Conflict in Contemporary Muslim Society: A Collaborative Panacea from the ‘Ulama’ and Umara’

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Abstract: This constant and unresolved conflict is harmful to the social harmony and internal peace, which affects the economic and educational development of such a society. As a result, it undermine its civilization process. Several reason can be attributed to the conflicts in Muslim society. This paper is of the opinion that the demarcation between the Ulamā’ and the Umarā’ is one of the main causes. This opened for whimsical inclinations by both the leaders and the led. The Islamic injunction of practicing in totality is diminishing among its adherence. The life of the prophet is full of examples for all to follow. Embracing and having the modern western knowledge by the scholars and Islamic knowledge by the Umarā’ is an essential thing to implement. The globalized modernized, complicated world is in the hands of the Ulamā’ and the Umarā’ to help their people. Thus, this paper recommends a collaborative effort between the scholars and the leaders to save the society from further destruction. Unity of purpose from the ‘Umara’ and the Ulama’ is one of the tools to resolve conflict in Muslim society.

Keywords: Conflict, collaboration and Civilization

INTRODUCTION

Muslim societies all over the globe are afflicted by splits on various interest and groups. The major issues at hand now is the deepening division between ethnic group, religious affiliations or sects, political interest (Shah: 2013). This constant and unresolved conflict is harmful to the social harmony and internal peace, which affects the economic and educational development of such a society. As a result, it undermine its civilization process. The longer it takes for the conflict to escalate, the less is the ability by the people to reason rationally and resolve it. As human are created differently, conflicting ideas is a fact of human life. It can either be good or bad, depending on how it’s handled; constructively or destructively. No any nation will survive in a destructive conflict of ideas or interest. ‘Ulamā’ and ‘Umarā’ are the leading figure in the development of an Islamic civilization. For change to take place in a society, the two figures should come to term with each other. Emphasis on knowledge and acting upon it are the prevailing natural order for progress and development. The scholars are the leading figure in putting the acquired knowledge into practice, while the leaders are responsible for implementing justice and fair dealings. The issue of conflicting ideas in the Muslim society today is not new. Several historical event has shown contradictory interest even between the ‘Umara’ and ‘Ulamā’ and in the history of Islamic civilization, however, there are certain instances of stability and progress between the two leaders in their respective areas. These days, the world is globalized, as such, become more complicated with numerous kinds of modernizations. Thus, there is need to bear in mind the kinds of Ulamā’ to listen to and ‘Umarā’ to led the Muslim society.

DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

Conflict according to (https://www.merrim-webster.com/dictionary/conflict) is an incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests. It is a condition in which there happens to be a clash of contrasting wishes or needs, external or internal demands. Unfriendly state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons) which is an opposing action of incompatibles conflict of principles. In the view of Fisher (1990,6), conflict “a social situation involving perceived incompatibilities in goals or values between
two or more parties, attempts by the parties to control each other, and antagonistic feelings by the parties toward each other”. Which means conflict may have both element of subjectivity and objectivity; depends on the different situations. This is based on the emotions, perceptions, reasoning, communication, values, and motivations, which may involve decision making with limited rationality as asserted by Shah (2013).

CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN MUSLIM SOCIETY

The condition of the Muslim society is in correlation with their attitudes of neglecting the Islamic teachings. Half-baked practicing of the Islamic injunctions leads to such consequential condition. This emanate from both the led and the leaders. Islam represents a faith, a set of daily—or other periodical—rituals, a set of guidelines on ethics and morality, and a frame of reference or a worldview (Tamimi: 2007). Conflicts emanate as a result of various factors in any society. From the Muslim society, the main factor which leads to this is the separation between the leaders and the scholars in handling the affairs of the society (Mahmud: 2006; Perkins: 2007). In the sense that, the leaders negated their job in discharging the trust in order to create welfare for the people. At the same time, embracing the secular system of demarcation between religion and worldly affairs add more salt to the injury. On the other hand, the some of the scholars are not in the vicinity of the current modernity trends, in order the guide people to the right path. The adoption of the western modern method (Von Der Mehden: 1987) has contributed the irrelevancy of the scholar’s couple with love for power interest from the Umarū. Thus, the gap push the ‘Ulamā further away from the ruling class. This opened up for corruption, discrimination, huge social gap between the rich and the poor, quest for power, excommunication and condemnation of each among the two super-powers in a society, emerged and spread to the lower level, to mention a few.

DEMARCATION BETWEEN SECULAR AND SPIRITUAL

During the Jahiliyyah period, the Prophet was able to succeed in transforming the Arab society with many tribes to live in harmony with each other (Hitti: 2002). With this harmonization, many Arab tribes wanted to be allies with the Ummah. The Prophet built a powerful tribal confederation who were willing to help each other against each other’s enemies (Kennedy: 2015). This is even seen how small groups of Christians and Jews were incorporated. All these were achieved without demarcation between secular and state. Thus, an example can be seen from life of the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as to methods of creating success and prosperity for all to benefit; not for Moslem community alone. Nowadays, Muslims are far away from the original teachings of Islam in an effort to adopt from the western methods of leadership. In the history of early Islam, the ‘Ulamā occupied a powerful post and their theological the juristic decisions determine the community they lived. Even tough not without some hindrances as time goes on, the ‘Umarū always attempted to secure the support of the ‘Ulamā in important policies. The Ulamā have played an important role in the society. Gradually, the Ulamā in modern times has lost ground to the new western educated classes. Thus, an involvement in modern integration of knowledge by the Ulamā will be of great importance in serving the Ummah form this menace.

DUTIES OF THE ‘ULAMĀ

The ‘Ulamā (sing. Alim,) refers the person who has knowledge of science at large. In Islamic tradition, it refers to the scholars who aha acquired the Islamic knowledge and law. In a narrower sense, Ulamā may refer to a council of learned men holding government appointments or not in a Muslim state. Based on their knowledge, the ‘Ulamā are perceived as the protectors and maintainers of Islamic heritage. They occupy a very significant position in Islam. There are several narrations on the dignified post of the scholars by the prophet (saw), among which: “the Ulamā are the inheritors of the prophets” (Dawud: 3157).

The duty of religious scholars are to advise and warn the generality of the people including the leaders, in the matters of religion. This includes certain instances where the Sharī‘ah does not provide detail rules, the leaders should consult with the scholars (Malkawi & Sonn: 2011). Likewise the ‘Ulamā are expected to be guide the leaders. The prophet himself consult with the companions in many issues where he did not get any instructions and the consultation is for the benefit of the Ummah. Such was an instruction following a command from the Qur’an: “those who harken to their lord and establish regular ṣalat, who conduct their affairs by mutual consultations” (Qur’an: 42:38). On specific bases, the Qur’an (3:159) command the prophet to consult his people: “so pass over their fault, and ask for Allah’s forgiveness for them and consult them”. The same thing happens where human rights and religious laws are violated. The scholars should give counsel as bearers of knowledge beyond ordinary citizens. The prophet is reported to have said:
“Whosoever among you sees an evil (Munkar) then let him change it with his hand, if he is not able to do so then with his tongue, if he is not able to do so then let him hate it in his heart and this is the lowest level of Iman”. (Muslim: 184). The goodness of the society stem for the righteous scholars who execute their responsibility in guiding the citizens. The Ulam are obliged to offer effective advice to the rulers and make sure that the leadership does violate the precepts of the Shar’ah.

**UMARĀ (LEADERS) AND THEIR IMPORTANCE IN ISLAM**

Leadership is one of the most important indicators of civility among human. The importance of leadership cannot be overstated. It always essential to have leadership at anytime, anyplace and any human community (Shehu: 2007). The essence of leadership is even demonstrated by the Qur’an to be in existence among animal communities (Qur’an, 6:38; 27:18). Thus, the leadership among human should be as a result of rationality mutual trust, understanding, and cooperation.

The human community that devoid of such can be degenerative and barbaric. For the benefit of all community members, cohesive power and authority are needed to maintain order, resolve disputes safeguard against invasion or anarchy. For such reasons, the prophet order his Muslims to set up authority among themselves and obey the officials who administer their affairs, even during a journey. This is emphasized the fact that leadership is created for the purpose of establishing justice among human. Man is has the tendency towards selfishness, greed, caprices inclinations and many others. The role of leadership is help minimize the negative effects of human passions and maximize positive inclinations (Malkawi & Sonn).

The Ulam are obliged to follow the advice of the scholars where the Shar’ah is silence. Ibn Taymiyyah explains: “if the ruler consult the Ulamā, and they revealed to the rulers what should be followed in accordance with the Qur’an and Sunnah, or consensus of the Muslims, then the ruler must comply with it” (Ibn Taymiyyah:1969:159)

**INTER-DEPENDENCY BETWEEN THE ‘ULAMĀ AND ‘UMARĀ**

These two groups of people, the society depend upon on them, for their good and bad characters: the ‘Ulamā’ and ‘Umarā’. The conflicts of interest between them leads to a disruption in the society, which both failed to perceive. Neither the leaders nor the scholars should blame each other. Both are at lost with their responsibility in terms leading by example and guiding the leader with a good Islamic spirit to rectify the issue at hand. The duty of the scholar at first, is to teach and guide the Muslim about Islamic rules and regulations governing relationship with the creator as well as other creatures. A student of knowledge who has no background of his religion may hardly implement the teachings of such a religion when he assume leadership. Taking the duty as a scholar to guide people about Islam is among the ethical benefits of responsibility. Thus, an example is first perceived from the teacher as a scholar.

The mismanagement of power by the leaders creates resistance and draws opposition. As Muslims, all aspects of life are tele-guided by the revelation. A leader knows where the scholar does not know, the embracing of negative responses is an opportunity for the leader to improve and progress. A talented leader live for the society to flourish. He portray himself as the servant of the society he leads. Through this, he secure the trust from the citizens, and of course the scholar is part of them. He also stressed on the need for the Ulamā and Umarā to continue their efforts with honesty and lead with fairness and trustworthiness to uphold Islam and for the good of the people. Self-control and sense of responsibilities should be owned by a leader. "According to the Prophet's hadith, if these two groups of people (Ulamā and Umarā) are good, then all will be good, but if they are not, then everything will be destroyed”.

Therefore, to solve these problems, unity of purpose and collaboration between Ulamā’ and Umarā is essential. More significantly, the mutual aid should be based on respectful dialogue to create peace and civilize society. The ‘Umarā’ has to treat ‘Ulamā independently not as a ‘rubber stamp’ to legitimate their power, likewise the scholars to respect the leaders in a dignified manner. Any inappropriate interplay between them, opens up to destruction in their society.

**CONCLUSION**

Conflicts are part of human life which may not be override in total. The conflicts in Muslim society these days need a serious collaboration between the Ulamā and the Umarā in order to save the Muslim community from internal and external destructions. An example of the Prophet life is the only remedy to such issue. The adaption of the Quranic instructions in dealing justly with human is one of the solution to such problem. Unity of purees by the Ulamā and the Umarā will lead the Ummah into salvation. Differences were clearly narrated among the companions of the Prophet at many instances, but, it kept them together for sake of one
aim. Therefore, the ‘Ulamā and the ‘Umarā are the shining lamp of the Muslim Ummah, their unity should be for the sake of salvaging their people, not personal interest.

REFERENCES


