

MUHAMMAD

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وَالسَّلَامُ

**DIMENSIONS
OF EXCELLENT
LEADERSHIP**

Edited by:

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DR. AKRAM M. ZEKI



PERDANA
LEADERSHIP
FOUNDATION
YAYASAN
KEPEMIMPINAN
PERDANA



YABhg. Tun Dr. Mahathir
Mohamad



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Editors:

Dr. Waleed Fekry Faris -
Dr. Akram M. Zeki

International Islamic University Malaysia



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PREFACE

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the messenger of Allah ﷺ, his family, and his companions.

In difficult times, like the one we have been living through, people look for role models and leaders to get them out of the confusion and misery.

This book started from the project works from the course of Sirah and Early Islamic History, which is one of the courses under the Postgraduate Diploma in Islamic Studies (PGDIS) offered by the Center for Islamisation (CENTRIS). This course deals with some of the important dimensions of the Prophet's ﷺ biography, prophethood, mission, struggle, and leadership.

Besides the project works of the above course, the book welcomed contributions from other scholars, and we managed to receive a total of 17 chapters. We make Dua' that this book will be of benefit not only to IIUM or the Muslim nations but to the whole world.

—Editors.

DEDICATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would also like to thank the Rector of IIUM, the Deputy Rector for Students Affairs, and Professor Dawood from College of Education for providing forewords for the book.

Not to forget the respected authors of the book for their valuable contributions, especially the invited authors, Almarhum Tan Sri Prof. Dr. Mohd. Kamal Hassan, Prof. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten, and Dr. Fatimah Bt. Abdullah.

Finally, we would like also to thank brother Mohamad Murshyid bin Mat Nordin and brother Shafiullah Wasiq for their assistance in editing the book.

FOREWORD

Bismillāhi Al-Raḥmāni Al-Raḥīm

I am truly humbled to be requested to write an introduction for a book with such an important subject on the Leadership of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Not only that I am not an authority on the subject matter, but more so I am all too aware that there are many who hold the Prophet of Islam ﷺ at highest most esteemed as role model of all time throughout their life. In other words, the Prophet ﷺ is not a “leader” in the conventional sense of the word, therein lies the challenge. For example, a famous attributed to the Prophet ﷺ by al-Bukhārī and Muslim on the Authority of “Abd Allāh ibn ‘Umar, narrates:

“Each one of you is a shepherd. And each one of you will be asked about your flock. A ruler also is a shepherd, and he will be asked about his flock. And everyone is a shepherd to his family.”

To the authors of the book, this is indeed the reason why they took the challenge. Accordingly, while many books about the leadership of great spiritual and religious leaders like Jesus, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Martin Luther, and St. Augustine are written in English, it is not so for Prophet Muhammad ﷺ. Moreover, many of the latter seem to be confined to merely Islamic context, and not encompassing the larger global dimensions for the benefit of humanity.



Towards this end, I am delighted to acknowledge the various contributors covering a variety of disciplines beyond that of Islamic Studies only. I am sure that the multiple aspects involving human and natural sciences will further enhance and widen the understanding attributed to the Prophet's ﷺ leadership. This integrative approach is very much in line with the philosophy and vision of the University as its *raison d'être*. Such a novel approach will uniquely depart from the works of several classical authors by introducing elements and experiences that could be more relevant to the critical issues of the day including those mentioned in the seven missions of IIUM. Global warming, climate change, sustainable development, the Anthropocene, Singularity as well as the pandemic crisis are just some of urgent matters that require fresh and bold leadership perspectives in offering long-lasting solutions as mercy to all worlds or *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* as advocated by the University.

It is here therefore that authors of the esteemed book will make a difference because not only they are accessible to a whole range of related literature and manuscripts including classical texts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Urdu, to name a few, more so they too are very familiar to the deeper understanding of the Islamic faith as scholars and practitioners as a way of life. As such they can further uplift the meaning of "leadership" as attributed to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and close the shortcomings that they noted earlier. Much earlier, already, author Michael H. Hart who wrote *The 100: A Ranking of The Most Influential Persons in History* (1978), has decisively named Muhammad ﷺ as the topmost, saying: "My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular level."

That said, I do believe that this book could be yet another resource to point to the way of rahmatan lil ālamīn as a timely leadership imperative as we commit ourselves to the *amānah* as members of the blessed community of Muhammad ﷺ for all times. May Allah ﷻ make it easy for all of us and soothe the sincere intention to chart the course towards al-falāh in this world and the hereafter.

Prof. Emeritus Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
Rector, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)
27 May 2021 / 15 Shawwal 1442



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In *Muhammad ﷺ: Dimensions of Excellent Leadership*, our distinguished experts delved into the timeless legacy of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and explored the extraordinary facets of his leadership. This illuminating work offers an in-depth study of the Prophet's exemplary qualities, guiding principles, and visionary approach, which continue to inspire countless people across the globe.

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” (Sūrah al-'Anbiyā', 21:107)

Drawing from authentic historical sources and sacred texts, this book provides valuable insights into Prophet Muhammad's multi-faceted leadership style. From his profound wisdom in decision-making to his compassion for all humanity, we explore the diverse dimensions that made him an exceptional leader in every sense. The Prophet's unwavering commitment to justice, tolerance, and inclusivity sets an unparalleled standard for leaders of every generation. His ability to inspire and unite diverse communities under the banner of truth, peace and coexistence remains an awe-inspiring model for contemporary leaders and aspiring visionaries alike.

“So, by mercy from Allah, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from around you. So, pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the matter. And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].”

(Sūrah 'Āli 'Imrān, 3:159).

As we navigate the challenges of our modern world, studying the leadership of Prophet Muhammad becomes increasingly pertinent. This book serves as a comprehensive guide, bridging the gap between the past and the present, and revealing the timeless lessons that can be gleaned from his exemplary divinely inspired life. We hope that "Prophet Muhammad: Dimensions of Excellent Leadership" inspires readers to reflect on their own leadership capacities, embracing the principles of compassion, integrity, and empathy to create a positive impact in their communities and beyond and in accordance with their positions and roles.

Embrace the profound wisdom of Prophet Muhammad and join us on this transformative journey through the dimensions of excellent leadership.

Farid Ullah Ahmed Hussain

Kuala Lumpur

25 July 2023 / 7 Muharram 1445

INTRODUCTION

Bismillāhi Al-Rahmāni Al-Rahīm

In the name of God, The Most Gracious, The Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah the Lord of the Worlds, and peace and blessings be upon the messenger of Allah ﷺ, his family, and his companions.

Every nation, whether it is a developed or developing nation will try to go back to its great heritage looking for the wisdom and great leaders of the past who created the nation glory and civilization in such times of turmoil.

The Sīrah of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ shows how well and how long-ago Islam has developed the perfect set of skills for leaders, over 1400 years ago.

Unfortunately, many people look at Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as a Prophet and they do not reflect on the great attributes of his leadership. That is why this book came to address some of the prophetic leadership principles and values.

Many are glorifying themselves as great leaders or people glorify them, but we cannot know if this leader is good or bad until we compare him/her with an undisputed model of Leadership, and Prophet Muhammad ﷺ is the model that we should compare against.

Any just and fair study of the life of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ will show all aspects of leadership in one man: spiritual, religious, intellectual, political, military, and social. Which along the history of humanity has been demonstrated by very few people, we count them on our hands.

—Editors.





CHAPTER 1

The Muslim Ummah in Dire Need of a New Breed of Leaders



It is generally fair to say that many right-thinking and religiously committed Islamic intellectuals, thinkers, scholars, and professionals have been disillusioned with the state of the Muslim world 42 years since the advent of the 15th Islamic century in 1979. To them the miserable and shameful state of the Muslim world is due mainly to the failure of the nationalist and post-colonial Muslim's socio-political leadership to overcome the appalling socio-political and economic crises and the senseless internal political divisions of the Muslim community.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Muslim world was rudely shaken by the illegal and inhumane U.S. invasion of Iraq and Aghanistan and the dominant hegemonic influence it imposed on many West Asian countries. Subsequently, the bloody and dehumanising civil-wars in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Yemen—together with the structural paralysis of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)—only serve to perpetuate turmoil, disillusionment, disgrace, chaos, and insane barbarities in the region, while the devastation of Syria, the dismal failure of the “Arab Spring,” the hypocrisy and double standards of affluent Arab regimes and the unending socio-political conflicts and economic crises in Muslim countries have turned the Muslim world into a pitiful and humiliating spectacle. If we add on to this deplorable phenomenon of Muslim disintegration and disgrace; the unending inter-ethnic and inter-sectarian violence; the rising tide of Islamophobia in the West, India and some regions of China, Russia and Southeast Asia, coupled with white supremacist trends and neo-Fascist xenophobic fervour to curb Muslim presence in Europe and to foil attempts by Muslim refugees to seek political refuge or asylum in European countries, the global Muslim ummah appears to have the worst of existential crises since the advent of the 15th century Hijriyyah 42 years ago.

If we add to the above pile of socio-political tragedies the scenario of embarrassing moral corruption and decadence affecting many Muslim nations, political leaders, and elites around the world, amidst the destructive COVID-19 pandemic—not to speak of the never-ending social ills of the younger generation of urban Muslims, many of whom

are losing their moral compass in the nihilistic cyber culture—we are driven to the conclusion that the ummah is in dire need for a new breed of political and national leaders to lead Muslim societies and nations out of the valley of despair and indignity to a better future as the ummah approaches the new 16th century Hġriyyah by 2077. It is not too far-fetched to say that the post-colonial Muslim political and nationalist leadership has failed for various reasons which we shall not analyse here. Consequently, it is time that reformist-minded (*tajdid-i-islāhī*) and independent Muslim scholars and intellectuals who are committed to the cause of Islam in their respective countries should come up with credible futuristic plans which would be systematically, scientifically, collectively, and realistically designed.

As Muslim believers, our highest and ultimate sources of guidance, are the Glorious Qur'an and the Noble Sunnah of the Final Messenger of The Compassionate Creator-Master-Sustainer, Muḥammad (may the peace and blessings of Allah ﷺ be upon him, his family, and his Companions). The Qur'an praises the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ as the exemplar par excellence of the loftiest moral character (*khuluq 'aẓīm*) and urges all the believers to follow and emulate his excellent character traits in their personal, inter- personal, and societal conduct:

“Surely there was a good example (uswah ḥasanah) for you in the Messenger of Allah, for all those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much.” (Sūrah al-Ahzāb, 33: 21)

The Prophet's exemplary religio-political leadership and the new multi-religious city-state of al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah under his wise, ethical, and just rule serve as the best examples of religious and political leadership, good governance, and statecraft for political and national leaders to emulate. They need to rededicate their life- mission to the goals set by the Qur'an and the Sunnah as they are the highest and most authoritative references from where Muslims get divinely-revealed knowledge and truths about Allah ﷻ and false god (*Tāghūt*); Reality and Illusion; Truth (*al-Ḥaqq*) and Falsehood (*al-Bāṭil*); Good

(*al-Khair*) and Evil (*al-Sharr*); True Success (*al-Falāh*) and True Failure (*al-Khusrān*); True Righteousness and Improvement (*al-Ṣalāh, al-Iṣlāh*); True Corruption and Decadence (*al-Fasād*).

The Islamically-committed scholars and intelligentsia realise that contemporary and future Muslim nations and societies must undergo a process of internal spiritual-moral reform and sociocultural transformation for them to play the global leadership and witnessing roles (*shuhadā' ala'n-nās*, “witnesses for mankind”) of the Justly Balanced Community (*Ummah Wasat*) as intended by the Compassionate Master-Sustainer (*Sūrah al-Baqarah*, 2:143). There is, obviously, an urgent need to produce the new breed of Islamic leaders who are sincerely committed to the implementation of the holistic and comprehensive Islamic way of life which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ established in the multi-religious city-state of al-Madīnah al-Munawwarah, serving as the solid religious, intellectual, and ethical foundations for the construction of a virtuous and *Tawḥīd-oriented civilisation* as the alternative to the materialistic, homocentric, and Tawḥīd-denying civilisations around the world. Inspired by the Prophetic model of leadership, the new breed of leaders shall be characterised by high moral integrity, piety (*taqwā*) and deep spiritual and moral awareness (*ihsān*) of Divine omnipresence and omniscience. Profoundly conscious of their responsibility and accountability to the Compassionate Master-Sustainer, their personalities are imbued with the prophetic values and norms of honesty, trustworthiness, humility, selflessness, and putting the interest and welfare of the people and the community above personal interests.

It is most unfortunate that the global Muslim community in the 20th Century C.E. and in the last two decades of the 21st Century (or the last 42 years of the 15th Century Hijriyyah) have failed in actualising the religious and moral responsibilities of “inviting people to goodness” (*al-da'wah ila'l-khair*) and “enjoining what is good and right, and prohibiting what is bad and wrong” (*al-amr bi'l-ma'rūf and al-nahy 'an al-munkar*). However, as Muslims we should be optimistic, because at the level of individuals, families, organisations, and institutions, there

are reliable evidence to show that small groups of Muslims in several Muslim countries have attained praiseworthy success in upholding justice, goodness, and balance.

We should understand that what Allah ﷻ considers as “The Way of the Believers (*sabīl al-Mu’minūn*—as in *Sūrah al-Nisā’*, 4: 115) implies the zero-corruption way to true success, power, dignity, and honour that many political leaders are striving for their communities or constituencies. It is the Way of the Believers, not the ways of worldly deception (*al-ghurūr*), of Disbelievers or of Hypocrites (*Munāfiqūn*) that should be followed by all Muslim leaders be they in public administration, law enforcement agencies, politics, economics, science and technology institutions, media, or cultural activities. A prophetic leadership principle that Muslim leaders should never forget is they are obligated to seek answers or solutions to all their disputes, first, from His revealed Book and from the wisdom of the Final Messenger ﷺ. But if the two sources do not have the answers or solutions they are looking for – due to the novelty of the socio-political or cultural issues – then they are supposed to look for the answers from the knowledgeable scholars or experts in the disputed matters. If the scholars or experts are not able to provide the satisfactory solutions, then they are permitted to use their own reasoning (*ijtihād*, subject to certain religious conditions) to solve the problem, provided the solution is in harmony with the worldview of Tawḥīd, the principles, norms, and values of Islam. The verse that should be remembered and studied by all Muslim leaders no matter what their fields of specialisation or spheres of societal leadership they are in, is the following:

“Believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger, and those from among you who are invested with authority; and then if you were to dispute among yourselves about anything, then refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you indeed believe in Allah and the Last Day; that is better and more commendable in the end. [emphasis added]” (Sūrah al-Nisā’, 4:59).

Another principle of Islamic leadership which Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught, practised, and institutionalised in Islamic civilisation is the inseparability of good character or praiseworthy moral conduct (*Husnu'l-Khuluq*) from faith in Islam, because in the worldview of Tawḥīd, good character is part and parcel of one of the four most important dimensions of the religion of Islam as revealed by Allah ﷻ directly to Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in the famous “*Ḥadīth Jibrīl*” (in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*). This ḥadīth summarises the whole religion of Islam into a unity of (1) the five pillars [*Islām*], (2) the six pillars [*Īmān*] (3) spiritual-moral excellence, benevolence, and beauty manifested in good character [*Iḥsān*], and (4) Knowing the Portents or Signs of the Last Hour or day of Judgement [*Ashrāt or 'Alāmāt al-Sā'ah*]. The third principle covers matters of morality and ethics (*akhlāq*), arising from the profound awareness and conviction (*yaqīn*) that Allah ﷻ is continuously watching us outwardly and inwardly, while the fourth covers matter of eschatology. From this ḥadīth we realise that morality, which deals with virtues and vices, ethical and unethical conduct, and good character, is an integral part of Islamic religion and is inextricably connected with the dimensions of faith, religious rituals, and life after death.

Muslim political and national leaders need to be reminded that good moral character and good ethical behaviour are the direct outcome of being a Believer in Islam and follower of the prophetic model of leadership. This is made clear in no uncertain terms by the Prophet ﷺ himself when he said, “I have been sent only to bring to perfection the virtues of good character” (al-Baiḥaqī). It is hoped that Muslim leaders or masses who are exposed to this profound truth in the Qur’an and the Sunnah as well as in the syllabus of leadership transformation programmes maximise by Muslim organisations, the long-standing conceptual and behavioural disconnect between religion and ethics will be removed from the flawed mental frames of Muslim leaders or masses. Then, the regeneration of the culture of good character and moral integrity as required by the prophetic paradigm of leadership should become one of the primary goals of the transformation of Muslim political culture and behaviour in the decades ahead.

To highlight the supreme importance of good character and ethical behaviour of Muslims in the religion, society, and culture of Islam, we decide to provide below several relevant quotations. It is expected that no Muslim politician, cadre, follower, or supporter will continue to behave or act immorally or unethically in the political arena or in national governance if they are Muslims. All the texts on *ḥadīth* are taken from the collection of Abu Amina Elias from the website: <https://www.abuaminaelias.com/good-character-is-the-path-to-salvation/> February 13, 2016.

Allah praised the Prophet's character and set him as the example for all Believers to follow. Allah said [in translation]:

“Verily, you (O Muhammad) are upon great moral character.”
(Sūrah al-Ālam, 68:4).

Ibn Kathir comments on this verse, saying: "The meaning of this verse is that the Prophet would emulate the Qur'an in its commands, its prohibitions, and it became his temperament. His character became accustomed to it, and he abandoned his visceral carnal nature. Whatever the Qur'an commanded he did, and whatever it prohibited he abstained. Along with this, Allah ingrained within him great character traits of modesty, generosity, courage, forgiveness, forbearance, and every beautiful trait" (Source: *Tafsīr ibn Kathīr*, 68:4).

The primary mission of the Prophet was to instil good character within the Believers in every aspect of their lives.

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, I have only been sent to perfect righteous character.
(Musnad Aḥmad, 8729), Grade: Ṣaḥīḥ.

Malik reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

I have been sent to perfect good character.
(al-Muwāṭṭa, 1614), Grade: Ṣaḥīḥ.

Jābir ibn ‘Abd Allāh reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, Allah has sent me to perfect noble morals and complete good deeds.

(*al-Mu‘jam al-Awsat*, 7073), Grade: *Hasan*.

Since good character is so important, behaving in a morally upright manner is a religious obligation. The Prophet commanded Muslims to behave well in every circumstance and with every human being, not simply to those who are close to us.

Abu Dharr reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Behave with good character toward the people.

(*Sunan At-Tirmidhi*, 1987), Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

An-Nawwas ibn Sam’an reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Righteousness is good character and sin is what waivers in your heart and you hate for people to find out about it.

(*Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2553), Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

The servant will not reach the reality of God-fearing piety (taqwa) until he leaves what wavers in his heart. (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8), Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

‘Abd Allāh ibn ‘Amr reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

The best of you is those with the best character.

(*al-Bukhārī*) Grade: *Muttafaquun Alayhi*.

Abu Hurayra reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

The most complete of the Believers in faith are those with the most excellent character, and the best of you are the best in behaviour to their women. (*At-Tirmidhi*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

In another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

The best of you in Islam are those with the best character, if they have understanding. (*Aḥmad*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

And in another narration, the Prophet ﷺ said:

The most evil in my nation are the garrulous, the braggarts, and the pompous. The best of my nation are those with the best character.
(*al-Bukhāri: al-Adab al-Mufrad*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

‘Ā’ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, the Believers with the most complete faith are those with the most excellent character and who are most kind to their families. (*At-Tirmidhī*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Jābir ibn Samurah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, obscenity and immorality are not part of Islam. Verily, the best people in Islam are those with the best character. (*Aḥmad*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Ibn ‘Umar reported that a man said, “O Messenger of Allah, which of the Believers is best?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Those with the best character. (*Ibn Mājah*) Grade: *Hasan*.

Abu Darda reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Nothing is heavier upon the scale of the Believer on the Day of Resurrection than his good character. Verily, Allah hates the shameless, obscene person. (*At-Tirmidhī*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

‘Ā’ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, the Believer may reach through his good character the status of one who regularly fasts and prays at night. (*Abū Dāwūd*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Usamah ibn Sharīk reported: I witnessed the bedouins ask the Prophet, saying, “O Messenger of Allah, what is the best thing a servant may be given?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Good character. (*Ibn Mājah*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Abu Hurayra reported that the Prophet was asked, “What enters most people into Paradise?” The Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Righteousness and good character. (*al-Bukhāri: al-Adab al-Mufrad*) Grade: *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

Sahl ibn Sa'd reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

Verily, Allah is generous, and He loves generosity and exalted character, and He detests vanity. (Sunan al-Kubrā, 19134), Grade: Ṣaḥīḥ.

For all these reasons, the Prophet would supplicate for good character, and he encouraged us to ask Allah for good character as well.

Ā'ishah reported that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, said:

O Allah, you have made my form excellent, so make my character excellent. (Musnad Aḥmad, 23871), Grade: Ṣaḥīḥ.

Jābir ibn 'Abd Allāh reported that the Prophet ﷺ said:

O Allah, guide me to the best deeds and the best character, for no one guides to the best of them but you. Protect me from evil deeds and evil character, for no one protects from the evil of them but you.

(Sunan an-Nasā'ī, 896), Grade: Ṣaḥīḥ. (<https://www.abuaminaelias.com/good-character-is-the-path-to-salvation/February 13, 2016.>)

The inculcation of the above Prophetic sayings regarding the supreme value of good character and behaviour should lead Muslim political or national leaders to give priority to, and be more concerned with, the elimination of unethical or immoral conduct in the Muslim society, governance, and national development. The erstwhile disconnect between faith and good character in the mental frame of many Muslims shall no longer be tolerated in Muslim societies and governments, at least at the conceptual level. Ibn al-Qayyim writes: "The religion itself is entirely good character, so whoever surpasses you in character has surpassed you in religion" (Source: *Madārij As Salikīn*, 2/294). Equally, Ash-Shatibi writes: "The Sharī'a in its entirety only creates noble morals" (Source: *al-Muwāfaqāt*, 2/124).

It is our conviction that under the current deplorable circumstances, the goal of moral-ethical transformation of Muslim-Malay political behaviour and culture including true and lasting solidarity and unification of the Muslim ummah can only be achieved if the national and political leadership is constituted of leadership possessing not just professional

competency or long experience in leadership position, but having high moral integrity, strong *īmān*, and deep *taqwā* as the *conditio sine qua non* upon which other conditions can be added to meet the different needs of different circumstances.

We need to remember, first and foremost, that as individuals and as a Muslim community, we are living in an age which is characterised in the Qur'an by the term *fasād* (moral decadence, chaos, mischief, corruption, deceit, oppression, and pollution) in the following verse:

“Corruption, oppression, mischief, deviation, and pollution have appeared on the land and at sea because of men’s deeds: and so, He will let them taste [the evil of] some of their doings so that they might return [to the right path].”

(Sūrah al-Rūm, 30: 41).

There is also no doubt that Muslims are going through an age which is regarded by Islamic religious scholars as the “end of Times” (*ākhir al-zamān*) in which many kinds of afflictions and tribulations (*fitnah*) including political *fitnah* would occur. Without strong, sincere, and unshakeable, deep faith and conviction in Allah ﷻ as the One and Only God, Creator, Guide, Sustainer, Controller, and Sovereign of all that exists and in His teachings (*īmān*); reinforced with deep, well-entrenched and invigorated profound consciousness and constant mindfulness of Allah ﷻ and accompanied by obedience to His commandments as well as fear of transgressing His prohibitions (*taqwā*), many Muslim leaders and elites would easily succumb to the dominant unislamic trends in this so-called “post-truth” and “post-normal” times. It is useful to remember in this regard that Believers have been cautioned by the Qur'an that they should not assume that they would have an easy life in this world just because they are people who have true faith in Allah ﷻ. The Qur'an refers to the inevitability of being tried by Allah ﷻ in several places, but the following verses should suffice our purpose:

“We shall certainly test you by afflicting you with fear, hunger, loss of properties and lives and fruits. Give glad tidings, then, to those who remain patient; Those who when any affliction smites them, they say

[with deep conviction]: “Verily, we belong to Allah, and it is to Him that we are destined to return.” Upon them will be the blessings and mercy of their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided [emphasis added]”
(*Sūrah al-Baq̄arah, 2:155*)

The current worldwide COVID-19 pandemic that forces whole nations to live under emergency conditions is another form of test for the Believers, because it puts many people in difficult economic, social, and psychological circumstances. In facing these most challenging times in an age of global turbulence and moral decadence, Muslim societies, including Malaysia, need leaders to serve as role models of leading with courage, wisdom, genuine concern for people’s welfare, moral integrity, humility, compassion, simplicity, and transparency. It is with those moral-ethical leadership qualities that Divine blessings, assistance, and protection would descend upon the community and help it to be resilient to face the trials and tribulations. Hence, the importance and necessity for the Muslim community, not only in Malaysia but in all Muslim countries, to plan to produce this new breed of leaders to lead the Muslim communities out of the whirlpool of political corruption and hypocrisy towards the oasis of justice, moral excellence, and true well-being (*al-Falāh*) in this world and in the Hereafter as represented by the *Ummah Wasat* vision of the Qur’an. These new leaders, we reiterate, should come from personalities who are selfless, sincere, competent, tolerant, and humble leaders of high integrity with God-fearing character, possessing sound knowledge and wisdom regarding complexities of the contemporary world and exposure to multi-ethnic and multi-religious dialogues. This leadership factor is the driving force and the most crucial factor for the transformation of Muslim societies, cultures, and politics in the future.

It is crucial, too, that these leaders possess transparent and ethically clean track record in whatever profession they were trained in or whatever public position they held at state or federal levels, and that their motives for political management and leadership have to be ethically-driven and proceed from hearts (*kalbu*, or *hati nurani* in

Malay) which are filled with genuine concern, compassion, empathy, and love for the welfare of the people as a whole. These leaders should truly be embodiments of the principles of “bersih (morally and spiritually), cekap dan amanah” (clean, efficient/competent, and trustworthy) which became very popular in public administration of the 1983-1988 period. Finally, they must provide good examples of leadership within the democratic political system, practice democratic and servant-leadership principles, and respect the results of democratic elections even if the results are not in favour of the Muslim communities.

In the Malaysian context, we envisage that the new breed of ummatic leadership in the Malaysian socio-political context will shoulder heavier responsibilities particularly for those Muslims aspiring to be national and political leaders. This is because we believe the future of the world and Malaysia would be far more challenging and far more spiritually and ethically demanding. Already we are witnessing many of the Minor Signs of the Last Hour as described and prophesied by Prophet Muhammad ﷺ in many authentic ḥadīths. We have seen enough moral decay and chaos in Malaysian politics already because the people as a whole and the Muslim community and leaders have been operating in a political culture propped up by racial and communal leadership and sustained by materialistic and pragmatic values.

Therefore, it is high time the Muslim intelligentsia and intellectuals in Malaysia demand that Muslim political leadership culture and values be spiritually and morally transformed so that the Muslim ummah could finally emancipate itself from the current toxic, demoralising and self-destructive political culture, not to speak of the more depressing trials to come in the future. This requires long-term construction of a new culture of justice, moral excellence, and balance between material and spiritual well-being—the main goals of *Ummah Wasat* that Allah ﷻ has clearly ordained for the Muslim Community. In this connection, budding politicians with ambition to be top political leaders, youthful aspirants for political leadership, and those seriously contemplating to enter the world of politics and national leadership among Muslims—of

whatever ethnic origin regardless from East Malaysia or West Malaysia—must seriously consider acquiring the praiseworthy qualities of the new breed of leaders because of the more challenging future scenarios and the anticipated worsening global conditions.

Bearing in mind the failures and mistakes of current leadership culture and system, the new leaders must not to repeat the mistakes, follies, and treacherous acts of the current generation. In fact, they must resolve to become the future moral saviours of the ummah who shall redeem the lost dignity and honour of the Malay-Muslim community. We list below some of the most important spiritual, moral, psychological, and intellectual qualities for future transformational Muslim political leadership:

- A) Possessing and practising the principles of justice (*'adl*), spiritual-moral values of goodness, benevolence, and spiritual beauty (*khairiyyah, ihsān*), balance (*tawāzun, i'tidāl*), integrity (*amānah, istiḳāmah, ṣidq*), humility (*tawāḍu'*), sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*), humility, selflessness, accountability (*mas'ūliyyah*) to Allah ﷻ, high integrity, and possessing sound knowledge and wisdom regarding complexities of the contemporary world and exposure to multi-ethnic and multi-religious dialogues. Their highest objective in life is to seek the good pleasure of Allah ﷻ (*ibtighā'* and *ittibā' riḍwāni' Llāh*) in addition to the principle of obedience (*tā'ah*) to Allah ﷻ, to Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and to the suitably and properly appointed or elected authorities (*ulu'l-amr*);
- B) Having professional knowledge and competency in different useful areas of specialisation, with relevant and appropriate skills that the time and changing circumstances call for, in addition to (i) having strong commitment to the *'Aqīdah, Sharī'ah*, and *Akhlāq* of Islam, as well as to the *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, and (ii) having a good knowledge of the history of the nation and of the cultural, social, political, economic, and religious development as well as the diversity of contemporary Malaysia;

MUHAMMAD ﷺ

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