

THE UNITY OF UMMAH AS THE ESSENCE OF MUSLIM POWER: A STUDY OF MUSLIM HISTORY IN SOUTH EAST ASIA

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As Keynote Speaker, I delivered this paper during the "International Seminar on the theme: Khilafat as a Key Solution to the Muslim World Crises and the Need for Liberating Al-Aqsa" last July 23, 2011 at Auditorium Building Widya Graha LIPI, Jakarta-Indonesia

I. Introduction

An attempt to revive the unity of the Muslim Ummah has become the topic of discussion among Muslim scholars and intellectuals in various fora and conferences. This move has taken place in different regional communities of the Muslim Ummah after the Ottoman Empire has gradually drifted away in 1920s from the ideal order founded by Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him) under the impact of westernization and secularism.

This move can also be referred to the course of action intended to bring back the old glory of Muslim Ummah as a vision to rebuild its unity and to recreate an Islamic social order being guided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah in reaction to the arrogance of Western values and socialist materialism that have contributed to the evolution of social ills in many Muslim countries.

The Muslim *Ummah* has been fragmented into different nation states having different foreign policy positions. Some have been with the United States and others had been with the Soviet Union.

In Southeast Asia, Islamic resurgence has taken place and continue to persist. This is manifested by the formation of many organization, like the Al-Aqsa Working Group International Secretariate in Indonesia, the Aqsa Sharif in Malaysia and the Bangsamoro Cares Worldwide in the Philippines. Their concern is for the Muslim Ummah.

In the Philippines in particular, the Bangsamoro have resorted to different approaches in their struggle for Islamic society. These approaches are: 1) Jihad or armed struggle which has been done by the mujahidin referring now to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. They are struggling for self determination in order to live according to the Shariah; 2) Da'wah or the

propagation of Islam which has been employed by the ulama (learned Muslims) and the Islamic propagators having different organizations. They wish to Islamize the entire country; and 3) Political participation which has been observed directly and indirectly by the large number of the Muslim populace in the country. Among their political leaders have participated in the electoral process so after winning they could display the good qualities of leadership.

Hence, this paper is designed specifically to present the meaning and nature of Muslim Ummah, Islamic education as a process, Taqwa or God fearing as a unifying factor, and unity as the essence of Muslim power and leadership.

II. Meaning and Nature of Muslim Ummah

Before going further to the process and modes as well as the unifying factor of the Muslim Ummah, it is quite significant to say that this Ummah is an Arabic word of "community" or "nation". It is commonly used to mean the collective nation of states and is used to mean the Commonwealth of the Believers (ummat al-mu'minin).

The phrase *Ummah Wahida* in the Qur'an (One Community) refers to the unified Islamic world. The Quran says:

► كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind; commanding what is righteous and forbidding what is wrong and you believe in Allah. (3:110].

The term caliphate refers to the first system of government established in Islam and represented the political unity of the Muslim *Ummah*. This was initially led by Sahabah or companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Pbuh) as a continuation of the Islamic political system, known as the 'rashidun caliphates'.

To the Sunni Islam, the head of state, the caliph, should be primarily selected by Shura or consultation.

III. Islamic Education as a Process

In order to achieve the unity of the Muslim Ummah, Islamic education is the process. This process starts from reforming oneself to family and to

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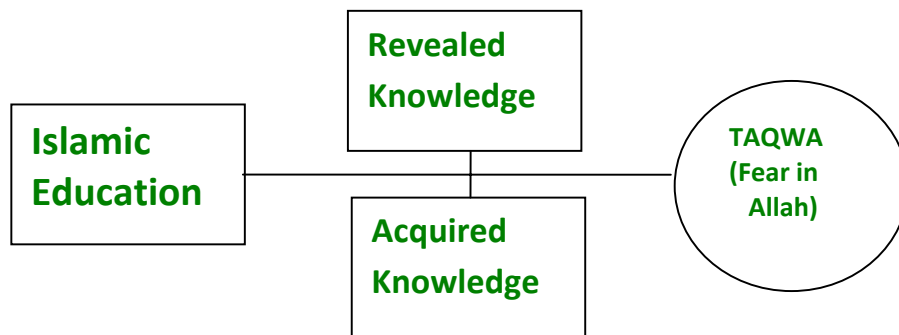


Fig. 1. Showing the Meaning and Nature of Islamic

the society. It consists both the revealed and acquired knowledge. The former is the one directly learned from the Qur'an as explained by the Prophet Muhammad in his ahadith (sayings). The latter is the one learned from the different creatures of Allah on earth which are indeed the expression of His omnipotent. Its main objective is to teach Taqwa or God fearing in order to mold a God fearing persons.

This process is basically enshrined in the Qur'an where Allah says:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ - خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ - اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ
الْأَكْرَمُ - الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ - عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ

Read! in the Name of your Lord who has Created (all that exist).
He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood).
Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the
writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.
(96: 1-5).

The verse implies that Muslims should primary know Allah, the Creator, and to comprehend and appreciate His attributes. The used of "pen" also implies the process of human struggle in search for knowledge. Allah says:

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

It is only those learned among His slaves that fear Allah (35:28).

The importance of knowledge was mentioned by Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. on many occasions. Some of his sayings are: 1) 'The acquisition of knowledge is a duty incumbent upon every Muslim, male and female,' 2) "Seek knowledge even unto China," and 3) "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave."

IV. Taqwa as a Core and Unifying Factor

This Taqwa or God fearing could be considered as a core and unifying factor of the Muslim Ummah. It should be an effect of Islamic education as a process. Those who have internalize this Taqwa are known to be Mutthaqiin or God fearing persons. It is the inner core value of the mutthaqun. As muthaqun, Allah says in the Qur'an: This is the Book; in it is guidance sure, without doubt, to those who fear Allah. Who believe in the Unseen; establish prayer; spend out of what we have provided for them; And who believe in the revelation sent to thee, and sent before thy time, and have the assurance of the Hereafter (Qur'an, 2:2-5)

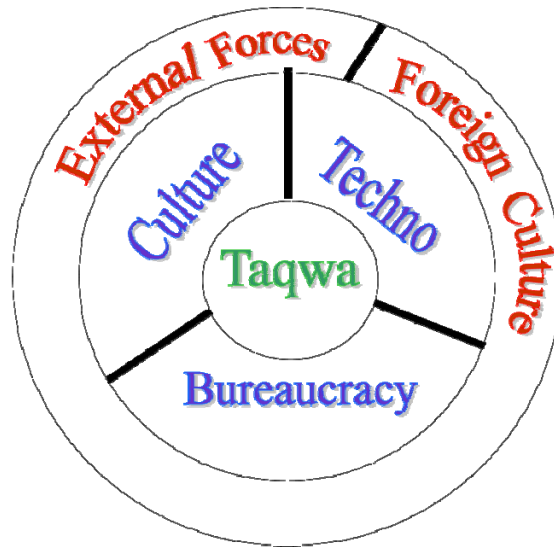


Figure 2. Showing Taqwa as a Core and Unifying Factor

Taqwa as a core value would serve as a unifying factor of culture, technology and the governmental structure or bureaucracy and the members of the Muslim society. When Taqwa is being internalized in the hearts of the Muslims, the sense of unity and brotherhood has taken place. It cleans human conscience. This happened during the life time of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). He was able to teach and develop the value of Taqwa among the Sahabah (companions). With this, the Sahabah had internalized the sense of unity and brotherhood in Allah alone and that they were united in defending the Islamic religion and society from outside forces.

Every Muslim is expected to worship Allah s.w.t. He says: "Verily we created man and jin only to worship me." This nature and form of worship is manifested by the performance of the said five essential duties. It is assumed that the higher the degree of the faith of the believer the greater the sense of unity and brotherhood he has.

So, man has a soul so that he can acquire spiritual things. He has a body to enable him to live on his material sphere. His spiritualism is an essential element that serves his human nature in a successful way. If man were not given with spiritual capacities, moral values, and intellectual abilities, he would be no better than an animal.

V. Unity: The Essence of Muslim Power

The unity of the Ummah as the essence of Muslim power could be an effect of Islamic education as a process and the internalization of Taqwa or God fearing as a unifying factor. It can be referred to the unity with unified

political institution, the Caliphate, of the Muslims regardless of their tribe, nationality, race and color. Its revival and establishment is one of the major and significant purposes of man's creation. This is related in the Qur'an which states: And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels: "Verily, I am going to place a *khalifah* on earth." This *khalifah* refers to the mankind that must have unified leader or Caliph who should lead according to the *Shariah*, the totality of the commandments of Allah.

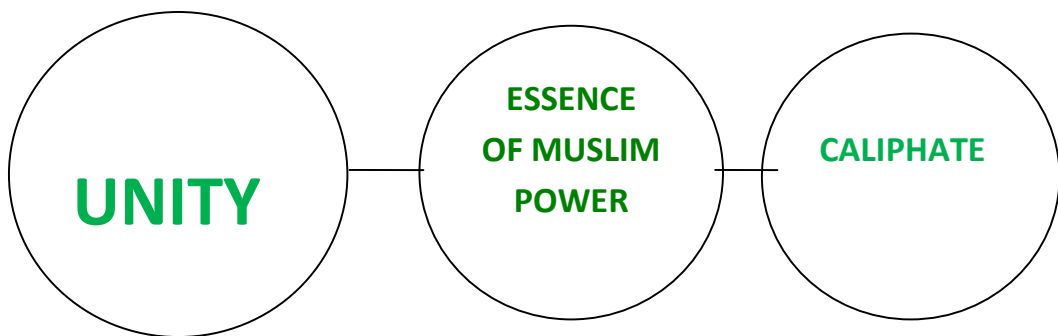


Fig. 3. Showing the Unity of Ummah as the Essence of Muslim Power and the Revival of Caliphate.

The emergence of various Muslim organizations in different countries and in South East Asia in particular is part of the global Islamic resurgence mainly to reestablish the unity of the Muslim Ummah under one unified leadership. In order to achieve unity, Allah s.w.t. says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ
لِتَعْرِفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. (Qur'an, 49:13)

The verse implies for the Muslims to know each other regardless of nationality and tribe. They should not only confine their vision for the people who belong to their society. This verse has relevance to individual, family, tribal, national and international relations.

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said: "The believers, in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other, are like a single body; if one limb feels pain, the whole body becomes restless."

This means that the only key to resolving the Muslim world crises and for liberating Al-Aqsa lies on the building up of Muslim's collective power. The foundation of this Muslim power are laid through massive Islamic education and the internalization of Taqwa. The rationale of uniting the Muslim Ummah is to make people with common feelings and vision. Such unification is also enshrined in the Qur'an, where Allah says:

﴿وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾

Hold fasts, all together, by the rope which Allah (stretches out for you) and no to divide among Yourselves. (3:103)

The verse implies that Muslims should unite among themselves. Rope is a thing which is visible and can be used to keep diverse things into one and therefore it may be used in this verse to make people aware that it is only through unity in Allah that people can do something to manage their goal and vision.

The necessity of unity has been influenced by the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (phub), when he said: "there will come in every century a Mujaddid (reformer) who will revive my faith in my people." This Prophetic saying portrays the advent of a reformer to check the spiritual condition of the Muslims in a particular century. It further implies that Muslims should be united and always be conscious of their faith and religious activities otherwise they are deviating from the direction of the Prophet.

VII. Conclusion and Recommendation

Conclusion

Therefore, the unity of the Muslim Ummah as the essence of Muslim power could be achieved through Islamic education as a process and the

internalization of *Taqwa* or God fearing as a unifying factor. Such unity will revive the *Khilafat* as a key solution to the Muslim world crisis and the liberation of Al-Aqsa mosque.

Recommendation

In order to achieve unity of the Muslim Ummah as the essence of Muslim power and to prevent any adverse move against such unity, the Muslims should:

1) Adopt Hassanul Banna's steps and modes of reforms, to wit: 1) To reform oneself, 2) To reform ones family, 3) To reform ones society, 4) To free the society from the colonialists, 5) To establish Islamic government, 6) To revive the Khilafat, and 7) To lead the world to the path of Allah s.w.t. and

2) Conduct more international conferences on Islamic awakening and the unity of the Muslim Ummah.

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