

Faith-Based Peacebuilding through Intercultural Dialogue

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Abstract

Addressing the root-causes of conflict amongst people, peace practitioners attempted to present their peacebuilding models to build peace in a context of fighting individuals, groups and societies. Islamic faith-based peacebuilding derived from the main sources of Islamic thought - the Quran and *Sunnah*- is the model by which Muslim peacebuilders tried to solve the problems of the Muslim world.

The outstanding icon of Islamic peacebuilding is Prophet Muhammad (S) as he is introduced to be a perfect role model for all humanity in any time. Therefore, we have a glance at the Prophet's (S) tradition in order to illuminate how he behaved in a multi-cultural and multi-religious environment of Medina to build an integrated community. Dialogue was a tactic used by Prophet (S) in dealing with people by reciting the glorious Quran and issuing the Charter of Medina to unify the diverse society of Medina under a new culture of Muslim brotherhood and *Ummah*.

Keywords: Islam, The Quran, Faith-Based Peacebuilding, Culture, Intercultural and Interfaith Dialogue, Prophet Muhammad (S), Medina Charter, Muslim Brotherhood.

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Introduction

Today we are witnessing different manifestations of mischief, oppression, tension, violence and enmity amongst people emanating from human ignorance and his detachment from spirituality and divinity. Seeking outlet, the traumatized individuals and communities struggle to relieve the pain from which they are suffering in order to reach peace and tranquility. Among peacebuilding models, faith-based peacebuilding derived from the main sources of Islam -the Quran and *Sunnah*- focuses on interreligious as well as intercultural dialogue to facilitate peace and justice, and deescalate conflict and oppression.

Prophet Muhammad (S) being a perfect role model for all humanity was taken as a symbol of Islamic faith-based peacebuilding in this paper to illuminate the path toward sustainable peace and justice. Therefore, the Prophet's (S) normative conduct in a multi-cultural society of Medina and his way of social unification under the shadow of Medina Charter created a new culture within the Muslim community.

Illustrating the terms such as peacebuilding, faith-based peacebuilding, culture and intercultural dialogue, Prophet Muhammad's (S) peacebuilding model in Medina, and Medina Charter, this paper attempts to present faith-based peacebuilding as a model to help reach peace through dialogue with people coming from various religious and cultural background.

Peacebuilding

The first concept which needs to be explicated here is the word peacebuilding which constitutes the focal theme of the present paper. While Johan Galtung defines peacebuilding as reconciliation of past traumas, resolution of conflict and construction of equity and harmony (Galtung, 2012) John Paul Lederach considers peacebuilding as relationships. Lederach developed a peacebuilding pyramid, outlining relationships is a key against violence. The pyramid consists of three levels in peacebuilding; 1) The grassroots level, as the bottom-up work for peace. 2) Leaders at the top of the pyramid, as the top-down work for peace. 3) In the middle Lederach placed people that work both with the grassroots and leaders for peace. According to Lederach this pyramid has been completed by referring to web peacebuilding theory and the way by which how a spider makes his web and hooks it up to a few strategic position, intersected at a core. He stated that sustainable peacebuilding based on relations, is to: 1) Understand the social context by building a network connected to strategic positions that carry the network, through developing relationships with people who are situated differently in the social context. 2) Construct the web where people are present and situated as that is the core interconnecting the network. 3) Be flexible and smart, responsive and adaptive to the changing environment.

Lederach argued that a sustainable way to build peace is creating a web of relationships, a network that includes our enemies. Lederach further highlighted that peacebuilding is adaptability, the capacity to respond and adapt in a dynamic environment (Lederach, 2005). What is called the Charter of Medina in the time of the Prophet would be as a model for network peacebuilding embraced not only by Muslims but also non-Muslims as well as the people of the Book.

On the other hand, Lisa, argues that peacebuilding is most often used as an umbrella term to encompass other terms such as conflict resolution, management, mitigation, prevention, or transformation¹. Schirch peacebuilding prefers to focus on the larger goals of peace and security rather than on the problem of conflict. Conflict-related terms focus on the negative and they label whole regions by their experience of conflict rather than their capacity for peace (Schirch, 2008).

Therefore, peacebuilding is an umbrella term that includes all attempts for building peace practiced by the pyramid of peace builders: leaders, middle class, and grassroots to build relationships through web peacebuilding for peaceful coexistence. Web peacebuilding would help peacebuilders understand social context, construct network peace through connecting people to peaceful coexistence, and finally to be responsive encountering the changing and multi-cultural environment.

In this paper, we will be visioning Islamic peacebuilding model through the lens of network peacebuilding in Medina established by Prophet Muhammad (S), the most perfect faith-based peacebuilding figure.

Culture

Without knowing culture and cultural diversities of a conflicting context, peace builders have no capability of confronting the problems and building peace. Therefore, the main culture under which the variety of people are interconnected and coexistent, is the channel through which peace practitioners would set up their peacebuilding mission. Indeed, culture is the social behavior and norms found in human societies, and it is considered a central concept in anthropology encompassing the range of phenomena

1. Schirch illustrates those similar terms in this way: The term “conflict resolution” is useful when communicating to the general public, and to funders who generally understand this term. Yet there are a variety of problems with the term “conflict resolution.” First, many believe it implies too much finality. Conflicts rarely end neatly. A second, related concern is that the term de-legitimizes nonviolent forms of resistance and struggle, making the problem “conflict” and not violence, thus inherently supporting status quo structures of power. The term “conflict transformation” on the other hand communicates that conflict is indeed transformed rather than managed or resolved. Yet it is unclear exactly which way transformation is happening and what is being transformed. The term “conflict prevention” refers to efforts to build peace proactively, to prevent violent conflict. Since the field of peacebuilding teaches that conflict is normal and can be a positive opportunity for bringing about needed changes, if handled constructively, some note that it is violence, not conflict that should be prevented



that are transmitted through social learning in human societies. According to the Merriam Webster (Maconis & Gerber, 2011) culture would be defined as:

- A: the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations;
- B: the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also: the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time;
- C: the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.

Considering the definition of human being as a civic being (Aristotle, book 1, chapter 7) and different aspects of human social manifestation are generally referred to as culture which shows itself through relations within the network peacebuilding.

Dialogue

Dialogue as a kind of communication can build an intersubjective network to attain physical peaceful coexistence in a diverse society. The etymology of the word 'dialogue' is from the Greek 'dialogos', 'Dia' means through or across; 'logos' means word, meaning or reason. The Merriam-Webster dictionary presents a common definition of dialogue as "a conversation between two or more persons" (Merriam-Webster, culture, 2018). In the Oxford Dictionaries dialogue as a noun is defined as a discussion, specifically addressing a subject or for the purpose of resolving a problem (Oxford dictionaries, culture, 2018).

The goal of dialogue is to understand the other and it is not possible except by listening. The phase of listening before speaking is to understand the other better before conversing them. Following listening, the focus in dialogue is to openly share one's own point of view. As dialogue is a reflective form of communication, changing one's opinion through internalizing thoughts, considerations and impressions from communications is seen as a strength. Dialogue thus requires a degree of openness to others and oneself. Openness includes allowing emotions, along with reflections, stories and faith, thus making space for the whole person (They, 2016).

Intercultural dialogue

By intercultural or interfaith dialogue we mean a conversation between different individuals or groups whose purpose is simply honest engagement and increased mutual understanding with respecting the cultural values including the religious ones of the counterparts. This kind of dialogue is very distinguished from debate, where we seek to win an argument, to persuade

others to our point of view. It is also different from discussion, which aims to solve a problem, reach a consensus or decide on a course of action. In an intercultural dialogue we engage with others for the sake of relationship; we are looking simply for meaningful humanistic and cultural interaction through which we may grow in understanding of the other, of ourselves and of the linkage between us to make a strong network of peacebuilding.

We take benefit of Martin Buber's observation (Buber, 1971) of true dialogue here as a kind of interaction that provides understanding through direct experience of the other. He saw it as a genuine, transformative encounter between the participants seeing and responding to each other as persons, not as things that they might use as means to an end. For Buber, dialogue is a deeply meaningful interpersonal experience, which can change you, as it can help you see yourself from the perspective of the other. According to David Bohm¹, we can have the range of learning that can take place in dialogue (Bohm, 2004). The one who engages in an intercultural dialogue not only becomes aware of the realities of other cultures, but also he learns to revise his culture and deepen his faith. This process as David Yankelovich (Yankelovich, 1999) explores, may potentially transform conflict into cooperation and peaceful coexistence in a multicultural context, if it occurs under three particular conditions:

- equality (or at least suspension, as far as humanly possible, of inequality and coercive influences);
- listening with empathy in order to understand, and
- bringing assumptions out into the open.

These conditions are undoubtedly helpful in facilitating the sort of genuine human encounter that Buber envisioned, in which we meet the other as a valued human person, setting aside power games and the impulse to control or use others for our ends. Through the effort to meet as equals, to listen with empathy, and to be open about our preconceptions and prejudices, we may break down some of the barriers in the way of meaningful cultural and religious interaction. For dialogue practitioners, the full achievement of all three conditions is perhaps something to aspire to: an ideal set of circumstances in which a really profound dialogue may take place.

Therefore, dialogue is a verbal communication with other human beings who are interconnected to one another for mutual understanding and respect inside the web of various cultural demonstrations to implement peacebuilding.

Faith-based peacebuilding

All of the procedure of peacebuilding through intercultural dialogue practiced by Muslim peacebuilders was taken as faith-based peacebuilding



1 - D. Bohm is one of the most interesting and influential contemporary theorists in the field of dialogue.

rooted in their strong commitment to the Islamic Shari'a derived from the Quran and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (S). Many Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have identified values and principles in Islam such as monotheism and unity in following one God (21:92), merciful Prophet to the whole world (21:107) and taking him as a role model (33:21), being submissive to guardians, al-Awlia; God, the Prophet and Imams (3:32), accountability for all actions on the Day of Resurrection (37:24), Justice, 'Adl (5:8, 57:25, 16:90, 4:58 & 42:15) and peace (2:208) that are interconnected. The notion that peace cannot be achieved without justice is echoed by many peacebuilding researchers and activists (Lederach, 1997). These values are supported by innumerable verses in the Quran, commanding believers to be righteous and levelheaded in their dealings with their fellow beings.

Considering the above mentioned principles, the Quranic verses, enumerated below, can serve as indicators to faith-based peacebuilding:

1- The reality of diversity

The Quran explains that human free will caused a kind of diversity in religion and culture clarifying how to respond to it with righteousness and justice:

"Say, Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so." (18:29)

"There is no compulsion in religion." (2:256)

"Had your Lord willed, all the people on earth would have believed. So can you [O Prophet] compel people to believe." (10:99)

"If God so willed, He would have made you all one people." (16:93)

These verses signify that diversity out of human free will was intended by God. This requires us to learn how to live peacefully through intercultural as well as interfaith dialogue. Other verses from the Quran show us the divine wisdom in such diversity, encouraging us to engage:

"We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God had so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good: you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about." (5:48)

"If your Lord had pleased, He would have made all people a single community, but they continue to have their differences – except those on whom your Lord has mercy – for He created them to be this way." (11:118–19)

2- Honouring human beings

In his book *Dialogue in Islam* (Erol, 2012), Erol observes Muslims positive engagement with their fellow human beings from different cultural and religious background. Dialogue is a natural manifestation of our humanness, as both the Quran and the life of the Prophet (S) make it clear. The Quran tells us that the fundamental oneness of all human beings and

their ethnic and linguistic plurality together enable us to engage with and understand one another:

"And indeed We have honoured the Children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have provided them with al-Tayyibat (lawful good things), and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preference." (17:70)

Based on the divine will for honouring human beings, we have to share our humanity with all individuals and communicating them to reach peaceful coexistence. This honoured human being is created not only to connect to other people but to communicate with God, the creator, by worshipping Him.

"I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me." (51:56)

Worship itself is a form of communication and dialogue with God. According to some exegesis of the Quran (Tabatabaei, 1374 S.H) worship in this verse is knowing God. The process of knowing God requires us to start our spiritual journey within ourselves and discover the inner world which, according to Imam Ali (Meibodi, 1411 AH) is a great world. This long contemplation necessitates human being to connect meaningfully with himself as the honoured creature, the universe as the divine communications (Ayaat), and to God as his Creator. Dialogue in this procedure has a great role to establish communication with all engaging parties.

3- Mutual understanding

Dialogue of the dignified human being with other people from different nation and ethnic group leads us to our origin from a single man and a single woman; that is the departure point of human for communication and being together. This special kind of engagement facilitates mutual understanding for all members of humanity. Thus, dialogue can contribute to stable, peaceful relations between different groups to figure out which one is more connected to God and the most honoured by Him.

"O people, We created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should get to know one another. In God's eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him: God is all knowing, all aware." (49:13)

4- Problem solving

According to Islamic faith-based peacebuilding, a peacebuilder should be starting with the external shared problems taking them to Islamic holy scriptures (Sadr, 1428 AH). If a peacebuilder takes the global problems such as moral degeneration, environmental pollution, unfair distribution of economic gains, disease, poverty, collapse of family values, fanaticism in the name of race, religion and nationalism, and problems threatening world peace such as terrorism, war and exploitation to the Quran asking for solution, the Quranic answer for problem solving dialogue is consultation which is considered to be a conducting method for the great affairs.

Consultation in the Quranic usage is the peacebuilder's asking for seeking assistance from people around him by dialogue and practicing finally on a decision made out of the process of dialogue.

"And those who answer the call of their Lord and perform the prayer and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them." (42:38)

"And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their fault), and ask (Allah's) Forgiveness for them; and consult them in affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)." (3:159)

5- Quranic classification of people

Erol observed (Erol, 2012) that the Quranic text distinguishes three groups of people: (i) Believers who believe in One God and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (S). Hypocrites are included within the group of Muslims since they were outwardly pretending to be believers even as they were inwardly defecting from Islam and conspiring against the Muslims (ii) Unbelievers and polytheists, who are classed together as mushrikin, who deny God or associate a partner with God, and (iii) People of the Book refers to those who follow a divine book and a prophet sent by God. They include Jews, Christian and Sabians.

"The [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians – those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good – will have their rewards with their Lord. No fear for them, nor will they grieve." (2:62)

"For the [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians – those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds – there is no fear: they will not grieve." (5:69)

"As for the believers, those who follow the Jewish faith, the Sabians, the Christians, the Magians, and the idolaters, God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection; God witnesses all things." (22:17)

6- Dialogue with people of the Book

Getting aware of the Quranic classification of people, we have to know who the Quran encourages us to communicate and converse with. People of the Book are the class on which Islam had laid great emphasis and pushed Muslims forward to engage in dialogue with them upon the commonalities.

"Say, People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords." (3:64)

"[Believers], argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, 'We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God is one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him.'" (29:46)

7- Dialogue with common people

Imam Ali classifies people in his letter to Malik Ashtar into two main classes: Those who are our brothers in faith and those who are similar to us in creation (Imam-Ali, 1371 H). Thus, we must respect not only those are our co-believers but also that group of people shares the nature of creation with us. So based on this doctrine, we communicate with them through dialogue and mutual respect to build a peaceful coexistence in a shared environment. The Quranic verse state:

"And He does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with anyone who has not fought you for your faith or driven you out of your homes: God loves the just." (60:8)

The non-Muslims mentioned in this verse clearly include any non-Muslims, not just People of the Book.

Islamic peacebuilding model based on Prophet Muhammad's (S) tradition

To make this paper more practical and problem-based research, we firstly start moving from the external problem of peacebuilding toward the Islamic Model of peace in Medina (the tradition of Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family), and secondly move within the context of early Islam in Medina to discover the Islamic peacebuilding model for Muslims' behavior in their everyday life. This way of referring to Islam is called "making silent scripture to be talking" by Martyr Sadr. (Sadr, 1428 A.H) Considering this model, we organize this section of paper in three parts of early Islam in Medina:

1. Islamic peacebuilding

To begin with the Islamic peacebuilding practiced by the Prophet in Medina we would clarify four elements of Peace in Medina, Muhammad (S) the Peacebuilder, Anthropology and the Environment of peace in Medina to deepen our understanding about early Islam and applying its teaching in daily life.

A. Islam as the whole message of peace in Medina

Islam as the perfect example of faith-based peacebuilding completed gradually during 23 years of Prophet Muhammad's (S) mission. Considering the cultural diversity of different contexts, Islam was founded in Mecca and persisted in Medina to be perfected in Sharia, a universal system for managing both individual and social human life.

The holy Quran addressed people of Mecca by Ya Ayyuha al-Nas O People! to show its universal mission to the diverse society, and addressed people of Medina by Ya Ayyuha Allazin Amanu O people who you believe! to build the faithful community of new believers based on peace and

happiness. The calm and peace in Medina created a new cultural system in which religious rituals paved the way for social solidarity and integrity. The Quran in Medina tries to generate new culture of relationship amongst Prophet Muhammad (S) and his followers and the other inhabitants of the city such as Munafiqin, i.e. the hypocrites, and people of the book (Khorramshahi, 1377 S.H).

B. Peacebuilder of Medina

Accounts of Prophet Muhammad's (S) life show that he was a model of positive engagement with those around him before he was called to be a prophet, since before that time he was known as al-Sadiq al-Amin, the truthful and the trustworthy. Thus, at that time, he positively engaged with others not in obedience to the revealed word of God, the Quran, but in obedience to the norms of God's creation – the innate disposition, fitra, with which God endowed all human beings.

Prophet Muhammad (S), the perfect Islamic role model, the faith-based peacebuilder has started his mission from Mecca by internalizing inner peace through the piety, Taqwa, within the soul of the faithful individuals and continued his peacebuilding in Medina to build a faithful community by implementing Islamic Sharia system.

Peacebuilding traits of Muhammad (S), the faithful peacebuilder, in Medina:

1. Emphasizing on training and educating people by reciting the verses of the Quran, building mosques, contracting Muslim brotherhood between the Immigrants (Muhajirin) and the Helpers (Ansar) for creating new relationship.
2. Trying to establish Islamic political system on three pillars: 1) the believers as the peaceful members of the new community; 2) Sharia as an authentic law system which guarantees peace and its implementation; and 3) paving the ground for the faithful community building that is the embodiment of peace.
3. Contracting peace with the neighbors of Islamic community and People of the Book to project peace from Muslim community to the region.
4. Globalizing the mission of faith-based peacebuilding by sending invitation letters and envoys to the empires of that time.
5. Redefining the values and shifting them from wealth and genealogy of the ignorance to human faith-based dignity. The verse "verily the most honoured of you in sight of God is the most righteous of you" (49:13) creates new measurement to evaluate values and human dignity. Out of this measure, Bilal the former slave became the Muazzin, caller for prayer (Waqidi, 1989).

Zaynab bint Jahsh from a noble family married Zeyd bin Harehha, the slave of Kadija (Tabari, 1375 H) a faithful person amongst the other



believers considered to be as a part of one's body in the sense that if one part hurts, the other parts too start feeling (Ibn Sa'd, 1405 A.H).

C. Anthropology of Medina

Knowing people of Medina helps us establish what the Prophet did to them from peace and reconciliation, to the contemporary peace practitioners of the world.

1. Contrary to the people of Mecca who were mostly ignorant and pagans, people in Medina had peaceful coexistence with People of the Book for a long time (Shirazi, 1369 AH). People of the Book were monotheists and people of Medina became familiar with this transcendent doctrine of monotheism.

2. People of the Book used to have the culture of waiting for the last Prophet of God in Medina. (2:89) Despite the Jewish rejection of the new Prophet, the divine doctrines of the holy Book affected the population in the region and paved the way for welcoming to the Prophet and his immigration from Mecca to Medina.

3. The long conflict between two grate tribes in Medina, Aws and Khazraj and their exhausting situation before Hijra led them to seek a peacebuilder to resolve their lasting conflict. Therefore, they found Prophet Muhammad (S) as the savior as well as the peacebuilder.

4. The tribal culture and warm welcome the heads of tribes extended to the Prophet, caused the people of Medina to accept Prophet Muhammad (S).

In such a community, the Prophet took the opportunity of his addressees in different culture, and used his noble background to be the promised one for People of the Book, a peacebuilder for the fighting tribes, and finally a merciful leader for the community. This teaches us how a peacebuilder can transform conflict in a society to create peace and integrity.

D. Environment of Medina

Before knowing the environment of Medina, it is important to have a glance at the background of environmental shift from Mecca to Medina to understand Hijra strategy as an element of faith-based peacebuilding. During a 13-year prophecy, Prophet Muhammad (S) took the opportunity of tribal relationship and invited people to the new religion. He well knew that Quraysh could not assassinate him because they were scared of confronting Bani Hashim and butting themselves in the situation of war in Mecca. Therefore, their troublemaking to the Prophet was a kind of defamation, accusation and less physical damages (Shahidi, 1390 S.H).

Although a tribal society enjoyed some benefits, it was not a proper ground to establish one faith-based Ummah. So the Prophet decided to change the limited environment to the ideal one in which the integrated structure of Ummah settled (IbnKathir, 1411 AH). To get more knowledge about the environment, two critical concepts in pre-Islamic-Medina should



be taken into consideration, Autom, the castle, and Rab'a, the independent tribal culture.

Autom as a symbol of territorial independence was a building with a tall watching tower to defend a given tribe against enemy. Medina because of possessing vast land, had many Autom to be as a shelter for the inhabitants in a state of threat. Indeed, out of the peaceful spirit of people in Medina that made them needless to any political or military agreements on one hand, and lack of central power on the other hand, caused the tribes in Medina to feel constant insecurity and lasting conflict between two or more tribes (al-Ali, 1391 S.H). Rab'a was the cultural independence of a tribe to organize its social relations, customs and traditions distinguishing one tribe from the others.

The two former concepts help us to deepen our perception of the people of Medina that they used to live a state of fear due, mainly, to the absence of a central political system to unify the scattered tribes. This culture helped the Prophet to play the role of a great leader to manage the society, as well as of a peacebuilder to replace the state of fear with peace, stability and integrity.

1. Peacebuilding phases

Prophet Muhammad (S) used the proper means for his faith-based peacebuilding in Medina. These means included: 1) the glorious Quran as the main source of peacebuilding through a divine dialogue with the Prophet. The Quran has repeated the word Qul (lit.say) three hundred and thirty three times (Abdulbaqi, 1364 AH) to show God's emphasis on dialogue in which the message conveyed through the Messenger to the audience (Qaramaleki, 1393 H); 2) innovating some religious institutions: the Mosque, as the first cultural center established by the Prophet after Hijra to be the place of dialogue with God through worship and of people through sermons of the Prophet; 3) resisting psychological warfare of the enemies (Nasr, 1380 S.H) 4) good interaction with People of the Book and convincing them that all previous prophets are sent by God and they are all in one mainstream and common religion of peace and submission to God, and have no difference in prophecy (3: 83, 84). Therefore, differentiation between true and false Christians and Jews, and justice in judgment between them was some of the ways through which the noble Prophet communicated with People of the Book (Zargarinejad, 1384 S.H). 5) Sending messengers to different corners of the region for reciting the Quran and teaching the new religion, Islam, and giving charity (Alviri, 1383 S.H, N.21). 6) Appointing 12 middle class peacebuilders calling them Naqeeb for taking assistance from them in the process of peacebuilding in the tribal conflict context. The Prophet addressed 12 Naqeeb saying "you as the Apostles of Jesus Christ are the chiefs of your tribes, and I am the chief of my own people (Tabari, 1375 S.H, p. 935)".



Medina Charter

The Charter of Medina, is the constitution drafted by Prophet Muhammad (S) shortly after his arrival in Medina. (Watt, 1961) to build faith-based peace and guarantee sustainable peace in the Muslim community. The document is a book of Prophet Muhammad (S) to operate between the believers and Muslims from the Quraysh tribe and from Yathrib and those who may be under them and wage war in their company, declaring them to constitute one nation Ummah includes all individuals of a diverse society. It established the collective responsibility of nine constituent tribes for their members' actions, specifically emphasizing blood money and ransom payment. The first constituent group mentioned are the migrants from Quraysh, followed by eight other tribes. Eight Jewish groups are recognized as part of the Yathrib community, and their religious separation from Muslims is established. The Jewish Banu Al shutbah tribe is inserted as one of the Jewish groups, rather than with the nine tribes mentioned earlier in the document. The constitution also recognized Prophet Muhammad (S) as the mediating authority and peacebuilder amongst those groups and forbade waging war without his authorization. The constitution formed the basis of a multi-religious Islamic community in Medina (Firestone, 1999).

The constitution was created to end the bitter intertribal conflict between the rival clans of Aws and Khazraj in Medina (Serjeant, 1978) and to maintain peace and cooperation among all groups in Medina. Establishing the role of Prophet Muhammad (S) as the peacebuilder between the two groups and the others in Medina was central to the ending of internal violence in Medina and was an essential feature of the constitution. The document ensured freedom of religious beliefs and practices for all members who follow the believers. It imposed a tax system for supporting the community in times of conflict. It declared the role of Medina as a Haram, (Hamidullah, 1377 S.H) i.a. asacred place, where no blood of the peoples included in the pact can be spilled. Haram indeed is the place of peace with God and God's creation indicating that Islam is the religion of peace and the community embraces Islam is the peaceful community.

One of the most important feature of the Constitution of Medina is the redefinition of ties between Muslims. It sets faith-based relationships above blood-ties and emphasizes individual responsibility. Tribal identities are still important to refer to different groups, but the main binding tie for the newly-created Ummah is religion. That contrasts with the norms of pre-Islamic Arabia. (Serjeant, 1978)

The non-Muslims had the following rights on the condition they followed the Muslims: (Ahmad, 1979)

1. The divine protection is equal for all groups,
2. Non-Muslim members have the same political and cultural rights as Muslims. They have autonomy and freedom of religion.



3. Non-Muslims take up arms against the enemy of the nation and share the cost of war. There is to be no treachery between the two.
4. Non-Muslims are not obliged to take part in the Muslims' religious wars.

By the Medina Charter, the Prophet renewed the social relations of the community and founded a network peacebuilding based on faith. This intercultural and interfaith charter teaches the Muslim peacebuilders today to have Ummah-building perspective by recognizing the cultural and religious diversity within a vast framework of being together based on commonalities.

2. Peacebuilding strategy

The main strategy of Prophet Muhammad in Medina innovating a new social tie among individuals of that environment entitled religious brotherhood. Contemplating on that notion, would help religious communities to change from conflict to peace and solidarity.

a. Muslim brotherhood and faith-based unity

The historical background of the concept of religious brotherhood in the culture of the early Islam is older than the Prophet making pacts of brotherhood between Muhajirin and Ansar after his migration from Mecca to Medina. One of the oldest usages of the notion of brotherhood among Muslims is the one made by Muslims in Mecca about their fellow Muslims in Yathrib (or Medina) before they migrated there. (Ibn Kathir, 1411 A.H, p. 169)

Five or eight months after the migration of Muslims to Medina, the Prophet (s) told his Sahaba: "Every pair of you be brothers in the way of God". There is disagreement among historians with respect to the number of Muslims. According to many sources, they were 90 people, 45 from Muhajirin (those who had migrated from Mecca to Medina) and 45 from Ansar (residents of Medina who helped the migrants) (Ibn-Husham, 1396 A.H).

One of the main concerns of the Prophet was to establish social justice among all people (57:25), and this required, on the one hand, the collapse of social classes, and, on the other hand, an establishment of close relations and affinities among individual people. Thus, the Prophet established the relation of religious brotherhood as a practical strategy to form brotherhood and equality among all people (Encyclopedia-of-Islam, V.11, 1367 H).

Before the brotherhood, the verse 10 of chapter 49 was revealed, it would have been thought that the establishment of religious brotherhood was merely a wise and intelligent strategy by the Prophet as a religious and political leader in order to solidify the foundations of the newly emergent Islamic community and provide spiritual support for it. However, the revelation of the brotherhood verse showed that such a relation was, in addition to being a political strategy to unify the Islamic nation, part of the Islamic doctrines were legislated by God.



b. Procedures of Making a Pact of Brotherhood

Making this notion more applicable for peacebuilding process by Muslim peacebuilders, we bring here the procedure through which Islamic brotherhood may take place. To begin with the pact, two men or two women shake each other's right hands, with one of them reciting the verbal vow of brotherhood and the other accepting it.

Here is the verbal vow (Nuri, 1408 A.H): "For the sake of God, I will be your brother and I will be honest with you, and for the sake of God, I will put my hand in your hand, and before God, His angels, his holy scriptures, and his prophets, I promise that if I deserve to go to the heaven and I am allowed to intercede for you, then I will not enter the heaven without you"¹.

And then the other party responds: " Qbilty (I have accepted)."

Then the first speaker says, "I do not give you any rights of brotherhood except those of intercession, praying, and visits"².

And again the other party responds, "I have accepted".

The verbal vow does not need to be recited in Arabic; it can be recited in any languages, but the words should convey the meanings of this vow.

١ - واخيتك في الله و صافيتك في الله و صافحتك في الله و عاهدت الله و ملايكنه و كتبه و رسله و انبياءه و الانبياءة

المعصومين (ع) على ابي ان كنت من اهل الجنة و السقاعة و اذن لي بان ادخل الجنة لا ادخلها الا و انت معي.

٢ - اسقطت عنك جميع حقوق الاخوة ما خلا السقاعة و الدعاء و الزيارة.



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