Pro-Islamic civilization approach as the strategy to overcome divisions among all Muslims

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Premise

‘And hold on fast, all of you together, to the rope of Allah, and

be not divided among yourselves. (3:103)

Introduction

There is a need to determine what is modern, from an Islamic historiographical perspective that measures modern along the timeline of history.

This is necessary because diverse civilizations evolved at conjuncture and in juxtaposition as well as to delineate Islamic civilization in an array of civilizations.

The delineation will help to develop a clear pro-Islamic civilization approach as the strategy to overcome divisions among all Muslims. This means advancing modern Islamic civilization in the midst of competing civilizations, some of which contain strong elements of barbarism.

Islamic civilization stands differentiated in the midst of civilizations on the basis of its imaan while the different ones, generally, have a materialist basis. Imaan determines the Islamic historiographical approach to history and sociology and should form the basis of the strategy to unite Muslims.

The conjuncture and juxtaposition have brought into coexistence a robust competition of civilized and barbaric ideas. Islam is well stocked with civilized ideas in its living library to advance world peace as the core of its civilization.

Islam began with just one word, iq’ra, which created its unique culture of reading, writing, memorization, belief-system, and humane universal values. This culture transcended the geographical poverty of the isolated Arabian Desert where it was born. Its dynamic ideas have produced a diversity of interpretations, which is underpinned by its unity in imaan.

While imaan is the basis of the strategy the spirit of iq’ra should guide its tactical implementation. This entails the creation and dissemination of faith-based knowledge, as exemplified by Imam Al-Ghazali and Imam Reza (A.S.).

The strategy should be two-pronged – while it helps to unite all Muslims in Muslim majority countries it should reach out to potential new embracers of imaan, esp., in Muslim minority countries.

In order to determine what is modern it is necessary to draw various timelines in order to delineate the Islamic timeline from the interwoven timelines and to hold up the Islamic timeline as a single thread of Islamic civilization. The thread is fibred by imaan and iqra.

Broad brushstrokes of timelines

The conjuncture and juxtaposition necessitate reference to the overlay of Islamic timeline on various European timelines.

Islam was born in 610 CE, which places it in the European timeline of Early Middle Ages (600-1000 CE) or Late Antiquity (4th–7th century). It was the time of the rise and decline of two mighty empires – Greek and Roman, which were to bequeath formidable tangible and intangible assets to humanity. Islam drew from their intellectual legacies and, in turn, commuted them back to Europe through Spain after the decline of the mighty empires while adding the value of new knowledge to them.

Soon after its birth, Muslims defeated Roman colonialism in Bilad ash-Shams, i.e., Palestine, Iraq (partly), Lebanon (partly), Jordan, Syria, and the Golan Heights. This defeat was to eventuate in the final fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 17th century. This fall coincided with the rise of British and other European colonialisms and the rise of Protestant Reformation and the decline of the Roman Catholic Church. The fall also coincided

with the decline of feudalism and the weakening of the aristocratic class and the monarchy and with the rise of capitalism and the new bourgeoisie.

The overlay of Islamic timeline on Christian timeline

The development of world history brought Islamic civilization through the Ottoman Empire in conjuncture, and at juxtaposition, with Christian civilization. Islam and Christianity became influential factors of history as contending forces. Religious and political beliefs suffused history with human emotions, which have the inherent potential to strengthen or to weaken civilizations, draped in diverse religions, cultures, and languages.1

In 1516-17 the Ottoman Empire militarily defeated the Egypt-based Mamluk Empire, which had controlled Egypt and Syria as Sultanates. In spite of the defeat, the Mamluk Sultanate remained intact and strong enough to reskill its slaves as soldiers and administrators, who rose to public office in the Ottoman government in Egypt. They institutionalized and constituted themselves as the core of the new military class, which were to continue to rule present-day Egypt through its 70% control of the national economy. In the late 17th century when the Ottoman Empire was in steep decline the Mamluks, once again, assumed control of the departing Ottoman army, the state/province revenues, and the government. Egyptian revenues stopped flowing into Istanbul. The scene was set for the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798 when Islam and Christianity became contending forces on Egyptian soil and sea. Until then they had coexisted in peaceful harmony.

Although the Ottoman Empire was ruled by a Turkish family dynasty it was constituted of Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Bosnians, Serbians, Persians, Arabs, Greeks, and others. Its diversity, in the pre-nation state era, was its strength until the imposition of European nationalism. In 1832 the British engineered Greek national independence from the Ottomans. The Russians attempted the same political engineering on the Serbs but failed.

The young Turkish students who were studying in London and Paris in the 1800s themselves

-became influenced by European ideas of nationalism, which they internalised as a belief system. This introduced internal conflict in Turkey under Sultan Abdulhamid II (1876-1908). But his authoritarian rule could not stop the rising tide of nationalist emotions/beliefs. The 'Young Turks' or The Committee of Union of Progress, constituted of Western-educated Ottoman army officers overthrew Abdulhamid in 1908 and erred grievously in imposing its Turkicentric nationalism on the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire. The subject people reacted with their own nationalist emotions/beliefs to the imposition. This set the scene for the fragmentation of the Empire and the reception of the ideas of a nation-state and nationalism.

Simultaneously, the Empire's Arab cities such as Cairo, Damascus, and Beirut became the centres of nascent 'Arab nationalism', which American Christian missionaries introduced through educational institutes after they had failed to Christianize Muslims. Muslims had resisted with and in imaan to the attempt at the destruction of Islam. The majority of Arabs were not resistant to Ottoman rule per se because of a shared imaan and civilization.

The philosophy of reading in Islamic timeline

Islam began with the philosophy of reading beyond its mechanical practice. Reading presupposed the existence of alphabets and numbers. They resulted in writing, which produced books. Books needed paper, ink, and printing press. These commodities were scarce in early Islamic times. Writing was restricted to pen and any writing material. The Quran was massified not through books but memorization.

In spite of the technological limitations of that early era, Imam al-Ghazali (1058-1111 in Persia) rejuvenated knowledge-based imaan while he was based in Baghdad, which with its 10000 books was the world centre for knowledge.

Although Islam faced many internal and external threats he persisted in spreading Islamic civilization through knowledge. Under the skilful administrative leadership of the great

Seljuk vizier, Nizam al-Mulk, he established educational centres throughout the Ottoman Empire. In the face of resistance to his new philosophical approach to education he began a revolution in education. He structured a new Islamic epistemological approach to discovering truth. He raised the informal maktabs (primary schools) of the 900s to formal schools of the 11th century. In the 12th century the number of madressas as the equivalent of modern universities had grown to 75 in Cairo, 51 in Damascus, 44 in Aleppo, and 100s more in Muslim Spain. Ibn Khaldun notes that in Morocco the curriculum spanned 16 years, the minimum time required to develop the scientific discipline of learning. Successful students were awarded the equivalent of the modern university degree known as ijaza. The opportunity extended to males and females.

His main concern was having the correct Islamic approach to discovering truth. He had to counter the popular Western ideology then current and known as philosophy, which was modelled on Aristotle's Greek philosophy that had enjoyed 200 years of popularity in the Muslim world. Prominent Muslim scholars like Avicenna or ibn Sina were proponents of Aristotelian philosophy. In the 10th century Baghdad, Arabic-Aristotelian teachings had influenced al-Farabi, who believed that human reason was superior to revelation though The Holy Qur'an, which provides truth in symbolic form to people who were not philosophers but ordinary people. Al-Farabi tried to marry Aristotelian philosophy and Islamic governance and advocated the control of state by philosophers. In the 9th century al-Kindi concerned himself, amongst other subjects, with Aristotelian philosophical questions. In the 12th century, Averroes or ibn Rushd, an Aristotelian commentator, gave a merciless reply to Imam al-Ghazali's The Incoherence of the Philosophers (published in 1095 CE). Great thinkers were in contestation of great ideas.

Victory went to Imam al-Ghazali because he became the most influential representative of Sufism. His influence was born out of his outer struggle or Jihad-e-Ashghar and inner struggle or Jihad-e-Akbar. His revived Sufism inspired great prose, poetry, and profound Arabic vocabulary. It continued to inspire a creative thinker like ibn Khaldun in the 14th century. The Qur'anic admonition for people to discover life's lessons in actual history

inspired ibn Khaldun to create the philosophy of history or historiography, which is the characteristic subject of Muslims in the history of competing ideas. Before ibn Khaldun, history was a mere accumulation of facts for the sake of facts but his general principles of history had helped humanity to identify the manifestations of human civilisations.

Imam al-Ghazali overthrew the influence of Aristotelian ideas on Islamic thought and restored Qur'anic influence on Islamic thought.

Although Imam al-Ghazali refuted Western Aristotelian philosophy he embraced the scientific and mathematical discoveries, with the 'fine precision of their details and the clarity of their proofs', made by the great Islamic scholars.

He cautioned students that they should be careful in accepting their scientific and mathematical ideas by blindly following their philosophical ideas and problematical subjects. He defended the scientific and mathematical enterprises for posterity by insulating them from false theories, which could eventuate in the dilution of the sciences and mathematics by being based on false conjecture and reasoning.

In his educational model, he combined logical thinking and emotional thinking, based on unquestionable i'maan. In modern terms, this is referred to as cortico-thalamic processes of the brain, which enables human beings to flourish, logically and emotionally as whole beings and contribute to the development of individuals, families, communities, societies, civilisations, and cultures.

Out of the 400 books that he had written, about 70 survive. He influenced Saint Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century to develop Christian theology and he influenced Rene Descartes in the 17th century to develop the modern scientific method.

In the 18th century reform movement in the Ottoman Empire, in spite of the setbacks to Islam, the mass printing of books began in its domains. Ibrahim Muteferrika (1670-1745), a

Hungarian revert to Islam, became an influential diplomat for the Ottomans. He promoted the mass printing of books. He also promoted the Ottoman-French alliance of 1737-39 against Austria and Hungary and the Ottoman-Swedish action against Russia. He printed books on language, history, geography, and the natural and physical sciences. In his 1731 treatise on the decline of the Ottoman Empire he described European forms of government and military organization and proposed reforms in the Ottoman Empire, including the secularization of education. This was to prove to be a grave error in the face of Imam al-Ghazali's formidable scholarship and epistemological leadership. The error was a major factor in the decline of the mighty Ottoman Empire.

In the 19th century the French timeline disrupted Ottoman timeline. The French secularist advisors to the sultans influenced the 'reform' of Islamic educational system by removing religion from the curriculum, based on European books, and restricted education to only secular subjects.

Ibn Khaldun states in his Muqaddimah, 'It should be known that instructing children in the Quran is a symbol of Islam. Muslims have, and practice, such instruction in all their cities, because it imbues hearts with a firm belief (in Islam) and its articles of faith, which are (derived) from the verses of the Quran and certain Prophetic traditions.'

From Imam al-Ghazali of the 11th century we bring forward into the 21st century his idea of spreading a knowledge-based Islamic civilization, underpinned by imaan.

The overlay of Afghani timeline on British timeline

The Battle for the Throne of Kabul in Afghanistan took place in 1880-83. Abdul Rahman Khan, a Sunni, led the army. The British anointed him as the 'Amir of Kabul and its Dependencies'.

The Hazaras who were Shias opposed Khan because he was a surrogate of the British. They

refused to pay taxes to the British through Khan who had carried out three military campaigns against the Hazaras in 1881-83.

The British ogled Hazarajat because it was a strategic trade and communication node in the Silk Road, which extended from the south of France to China.

Khan ordered his subservient Grand Mufti to issue a fatwa against the Hazaras that declared them infidels. He used the fatwa as a basis to conscript Sunni Pashtuns, Ghilzais, Durranis, and other Sunni tribes and go to ‘holy war’ against the Hazaras. They attacked from Kabul, Turkestan, Ghazni, Herat, and Kandahar, after Khan had captured them in an earlier war, with British military support.

The British used Khan to lay the foundations of a strong centralized nation-state and to prevent the rising Russian Empire to expand into Afghanistan, from which they could attack ‘British’ India.

The Hazaras of all the tribes were the last one to be defeated, i.e., in 1893.

During the 1881-93 war against the Hazaras the British coined two suffixed terms: Shi’ism in 1883 and Sunni’ism in 1892. They became the stigmatising catch-all terms to show the ‘divisions’ in the theological and juridical dimensions between Shia and Sunni schools of thought 5. The stigmas persist in the 21st century.

The overlay of Arab timeline on Ottoman and European timelines

In WWI the Ottoman Empire together with Germany found itself at war with Britain, France, and Russia. Britain, particularly, aimed to drive the Turks out of the Hejaz (the west of the Arabian Peninsula). The British were aware of Emir Sharif Hussein’s fear of being removed as the Sultan of Mecca by the Ottomans. He had dreamed of an independent Hejaz under his tribal rule and of becoming the king of all the Arabs. He was a descendent of Banu

Hashim (the same tribe as that of Prophet Muhammad). They exploited his fear, utopian dream, and bloodline and began engineering an ‘Arab Revolt’ against the Ottomans through his bigoted political/religious agency. In 1915-16, during WWI, the British had written a series of letters to Hussein, with the promise of money, weapons, ships, and soldiers, inciting him to lead a ‘Hashemite’ rebellion against the Ottomans. He and his son, Feisal, bragged to the British that they could influence 100000-250000 Arab soldiers to defect from the Ottoman army. In 1916 he declared an ‘Arab Revolt’ against the Ottomans. The response from the Arab soldiers was muted except from soldiers of his tribe. The non-Hejazi soldiers who participated in the muted ‘revolt’ were prisoners of war, brainwashed by their British captors.

Hussein was tribalist and could not have been nationalist in sociological orientation because the highest social structure above the family was the tribe/clan in Arab society. The concept of Al-asabiyyah Al-Qabaa illiyah or tribal patriotism with bayah or oath of allegiance to the tribal leader operated and continues to afflict modern Arab nation-states.

There was a conjuncture and juxtaposition of Arab tribalism and British nationalism. The logic of this historical coincidence or non-belligerent conflict was for Hussein to develop the feudal institution of monarchy, with a narrow base in the new aristocracy, under British patronage. With no mass support but with British money, naval power, and technology Hussein quickly gained control of the Hejaz but Medina, under Ottoman commander, Fakhri Pasha, fell under his control only in 1919, i.e., after WWI. The Ottomans were bogged down in the Hejaz and left their flanks in Palestine and Iraq open to British attack.

While the British cultivated a relationship with Hussein in the Hejaz they had also been cultivating a relationship with another tribe, the Saudis, in the Nejad or east of the Arabian Peninsula. The Saudis were arch-rivals to the Hashemite and they had no bloodline to the Final Prophet. Although the Saudis had revolted against the Ottomans in the 1800s the British were content at keeping them neutralized while inciting Hussein to revolt. Hussein lacked the capacity to organize the revolt and his tribesmen lacked artillery and guns. In

spite of this, the British continued to prop up Hussein and even supplied its soldiers from India and Egypt to man the large weapons. The Husseini soldiers by harassing the Ottoman supply chains leading to the frontlines up and along the Palestinian coast helped the British to capture Al-Quds (Jerusalem) in 1917. They also helped the British to advance towards and capture Damascus and Aleppo in October 1918. Simultaneously, the British and the Husseinis captured almost the entire Arab region.

The Saudi claim to having brought about the downfall of the Ottomans has no factual basis in history. The Husseinis were, at best, the limping dogs of war for British imperialism and, at worst, were the betrayers of Islam.

The overlay of the Bilad ash-Shams timeline on British and French timelines.

The British had promised to Hussein the control of the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, and Iraq in exchange for their revolt against the Ottomans. The British refused to fulfil their imperial promise and went about, together with the French manipulating the new League of Nations (later UNO) to partition the Arab lands between them. Britain took control of Palestine, Transjordan, Iraq, and continued with the control of Egypt. France took control of Syria and Lebanon.

The French crowned Feisal, the son of Hussein, as the king of Syria in 1920 and quickly overthrew him when he tried to establish an independent authority. In 1921 the British installed him as the king of Iraq after the outbreak of riots against the British ‘mandate’, though he was unknown to the Iraqis. He ruled with strong British support as their lackey. But in 1958 the Iraqi military overthrew him. Jordan, under the modern semi-feudal King Hussein, is a remnant of Sharif Hussein’s Hashemite tribal kingdom.

The British had anointed Arab tribal leaders with kingship, which is antithetical to Islam

and persists in the 21st century. There was a conjuncture of Arab tribalism and British colonialism/nationalism. There was a juxtaposition of the primitive and the modern as the aberration of Islamic civilization.

The overlay of Saudi tribal timeline on Hashemite tribal timeline

Sharif Hussein suffered from delusions of being the powerful monarch in the Hejaz and he proclaimed himself as its Caliph after Ataturk had abolished the Ottoman Empire in 1924. Only his tribe shared his delusions. On his death in 1924 his son, Ali, succeeded him when the fall of the weak Hashemite rule in the Hejaz was already in sight.

In 1925 the Saudi tribe, with British support, conquered the already weakened Hejaz while they had control of the Nejad.

The British created the different warring monarchies in Arab lands though the concept was antithetical to Islam, in principle. British imperialism and Arab feudalism found themselves in an unholy partnership to further their complementary interests, centred on vast crude oil reserves.

The tensions between tribal patriotism and national patriotism

When the British and the French assumed control of the Arab lands and partitioned them along new artificial international boundaries peoples of the same tribe, ethnic group, culture, language, and religion were scattered across the boundaries and their separate group identities were shattered and they even became newfound enemies. The imperialist powers exploited valid group identities to engineer bitter divisions. They imposed their European -concept of nation-states on groups of people who were not ready for existence in nation states because of the Arab sociological concept of Al-Asabiyyah Al-Qabaa illiyah. The new nation-states fostered massive hitherto unknown social, political, and military divisions with new political clowns to act out the roles of international statesmen in the image of

imperialism.

The British and French went about destroying the memory of the Great Mesopotamian -Civilization, centred on the fertile valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, in present day northern Iraq, which the Ottomans had named Al-Jazeera and it was divided into three provinces, centred on the cities of Mosul, Baghdad, and Basra.

The Kurds, e.g., were a Sunni Muslim ethnic group with a language and culture distinctly different from those of the Arabs and found themselves scattered over Iraq, Syria, Turkey, and Iran 2. They were based in northern Iraq and constituted 15-20% of the 'Iraqi' population.

Central 'Iraq' consisted of Sunni Arab population, centred on Baghdad. They made up 25% of the 'Iraqi' population. The British favoured them with top government positions.

Southern 'Iraq' consisted of Shia Arabs who made up more than 50% of the population. They were socially different to their Sunni Arab neighbours. Their ulemas played an executive role in the management of the daily affairs of their citizens. They treated the concept of monarchy as being antithetical to the rule of jurists.

The British encapsulated the northern Kurds, central Sunnis, and southern Shias in the new nation-state of Iraq and favoured the Sunnis over the Kurds and Shias. The British and French obliterated the Ottoman tolerance for multiple ethnic identities.

The violent British/French legacy in Middle East

The broad brushstrokes of over-layered timelines lead to the crux of the struggle for Islamic civilization, which in international law are benignly known as:

1. Sykes-Picot Agreement

2. San Remo Conference (Italy)

3. Treaty of Sevres (Italy).

4. Treaty of Lausanne (Switzerland)

The Sykes-Picot Agreement was signed on May 9, 1916 during WWII at a secret convention between Britain and France with Russian assent. It dealt with the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, in terms of which Russia grabbed the Armenian provinces; France grabbed Lebanon and Syria; and Britain grabbed Palestine. Palestine was supposed to fall under international control because of Al-Quds and the other holy sites 3. The slumbering Arabs heard of this agreement only after it was published.

The San Remo Conference was held in Italy on April 19-26, 1920 by the triumphant world powers. It worked out the final framework of a humiliating ‘peace treaty’ with Turkey. France secured 25% share of Iraqi oil and the right to territorial passage for the oil through Arab lands.

The Treaty of Sevres was signed in Italy on August 10, 1920, which oversaw the final abolishment of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey was forced to renounce all rights over Arab Asia. But the new Turkish nationalists who had mimicked European nationalism rejected the Treaty.

The Treaty of Lausanne was signed in Switzerland on July 24, 1923 by the triumphant world powers and a defeated Turkey. It was the final treaty that concluded WWI. The world powers conceded a few insignificant demands of the defeated Ottoman Empire. Crucially, Turkey lost total control of Palestine, Syria, and the Hejaz.

The underlying economic motive of the Western powers in the Middle East were and are:

- To keep control of the production and distribution of oil and gas, principally, in the hands of the seven major energy companies (a.k.a. the seven sisters).

- To keep control of the territories for pipelines from the Eastern territories to Western Europe.

- To foment regional wars for the sake of capital accumulation through arms trade.

Centrality of Masjid al-Aqsa to Muslim unity

Masjid al-Aqsa is central to the struggle for Al-Quds, which is central to the struggle for Palestine, which is central to the struggle for Bilad as-Shams, which is central to the struggle for the Middle East, which is central to the struggle against Zionism, colonialism, and imperialism.

This makes Masjid al-Aqsa central to the worldwide struggle against colonialism and imperialism.

There are numerous real imperialist, colonialist, and Zionist threats to Al-Quds:

1. The military threat, which is highly visible.

2. The 1969 arson attack on Al-Quds.

3. Political threat, e.g., the Jerusalem Law 4.

4. The 2014 invasion of the Masjid compound by 10926 Zionists.

5. The Zionist digging of tunnels and excavations under its foundation, which is hidden from public view.

6. Financial threat of the Jerusalem Municipal budget of $1.93-bn.

7. The Zionization budget of $150-m p.a.

8. The paltry PA budget of $12-m p.a.

9. The paltry OIC budget of $10-m p.a.

The PA and OIC budgets indicated to the unarmed youth of the Third Intifada that the old leaderships are not really serious about the liberation of Palestine and so took it upon themselves to give leadership to break the 13-day siege of Al-Aqsa in 2017.

Al-Quds in The Holy Qur'an

Surah Al-Isra mentions Al-Quds, 'Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by -night from the Inviolable House of Worship (at Makkah) to the Remote House of Worship (at Al Quds) – the environs of which We had blessed – so that We might show him some of Our symbols…' (17:1)

Al-Quds comprises not only Masjid al-Aqsa and Qubbat Al-Sakhra (Dome of the Rock) but also the environs of 125 km2; four walls of four km in length and 12-meter in height; seven gates; Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and Armenian quarters; businesses; school; museum, and other entities.

The timeline of Masjid al-Aqsa and Al-Quds stretches back 3021 years in history to the period of Prophet Suleiman (A.S.). They have been subjected to contestations by Babylonians, Greeks, Romans, Christian Crusaders, Ottomans, British, and Zionists.

The struggle for Al-Quds as the capital of Palestine is central to the history of freedom struggles in the world.

Imam Khomeini declared:

- The last Friday of Ramadan as the International Day of Al-Quds.
- 12-17 Rabi'al-Awwal, the birth week of Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.), as Muslim Unity Week.

These two events should serve to build Muslim unity.

Muslim unity centred on Masjid al-Aqsa

Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) referred to Masjid al-Aqsa as Bayt al-Muqaddas or The House of Purification.

This sacred House stands in Bilad as-Shams or The Land of the Sun, which is the birthplace and burial ground of many prophets and spiritual nobles, e.g., Imam Hussein (A.S.) and Hazrat Bibi Zainab (A.S.).

The sun (shams) in The Holy Quran is a metaphor for purification.

Surah al-Shams states, 'Truly he succeeds that purifies it (soul)' (91:9)

The Quran defines success as the purification of the soul. The best place to purify the soul in Bilad as-Shams is Bayt al-Muqaddas.

Masjid al-Aqsa and the prime necessity of the purification of the soul are interwoven in Surah al-Isra and Surah al-Shams and provide the meaning and purpose of life and death. They

alone demand unity of all Muslims.

The purification of the soul entails the internalised control of emotions, feelings, thoughts, intention, internal speech combined with control of outward social, political, and economic conduct.

Masjid al-Aqsa, even at a personal level, symbolises the heart of the purpose and meaning of human existence in addition to the Kaba. The Quran interconnects the two holy sites.

Imperialism, colonialism, and Zionism are aimed at destroying this heart for the sake of capital accumulation, for which they have to oppress, exploit, and kill ordinary human beings.

The economic crux of Zionist colonialism

For the sake of wealth accumulation the Zionists control 77% of Palestinian land while the Palestinians are confined to 23% of the land, which functions as a labour reservoir for the Israeli economy.

This control favours Israel in two-way trade between Israel and Palestine by $2.7-bn (2014). Wealth accumulated in favour of Israel by $280-bn (2013). This is ‘classic’ colonial relationship.

The historical juxtaposition manifests itself as the juxtaposition of obscene Zionist wealth and severe Palestinian poverty.

Haj: return to a state of fitra, as unifier

As all human beings are born in a state of purity, Muslims nurture the intention to perform Haj in order to return to that state of purity, which gets diluted in the course of living.

This intention unites all Muslim hearts. The intention is interwoven in the desire to purify the soul, as the sole measure of success in life for the after-life.

While it is a physical journey to the Kaba it is, at a deeper level, a journey into one's self. The inner journey begins with repentance, which manifests itself as humility. Set against all of Creation, the human being considers himself or herself as being insignificant. Residual ego, if any, is shed.

The inner journey includes taking account of oneself like a form of self-punishment. The acceptance of such punishment is necessary for the exercise in the purification of the soul. In spite of the punishment, the person is filled with positive thoughts, which no hardship can deter the person from going through the entire set of unifying rituals.

The rituals begin the dress rehearsal for end-times. Equality is centred on the humble black rock. The rituals focus concentrated attention on the purpose of haj and the pilgrim is transported from the physical to the spiritual realm. Life and death are forgotten and the after-life is embraced with joy.

The ihram marks the dress rehearsal. The tawaf unifies the body, mind, and spirit. Safa and Marwa test one's imaan, which demands absolute obedience to Allah. Arafah is the ultimate achievement of purity and unity, annihilation of the self and ego, enfolding of the inner and outer forms of haj; and the return to a state of fitra.

Some of the lessons of haj are:

- Unity of all Muslims
- The role of the masses in unity
- The religious, political, and social dimensions of life

· Appreciation of water

· Consciousness of knowledge

· Strengthening the Islamic character of individuals and society.

Haj softens the heart to the extent that differences of any nature are non-existent. Hearts are united.

The need for two acknowledgments

1. There is a need to acknowledge, in theory and practice, ‘Mankind! We have created you from a pair of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each -other. The most honoured of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you.’ (Al Hujurat:13)

At one level, this ayat deals with the Arab sociological factor of Al-Asabiyyah Al-Qabaa illiyah, which was an obstruction to Arab unity in early Islamic timeline during the life of the Prophet and continues to be so.

At another level, it calls for the unity of humanity. Islamic civilization can advance only in the context of the unity of humanity.

-2. There is also a need to acknowledge that WWII produced the military-industrial-fascist media complex, centred on Wall Street, USA, as the new site for the obscene accumulation of wealth through the promotion of regional wars as the preferred alternative to another world war. Islam is now demonised ideologically to justify the lucrative arms trade as once communism was demonised. These wars serve to divide humanity, politically and religiously.

Wall Street fosters Muslim political and religious divisions within the wider divisions of

humanity. Divisions are good for their bloody business. Religions matter only for the sake of ill-gotten wealth. Islam is projected as the enemy of humanity and of itself. The projection threatens true Muslim identity, incites disunity, misrepresents Islam as a violent religion, and claims that the West is the only force for peace.

Wall Street funds misguided Muslims to be terrorists and stereotypes all Muslims as ‘extremists’ who are naturally barbaric in behaviour. These Wall Street surrogates decimate the tolerance and moderation of Islam, with the claim that they are the only ‘pure’ and ‘pious’ Muslims. The barbarism displayed by the misguided terrorists is only a miniature replica of the barbarism of imperialist regional wars. History demonstrates abundantly that as humanity progresses towards civilization it also in an opposite way regresses towards barbarism. Humanity is always caught up in the antagonistic tensions between civilization and barbarism and Islamic civilization is no exception. The earliest barbarism demonstrated by Yazid’s army was the beheading of Imam Hussein (A.S.) while he lay prostrate in salaah, accompanied by the massacre of innocent children, women, and men. The blood of these martyrs continue to flow in the veins of liberation history as a reminder to humanity to turn away from the misanthropic ways of barbarism and to turn only towards the sociable ways of civilization.

The minority Muslim misanthropes go directly to the terrorist phase of war without any theoretical and practical or strategic and tactical knowledge of modern warfare. The basics of people’s war presuppose mass support of the people and that it becomes possible only after all peaceful means of struggle against oppression have been exhausted. In the guerrilla phase of people’s war the guerrilla army yields space to the occupiers and use time to create will in the masses to repossess the land and all its mineral and natural wealth.

The Prophet himself had yielded the entire city-state of Mecca to the powerful and oppressive pagans, took flight to the city-sate of Medina, and began the recapture of Mecca through the historic Battle of Bad’r with imaan and 313 ill-equipped soldiers.

From military theory, it can be predicted with certainty that the Daeesh anarchist-military adventure in Muslim and non-Muslim lands will fail because they begin war as ‘occupying force’ without the support of the masses, to who the war is unintelligible.

The self-styled ‘caliph’ of IS/ISIS is a disgruntled mutation of Al-Awlaki, who is a mutation of Al-Zawahiri, who is a mutation of the Wahabi sect, which is a mutation of ‘Lawrence of Arabia’, who is a mutation of Jamiatul Tabligh (1857), which is a mutation of British colonialism in India.

After defeating the Indians in the 1857 War of Independence in India the British created the Sudhi Sangathan as an agency for Hindu communalism and the Jamiatul Tabligh as an agency for Muslim communalism, as recorded in The Prisoners of Malta, by Maulana Syed Mohammad Mian, who was a prisoner of war on Malta Island in the Mediterranean sea, which was the British equivalent to apartheid’s Robben Island Prison.

The Sudhi Sangathan aimed to reconvert Muslims and Christians to Hinduism. Jamiatul Tabligh aimed ‘to purify’ Muslims. British colonialism laid the groundwork for Hindu/Muslim disunity. It also sent its ‘hero’, the infamous ‘Lawrence of Arabia’, to Iraq, Syria, The Hejaz, and The Nejad to nurture Wahabi sectarianism, based on the ‘pure Islam’ preached by the 14th century medieval Sunni scholar of the Hanbali school of jurisprudence, Ibn Taymiyyah 6. He played an influential divisive role by declaring the veneration of saints and the visiting of holy shrines as unIslamic practice. He was imprisoned for his iconoclastic views and acquired a personality cult status. His cultish ideas have mutated in the 20th and 21st centuries as Wahabism, Salafism, Daeeshism, and other isms. These cults take their precedent views against Shia Islam from this medieval scholar who equated Shias to Christians and Jews. He claimed that the Shias were the cause of problems in Islam.

These two acknowledgements mean that while Muslims struggle for Muslim unity they should also struggle for the unity of humanity by showing that they are against unjust wars and for world peace. This message must also reach non-Muslim majority countries.

Global population trends as factors of pro-Islamic civilization approach

The Pew Global Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050, indicate:

- The number of Muslims will nearly equal the number of Christians.
- Muslims will constitute 10% of the overall population in Europe.
- The Muslim population of India will exceed that of Indonesia.
- In the USA, Muslims will be more numerous than Jews; Christians will decline from 75% to 66.66%.
- 40% of Christians will live in sub-Saharan Africa.
- In 2010 Christians numbered 2.2-billion – (31%)
- In 2010 Muslims numbered 1.6-billion – (23%)
- 2010 total population was 6.9-billion
- By 2050 the total population is expected to grow to 9.3-billion – 35% increase.
- Projected growth of Muslims will be 73% because of their youths and high fertility rates.
- Muslim population will be 2.8-billion (30%)
- Projected growth of Christians will be 35%.

- Christian population will be 2.9-billion (31%)
- Projected growth of Hindus will be 34%.
- Hindu population will be 1.4-billion (15%).
- Projected growth of Jews will be 16%.
- Projected Jewish population will grow from 14-million to 16.1-million (0.2%).
- Projected growth of folk religions of Africa, China, North America, and Australia will be from 405-million to 450-million (11%).
- The unaffiliated population in the USA will grow from 16% to 26%.
- Muslim fertility rate is 3.1 children per woman.
- Christian fertility rate is 2.7 children per woman.
- Muslim under-15-year age population is 34%.
- Christian under-15-year age population is 27%.

These projections show the challenge to develop education trends in line with the population trends to build Muslim unity and as an overflow to reach out to potential embracers of imaan. Sub-Saharan Africa will prove to become the key site for the ideological contestation between Islam and Christianity for the hearts and minds of people.

Islamic epistemology should be equally dynamic and adaptive to population trends with relevant methods, validity, scope, opinions, justified beliefs, and the other aspects.

These projections also show convincingly that the religious communities constitute the largest single constituency in the world but their divisive nature prevents them from having any influence in the international multilateral organizations. They remain part of civil society and not of political society. Their leaders are closest to the emotions, feelings, intentions, and thoughts of the believers.

Islam should make every effort to reach out to this civil society constituency through all means possible, e.g., education, culture, arts, cinema – to mention only a few.

Amongst civil society is the hidden population, which is constituted of 65.6-million forcibly displaced population; 22.5-million refugees, of whom 5.3-million are Palestinians; 10-million stateless people; and 189300 resettled refugees. A daily average of 28300 people are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. About 168000 Rohingya fled Myanmar in the period 2012-2017. In 2002 there were 165000 refugees from the Western Sahara staying in the Tindouf camps in Southwest Algeria for more than 25 years.

This hidden population is denied the basic human right to national identity, education, healthcare, employment, and freedom of movement. Religious leaders are closest to this hidden population, which is the shame of humanity. They have a humane approach to human problems. Women, as mothers of nations, are effective peacemakers and peacekeepers amongst this population.

Outreach to civil society

The religious component of civil society constitutes the single largest constituency in the world, which consists of not only religious but also social, political, economic, and cultural diversity. Beyond belief, religions reflect people’s temper and culture, which enrich national life. Because of the constituencies, which their leaders represent they should have the right to express themselves on local, regional, national, and international matters. The leaders are close to the emotions, feelings, intentions, and thoughts of

people, i.e., they are close to the temperament of people. A religious faith is from within the heart of belief. As beliefs are from within people they cannot be legislated or pollicised or enforced. But religious leaders can command the respect of believers.

The demographic trends show the huge opportunities for Muslims to populate the changing demographic space with Islamic ideas in sub-Saharan Africa, Europe, and USA. In the democratic contestation of religious ideologies Islam can prove itself to be a formidable contender.

Decolonization and the rise of new independent states have helped to set new international agendas, to compel peace interventions, to adopt new approaches to economic and social developments, and to create specialized agencies. This space can be filled with pro-Islamic civilization approach to overcome divisions among all Muslims and to convey Islam to potential new embracers of imaan. It can act internally and externally.

In the same space neo-colonialism has become the new means to violate national sovereignty and to interfere in the domestic affairs of nation-states, which often result in local or regional wars that are proxy in nature. Neo-colonialism has been accompanied by the imposition of western secularism and the marginalization of religions. Civil society has the people's power to mobilize the masses on the ground against wars and other hostile acts. The will of the people is one for peace, security, and coexistence. Peace is the only option and religious leaders are best positioned to articulate the temperament of the people.

Neo-colonialism fosters poverty, injustice, oppression, exploitation, foreign domination, and imposition of social restrictions on Muslims. Such abject conditions breed extremism and violence, from which imperialism and Zionism recruit proxies. The eradication of such conditions will prevent violence, extremism, and terrorism.

In the same space there is also a military component, made up of 25-million soldiers in combat readiness and 75-million support workers to soldiers. They exclude child soldiers and

soldiers in irregular armies. Civil society, particularly, religious leaders need to inform them about the need for peace and the end to death and destruction. Religions are the real voice of peace.

From an Islamic perspective, unity has a threefold nature: unity of Muslims, unity of people of the book, and unity of humanity. The unity of Muslims is part of the larger unity of the people of the book, within the largest possible unity of humanity. Unity is indivisible.

-International attention should prioritize children, youth, women, environment, and socio economic development to promote peace, dialogue, understanding, rapprochements, and environmental protection within the larger context of the eradication of poverty in which 500-million people suffer from hunger.

The promotion of monotheism

Although monotheism holds the singularity of belief in One God it is not a homogeneous but heterogeneous concept.

The progression of the development of monotheism is, in outline, as follows:

1. Judaism, as presented by The Tau'rat, was the negation of polytheism.

2. Christianity, as presented by The In'jeel, was the negation of the altered Tau'rat.

3. Islam, as presented by The Holy Qur'an, was the negation of the altered In'jeel (The Bible).

4. Imamate monotheism was the negation of the 'diluted' caliphate monotheism.

5. The swearing of allegiance to tribal kings, an institution imposed on the Arabs by

the British, ‘diluted’ caliphate monotheism. The allegiance to God and the Final Prophet included allegiance to a fallible king and his compliant Grand Mufti. The Mufti issues fatwas and interprets the Quran to suit the political and economic interests of the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the hegemonic powers.

The writing of a parallel ‘holy book’, viz., the Talmud, corrupted the original Tau’rat. Jewish Law was derived from the Talmud, which consists of the Mishnah and the Gemara. The Mishnah consists of the original oral law or Oral Torah. The Gemara consists of rabbinical commentary and discussion of the Oral Torah after it was reduced to writing. The Talmud guided the Jewish diaspora in their everyday living and, gradually, displaced the original Tau’rat.

There are two Talmuds: the Babylonian Talmud and the Jerusalem Talmud. While the Mishnah is in Hebrew the Gemara is in Aramaic.

The original Tau’rat is about 3500-4000 years old but the Talmud is about 1500-1800 years old, as a product of the human hand.

The New Testament of The Bible consists of four Gospels, written by four apostles from four different angles for four different audiences, many decades after the perceived crucifixion of Jesus. The New Testament was a deviation from the original In’jeel, revealed to Prophet Jesus (A.S.).

Although the Imamate and Caliphate followers accept one unaltered Qur’an the Arab allegiance to a feudal king covers up aristocratic interests under the guise of divine authority through the faulty pen of a Mufti.

As Christianity and Islam are the major religious constituencies with a combined following of about 60% of the global population the Islamic monotheism, free of monarchical interests, should be clarified and presented to the world. Monarchy is a dying institution and Islam

should not be seen to be associated with it.

‘The powers of knowledge and faith’

Martyr Ayatollah Murtaza Mutahhari, in his ‘An Introduction to the Islamic World View’ states, “The powers of knowledge and faith (imaan), especially the power of faith and more particularly where these two powers harmonize, are a great and useful force. They can play an extraordinary and dynamic role in pushing forward or changing the course of historical movements.”

This paper on evidence bears out the correctness of this deep insight, esp., when it is considered that history is a complex and complicated milieu of colourful broad brushstrokes of timelines in history. The brushstrokes are always in conflict and in competition, generating noisy sounds and furies and evoking emotions and irrationality as well as calm reasoning.

From this milieu, this paper picks up the single thread of Islamic civilization, fibred by ‘the powers of knowledge and faith’.

In terms of Mutahhari’s concept of philosophical realism, Muslims have to give precedence to spirituality. But also to advance Islamic civilization they have to cater for the basic material needs of people such as food, water, shelter, clothing, medicines, and transport. Spirituality caters for needs such as education, knowledge, literature, arts, philosophical ideas, faith, ideology, adoration, ethics, and moral principles. Islamic epistemology should encapsulate both the material and spiritual needs, with spirituality having precedence over materiality as confirmation of the basic Islamic principle of fitra or pure natural state, into which babies are born. In the process of growing up human beings are distracted by materialism that dilutes the purity. Hence, the need to perform haj in order to restore one’s purity as a preparation to be in the ultimate Divine presence.

The precedence of spirituality over materiality was borne out by Imam Reza. When he was forced into exile from Medina to Khorasan in the 8th century, Khorasan was as barren as an infertile womb. There was not a single significant economic prospect for the development of a prosperous and populous society. It lacked the material basis for the creation of civilization.

Ironically, his martyrdom and his burial place attracted the permanent settlement of a large population on the basis of Islamic consciousness and imaan. He had planted the mustard seed of Islamic civilization in barren soil.

The Imam was armed with only two intangible assets of Islamic civilization, viz., imaan and knowledge to reproduce Islamic civilization on barren soil.

When Al-Mamun, his captor, legally compelled him into argumentation with Catholic, Jewish, Zoroaster, Sabian, and Hindu scholars, medical scientists, and rhetoricians Imam Reza took the opportunity to spread faith-based knowledge. Al-Mamun's evil intention was to embarrass his captive through failed argumentation.

The Imam's argumentation began with the Catholics. He used verses from the Bible to disprove the concept of The Holy Trinity and to prove the concept of a single God. He further proved that the Bible in circulation was not the same one that God had revealed to Prophet Isa (Jesus) but the one authored by four Gospel writers. He showed them the contradictions in the four Gospels. The Catholic archbishop after contradicting himself and sanctifying the authors as being above lies, eventually, conceded that they did lie about Jesus being a Christ.

His second argumentation was with the High Rabbi, the scholar of the Jews. From the previously revealed divine testament he proved the anticipated prophethood of Muhammad (S.A.W.). He argued that one of the characteristics of a prophet was to prove his ability to perform a miracle such as turning a stick into a snake or splitting the Red Sea. Why did not

the Jews believe in the miracles of all prophets except the miracle performed by Prophet Moses? His persistent argument on the validity of the miracles of all prophets forced the stubborn Rabbi to concede that all prophets had supernatural powers, which distinguished them from ordinary human beings. The Imam persisted, why then the Rabbi did not believe in the miracles of Jesus and the greatest miracle of Muhammad, the delivery of The Holy Qur'an to humanity when he was neither a scholar nor a writer – as proof of prophethood!

His third argumentation was with the Zoroastrian high priest who said that they accepted only the prophethood of Zoroaster because their ancestors had narrated the story of Zoroaster. The Imam argued that they believed in Zoroaster because of the ancestral narrative then why did they not believe the narratives of all the other prophets. He showed him the pattern of the history of nations and the prophets who delivered truths to humanity.

When the Imam had concluded the first three argumentations with the monotheistic scholars he called upon their followers to ask questions. He was met with silence.

The fourth argumentation was with Imran, the Sabian, who was a distinguished scholar. Imran asked him to prove the existence of God. This led to deep and complex discussion, to which the Imam had a scientific and simple approach. One of the questions was, 'Was the Being known to Himself by His Own Self?' The Imam answered, 'Knowledge is acquired by something, which would negate its opposite so that the thing itself would be existing through what it is negated about it, without the existence of anything, which contradicts its existence so that a need arises to negate that thing about itself by defining what is known about it.' The Imam also cautioned about the limits to human knowledge.

The Imam articulated the theory of ba'daa, which states that only God has innermost knowledge, which God taught to the Angels and Prophets. According to this theory, God makes manifest that Divine Will hinges on what is the opposite of it. Then God makes manifest the actual Divine Will when the advantage is satisfied from all angles and the reasons for which it was not previously manifested are removed. Some people misperceive this as if God had

willed only to abandon the first Divine Will and, therefore, it is not in the reality of Divine Will. Ba'daa is about innermost knowledge and not ignorance.

Will is an action and not an attribute of God. So, it is transient. Attribute is intransient. Will is manifested as an event. Attribute is a permanent quality.

The hinging Will is in an opposite relationship to the actual Will until the advantage of an event self-actualises itself, with evident reasons. In this relationship of opposites, the -temporary Will has to be distinguished from the permanent Attributes of God. Will is time bound. Attributes transcend time. There are many examples of this from history in The Holy Qur'an. God sends prophets to recalcitrant people with warnings to revert to the correct path. When they continue in disobedience God visits calamities on them. The event of a finite calamity is hinged on the attribute of infinite compassion to teach humanity a lesson.

There is an ongoing struggle of opposites between the philosophy of faith (consciousness), which is abstract or intangible, and the philosophy of matter (being), which is concrete or tangible.

The subtlety in his authoritative leadership was his skill to interweave intellectuality and spirituality and to make spirituality primary and intellectuality, secondary. The learned scholars with whom he had debated had held the opposite position on leadership.

The Imamate assumption is that consciousness of God is primary and that being is secondary and that there are limits to human knowledge. Faith in such consciousness can result in the creation of civilisations and cultures out of a barren desert, as it had happened in the barren Arabian Desert 1400 years ago and as it did in barren Khorasan region 1200 years ago.

The Imam had ensured that the Imamate remained premised on the primacy of Islamic consciousness, which had laid the basis for the conceptualisation of Velayat-e-Faqih by Imam

Ayatollah Khomeini (S) 1300 years later. The conceptualisation bordered on the traditional and modern for the separation of secular and spiritual powers, in which the secular is subordinate to the spiritual in a modern nation-state. Ayatollah Khomeini arose at a time in modern history that compelled the strategic and principled redirection of the oppressed masses of the world.

The argumentations and speeches delivered by Imam Reza on the principles of Islamic knowledge and sciences are equal in number to those of Imam Ali (A.S.) and exceed the number of speeches delivered by all the other Imams in these fields. In addition, he identified false hadiths. This ability is what differentiated him from his peers except Imam Ali.

Truth through discourse and dialogue with Islamic and non-Islamic scholars convinced his opponents about the truth of Islam and it filtered down to the masses.

The concepts of Al Asabiyyah Al Qabaa illiyah and ba'yah were anathema to Persian culture. Imam Ali (A.S.) had liberated his (fourth) Caliphate from the tribal/clan loyalties of the previous three Caliphates. He ruled on the ideological basis of The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah. He posed an ideological threat to the material wealth of the entrenched tribes/clans, which had equated the al-amma of the Murji'ites to true Islam, that later evolved into Sunni Islam, which defended the institutions of monarchy, Caliphate, and tribal/clan patriotism. Imam Ali held that allegiance could be sworn only to God and not to any human being as ruler. The Imamate evolved on the basis of Shahada. Persian culture could not accommodate such backward feudal practice because at the time of the arrival of Islam it was already an advanced civilisation. It was receptive to an undiluted Imamate monotheism and not a diluted Caliphate monotheism 7.

The common factor to the ancient Arabian Desert and Khorasan region was their barrenness, from which Islamic civilization and cultures flowered in full bloom. The flowers of Islam spread their fragrances and colours to the remote regions of Earth, rooted in an abstract faith that grew concrete edifices through the human hand and mind.

Mashhad like Medina is a model that demonstrates how Islamic spiritual values can translate into material prosperity, as manifest Islamic civilization. These two historical and spiritual centres demonstrate even in the 21st century that it is possible to transcend sectarianism and to create a new Islamic civilization, in spite of their geographical poverty.

Barrenness has bloomed into the Holy City of Mashhad, through which 25-million pilgrims flow annually. They are witness to the Imam-Reza-thoughts-in-action in a specific geographical location, in living history, and in economic, cultural, and social development. The spiritual conquered geographical poverty.

The meaning and purpose of his thoughts and struggles deserve to be spread globally as a prong of strategy to create and to expand a new Islamic civilization, free of sectarianism.

Mashhad combines the spiritual and material or the intangible and intangible assets of Islamic civilization, which is an ideal model for modern Islamic civilization to offer to the world.

In Islamic economics and jurisprudence, the ownership of property, whether private or public, is vested in God and that the nominal ‘owner’ is a mere trustee of God’s property on Earth. This is the essential meaning of khulafa, which the Caliphate had lost to the imperative of personal greed that treated material accumulation as primary.

In Mashhad City Astan Quds Razavi (AQR) is premised on the Islamic principle that the ownership of property vests in God and that its nominees are mere trustees of God on Earth. In line with this principle, AQR discharges its fiduciary responsibilities to God and the people, with material and spiritual benefits.

The essence of the historical-religious conflict between the Caliphate and Imamate is the question of khulafa, which generated a heated alienation between the two institutions in the

form of the usurpation of power by the pretenders to the succession to Prophet Muhammad from the truthful First Imam. To the Caliphate, the accumulation of economic wealth through autocratic control of political power was primary. To the Imamate, the accumlation of spiritual wealth through the power of truth was primary.

Although AQR holds an awe-inspiring edifice to the world its primary purpose is to advance -Islamic civilisation and culture on the basis of The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah religious historical line. This primary purpose is in harmony with the primacy of faith. AQR's material wealth, interwoven with cultural and civilisational values, is secondary to faith. It is merely the tangible petals of faith that the human hand, with God on its side, grew out of the barrenness of Khorasan.

AQR has withstood the turbulences of about six historical periods – pre-Safavid, Safavid, Ghaznavid, Afsharid, Qajar, and Pahlavi and an earthquake in 1673 CE – until it became stabilised in the period of the Islamic Revolution (IR) (1979). It has a remarkable history of about 1100 years and has weathered the turbulences, precisely, because it is rooted in consciousness of Islamic faith. In the IR period, its governance fell under the Supreme Leader, free of any interference by political leaders. IR ended the machinations of the political leaders of the previous six periods. It liberated AQR and restored its rightful role in propagation, education, and culture, which are sustained by economic investments through an organisational structure of six departments plus two main commercial organisations. The Grand Custodian of AQR is responsible for the Holy Zarih, library, treasury, and endowments. The first Grand Custodian was Ayatollah Abbas Waiz Tabasi, who had participated in the political underground together with Ayatollah Khomeini and Ayatollah Khameini. One of his most remarkable achievements was increasing the number of books in the library from 85'000 to 22.5-million, which makes Mashhad knowledge-centred just as Islam is knowledge-centred (Iq'ra). Under his leadership, guided by Ayatollah Khomeini, Mashhad has become globalised as a centre of pilgrimage in the modern era around the humble Holy Zarih.

AQR is the best large-scale modern architecture of the Prophet's Medina model, based on

waqf. It has no space for personal greed like that of the caliphates. It caters for the spiritual and material needs of human beings for the sake of human happiness. It is in harmony with the concept of Velayat-e-Faqih. The brilliance of the Holy Zarih is brighter than the 30’000 light bulbs, which light it up without any malfunctioning single bulb.

The model holds an edifice, which includes landed properties and buildings; more than eighty large companies; employment of more than 20’000 workers in the formal and informal economic sectors; manufacturing and mining industries; transport; agro-processing; agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry; service industries; building construction; medical services; pharmaceutical industry; and engineering services within the Sarakhs Special Economic Zone.

The edifice constructed around the power of the Holy Zarih, on the foundations of the Medina model, offers each resident and pilgrim the opportunity for self-development through the Qur’anic concept of tar’biyah (the development of the whole being). Accordingly, there are various inter-related aspects to the experience – political, social, cultural, sporting, educational, psychological, and religious. Strategically, Ayatollah Tabasi said, ‘Sport must be done with the objective of spreading the culture of altruism, holy war, and chivalry.’ Sports includes swimming, traditional sports and wrestling, martial arts, cycling, football, volleyball, and climbing. The AQR sports facilities are the largest non-governmental one not only in Iran but also in the Muslim world. It is no wonder that Iran ranks as world champions in martial arts and archery (men and women), volleyball, and wrestling.

It has become the centre for the preparation of Basij forces, soft war of ideological forces, educational forces, Islamic Awakening, Islamic lifestyle, and Islamic civilization. It should be promoted as the global centre of genuine anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-Zionist forces, threaded to other Iranian cities like Qom and Yazd.

Some of the material externalisations of the Holy Zarih are the Razavi Islamic Sciences University, Islamic Research Foundation, Quds Cultural Institution, AQR Publications, AQR Physical Exercise Institution, libraries, museums, hospitals, and welfare centres.

Its concern for human happiness is best exemplified by its advances in the medical sciences – cell therapy for cardiac disorder, treatment of epileptic patients through in-brain electrode technique, haemorrhoid repair, brain surgery by means of electrode method, largest nuclear medical centre in West Asia (Middle East), centre of health tourism in Iran, Muntaseriyeh Hospital, Razavi Medical Institution (Dar al-Shifa), Razavi Institution for Medicinal Services, and Samen Pharmaceutical Company.

Thus, 'Razavi culture' has developed as a particular culture within the general Islamic culture, focused on tar'biyah. AQR carries out its cultural mission through its sixteen cultural institutions. The Razavi culture is inherently a culture of altruistic motives, which gives it its emblematic character that upholds martyrdom and the remembrance of martyrs as a noble value. The Martial Arts Stadium is regularly used to hold mourning ceremonies for martyrs. The Complex of Traditional Sports and Championship Wrestling is regularly used to celebrate the birth anniversaries of the Holy Imams.

Shia culture is the only culture that is known to have institutionalised mourning and remembrance of the Holy Imams and martyrs. This probably prevents negative stress and embraces positive stress, which would be good for mental and spiritual health through the production of positive neuro-chemicals and neuro-enzymes. Positive stress reinforces altruistic motives, to which Tabasi had referred. This culture is captured in the proverb, 'A teardrop for Imam Hussein puts out hellfire.' The hellfire is often within the person.

Culture characterises civilisation, which characterises human beings as a differentiated species in the zoological domain. The differentiator is the brain/central nervous system/mind complex, which compensates for humans being born without natural skills for survival like those of eagles, elephants, and whales. Human beings have the powerful capacity to use the mind to conquer and to control the rest of nature. Should they do this without God they have the capacity to be more animalistic than wild animals, which is manifested in bloody wars of aggression and environmental devastation. Should they do this with God they have the capacity for optimal humaneness. The mourning culture is a collective

and individual technique to increase the production of compassion and optimise humaneness towards human beings, animals, plants, and the natural environment.

AQR follows the thread from Imam Hussein (A.S.), as one of the two leaders of youth in Heaven, and pays special attention to youth through its Institute of Consultative Service, Youth, and Social Research (founded in 1998). It has a 20-year renewable strategy for the religious-cultural development of youth, who are guided to transculturate the thoughts and actions of Imam Reza, Ahlul Bayt traditions, and the Razavi Sirreh. Youth are helped to identify and solve their problems, to network with global youth, to counter Western cultural imperialism, and to heighten Islamic consciousness. The target age group is 14-29 years. The five-year programs include parents and counselors. The program course includes multiple and cultural identities, Imam Reza traditions, life skills, and marriage. It elevates faith and morality, from which follows the development of the mental and behavioural health of the youth. Annually, 100’000 youths benefit directly and 500’000, indirectly.

The monumental works and thoughts woven around the spirit of Imam Reza demonstrates in material and spiritual ways how traditional Islam can be made relevant in modern times.

This truth should be the driving force for the creation of the modern Islamic civilization in the 21st century.

The Way Forward

Muslims can unite to advance modern civilization on the basis of Islam’s intangible assets of imaan and iqra by its thinkers developing new economic model and new social state model, from which the people can benefit materially and spiritually. These twin models should incorporate environmental protection, peaceful use of nuclear power, peaceful resolution of disputes, prevention of terrorism through education and identity, ideological tolerance, end to weapons of mass destruction, end to violence as a sacred cult, security in Islam, development of the Islamic world, and Islamic media and ethics. Social media should be used

for societal change to transmit the culture of knowledge and values through families and individuals. It should advocate dialogue amongst cultures and civilizations. It should encourage thinkers to think deeply of the Quran in an effort to unite Muslim hearts that transcend the various schools of jurisprudence such as Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi, Hanbali, Jafari, Zaydi, Ibadi, and Thahiri.

These models should acknowledge that they have to be developed within the historical context that Britain, France, USA, and Israel have sown discord through sectarianism and proxy forces in the Muslim world to destroy Islam. There should be no compromise with them.

These models should be aware that the Western concept of human rights in unequal patriarchal -capitalist societies is utopian because patriarchy is inherently unjust to women and girl children. Instead, the complementarity of men and women should be advocated.

Civil society should be encouraged to get involved in the implementation of the UN program called World Against Violence and Extremism (WAVE). In spite of UN lethargy, ordinary civilians in countries such as Yemen and Syria are involved in WAVE of their own accord in the face of Daeesh violence.

There is a need for civil society to work with UNESCO and foreign embassies on its calendar of world events such as the Wall of Kindness.

There is a vital need for:

· Adherence to the principles of the OIC Charter on unity and solidarity and to the values of peace.

· Examination of the migration crisis and its social consequences.

· Rejection of Western terms that distort Islam.

· Rejection of extremism and terrorism.

· Condemnation of the censorship of the media.

-· Strengthening the roles of academics, scholars, and the thoughts of Imam Al Ghazali.

· Protection of UNESCO World Heritage sites.

· Use of democratic and peaceful means of struggle.

· End to violence in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq and the use of peaceful solution after the military defeat of the Daeesh.

· Strategic unity of all Muslim countries.

To fulfil these needs Muslim thinkers can contribute to the following creative task:

· Encapsulate the twin models philosophically with a moral intention, which is inductively from within the vast body of Islamic thoughts.

· The models should reflect that human beings were created with an induced Islam and were naturally endowed with rationality and innate capacity for imaan and iqra.

· The models should also reflect that Islam is a model not for but of reality, with a belief system.

· The model of reality should determine scholarly discourse and action.

· The model should develop scientific theories with the capacity to predict the

future and move Muslims forward.

· The model should be cognisant that history, though important, can move Muslim backwards through self-glorification.

Islam should be the constitutive element of the struggle for justice, which defines Islam as the peaceful force for qualitative change.

Notes:

1 The Mamluk Empire of Egypt and Syria had existed largely in isolation from European Empires in non-contention. The post-WWII cultivation of the power of the media enabled the hegemonic European and American imperialist powers to manipulate human emotions as an invisible and strong ally of imperialism. The defeated Ottoman Empire could not cultivate the power of the global media.

2 In 2017 Israel is further exploiting this historical division to finance and support the concept of an independent nation-state of Kurdistan, as the second Israel in the Middle East.

3 On November 29, 1947 the UN adopted the proposal that Jerusalem be placed under international regime with its custody vested in Jordan.

4 The UNSC Resolution 478 of 1980 declared the 1980 ‘Jerusalem Law’ of Israel that Jerusalem

be the capital of Israel as null and void.

5 In 1980 at the Arab League Summit, after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, Henry Kissinger added a political dimension to these terms. Shiism was used to demonise and Sunnism was used to laud. Shiism became a metaphor for Islamic extremism and Sunnism became a metaphor for moderate Islam. The Revolution overthrew 2500 years of monarchy, a primitive unIslamic institution.

6 Sunni monotheism later developed into ‘pure Islam’ under the influence of Arab theologian, Taqi ad-Din Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328 CE), who issued fatwas that Shia and some ‘other’ Muslims were apostates. Another Arab theologian, Mahommad Abdul Wahab, in the mid-1700s latched onto the idea of ‘pure Islam’. After the defeat of the Indians by the British in the 1857 War of Independence, its ideologue, T E Lawrence, the socalled ‘Lawrence of Arabia’, introduced this idea to the ruling family clan of Saudis, who adopted it, as a -British strategem to defeat the Ottoman Empire. He had desired the idea of a British controlled Caliphate and managed the ‘Arab Revolt’ against the Ottomans. Wahabia Islam was adopted as a state religion and came to typify the new Sunni orthodoxy. Ibn Saud called for jihad against the Ottomans. For their loyalty to the British Empire, the British helped the Saudi clan to seize control of Arabia and the two Holy Mosques in 1932. Saudi-clan Islam was masqueraded as the new ‘pure Sunni Islam’. In 1933, the clan signed away oil concession rights to the Rockefellers’ Standard Oil (Exxo and Mobil). Wahabia/Saudia Islam, with its tribal/clan patriotism and oath of allegiance to a king, found resonance in the old ‘pure Sunni Islam’, and replicated itself as Salafi Islam with its ongoing mutations through ideological self-divisions, hinged on ‘purity’.

7 Imam Khomeini, in his condemnation of the Shah’s attempt to celebrate 2500 years of monarchy, declared on October 31, 1971, ‘The greatest disaster that befell Islam was the usurpation of rule by Mu’awiya from ‘Ali (upon whom be peace), which caused the system of rule to lose its Islamic character enitrely and to be replaced by a monarchical regime…only when it is overthrown can the people celebrate and rejoice…Monarchy is one of the most

shameful and disgraceful reactionary manifestations.’

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