Machmudi, 2020). The main events of the Arab Spring include Muhammad Bouazizi's suicide in Tunisia, and later Tunisian President Zain-ul-Abidin bin Ali resigns and flees to Saudi Arabia; later Tunisian hold the first democratic parliamentary elections. Soon after, predominantly Muslim countries started to protest, opposing their authoritarian government and pushing for democratic reform (Larroque, 2019 & History.com, 2018). This event led to shifting alliances in the Middle East and shook the system of regional alliances and alignments, including inter Arab relations. The region's security plays a key role in alliance politics in the Middle East as well as in inter Arab politics (Ryan, 2019). These uprisings of 2011 led Yemen, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE to work together, but later this cooperation faded as quickly as the competition among Qatar and Saudi Arabia intensified (Bouoiyour & Selmi, 2020). Moreover, the Qatari television station Al-Jazeera made a statement against Saudi Arabia; as a result, Saudi Arabia, along with allied countries, started a campaign against Qatar and banned Qatar Airlines from their countries, and the crisis reached its peak (Lynch, 2017).

In addition, international politics and alignments with the Western Bloc and Non-Muslim countries produce conflicts among the Muslim countries (Fuller, 2018). The first and foremost interest of every country is to achieve economic benefits and to become stronger for the sake of both economic and military power so that they can share in international politics (Banchoff, 2008). The ones who are shaking their hands are only because they find economic and social benefit in the relationship. No one is willing to even raise the issue of miserable nations in the United Nations Organization, nor do they want to do so just because they do not see any benefits (Fuller, 2018). In fact, the same situation is prevailing in the Muslim World; they only maintain good relations with those brother countries with which they see potential to earn huge revenue for them. People use the word 'Unity'; in actuality, they are meeting their personal interests. There are

collaborative decisions in economic and business development along with infrastructure development, etc.; through these tactics, you can easily predict the reality of unity among the Muslim world.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study 'Unity in Islamic World: A Reflection' provides a great account of the unity of the Muslim world in the current situation. It further elaborates on the different factors behind the disunity among the Muslim world and the adverse impacts of the disunity on the Muslim ummah. Hence, concludes as:

Holy Prophet (S.A.W) left us as an Ummah, not in different sects. We are not realizing how our Prophet (S.A.W) struggled to spread the message of Allah. Muslims are killing each other for the sake of the Almighty Allah; does our Prophet (S.A.W) and Allah the Almighty teach us to do so? Holy Prophet (S.A.W) kept a soft corner for hypocrite enemies, and today we have sour feelings for our Muslim brothers. Prophet (S.A.W) teaches us to live in unity, but we Muslims are divided into different sects, as He (S.A.W) knew that unity is very important to achieve the strongest position in the World.

With the passage of time, Muslims lost their unity; that's why they were divided into different sectarian groups, which further led to bias, hatred, intolerance, belief prejudices, lust for power, etc. Moreover, Muslims are unable to take any stand to safeguard their interest. Thousands of Muslims are being killed in Libya, Syria, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Palestine. The whole world is either a silent spectator or a fake supporter; some of them are weak, while those who have a comparatively stronger position have no concern because they are more interested in their own well-being and strong economic position. Disunity is the root cause of Muslims' deprived condition, and they are just toys with whom enemies of Islam play and entertain themselves. Hence, we can say that unity in the Islamic world was a reality, but now the visible collisions among Muslims depict it as a pipe dream only. The Muslims' condition can undergo a 360-degree change if they want to change their condition, for which they must accept each other without any hypocritical intentions. Yes, this dream will only come true if we follow our Prophet's (S.A.W) teachings and guidance, and by following him, we will automatically follow Allah. Al-Quran says, *"O you who believe and obey Allah, the messenger and those in command among you, if you disagree about something, refer it back to Allah and the messenger, if you believe in Allah and the last day that is the best thing to do and gives the best result"* (4, 59).

Moreover, in the same chapter it is quoted, *"but if anyone opposes the messenger after the guidance has become clear to him and follows a path other than that of the believers, we will hand him over to whatever he has turned to, and we will root him in hell"* (4, 115).

Increasing internal conflicts among Muslim communities are one of the major causes of Muslim disunity. Sectarian divisions further exacerbate this problem. Furthermore, on diplomatic grounds, relations with powerful states whose policies are often viewed as hypocritical and inconsistent also contribute to divisions within the Muslim world; Iran and Saudi Arabia's bilateral relationships are examples. The abundance of natural resources in the Muslim world is revealed as the cause of disunity among the Muslim world. The Western world is eager to exploit the Muslim world, while Muslim countries lack coordination in the management and utilization of their natural resources. Finally, our data exposes that Unawareness with principles of unity enshrined in the Holy Quran and Hadith. The disunity among the Muslim nations has resulted in the gap. This gap has further devastated the relationships of the Muslim countries. The disunity leads them towards misguidance and misconceptions. The economic conditions of Muslim countries are going to be very weak due to the disunity. Social and cultural conditions are also affected due to the disunity in the Muslim nations. They are in armed fights with each other, and cold wars and hot wars, such as between Iran and Saudi Arabia, are revealing. Civil wars have also resulted among the Muslim nations due to their disunity. What an evil destination! Since the Holy Prophet (S.A.W) is a role model in the Quran by Allah, we should follow him wholeheartedly to have the best results in the world and at the Day of Judgment. In fact, his guidance and teachings are the only way through which we can get knowledge and awareness, along with the Quran, the pure and holy book from which we as Muslims cannot deny is the best tool of guidance as it contains supreme guidance of Allah regarding all aspects of life. It is a complete code of conduct. Furthermore, this is responsibilities of our Muslim leaders to play their role as well in these connections.

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