

Islam and Diplomacy: The Quest for Human Security

Mohammad Shekaib Alam,

A Ph.D., Candidate at International Islamic University

Malaysia Email - ibnqj3@gmail.com

Islam is one the fastest growing religion in the world. One among many reasons, it stands for peace, urges for peace and invites people towards peace. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was sent to spread mercy to all mankind regardless of colour, creed, sex and nation. Islam believes in borderless society where everyone entitled to justice, equality and freedom which also emphasized in its relations with others. Qur'an says:

“Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity” (60:8).

Unfortunately, today its beautiful teachings and its rich traditions are hijacked by global media and due to its misunderstanding or misinterpretation whole world believes that Islam is the prime

reason for calamities, by which human beings are going through. It seems Islam and terrorism became substitutes that if one is uttered, other is understood automatically. The reviewed book is a timely effort in explaining salient features of conducting international relations, living happily with different faith-oriented individuals, building civilization and making people free from fear and wants, from the perspectives of Islam. The book is divided into four sections namely '*Human Security and Islam*', '*Diplomacy and Islam*', '*Peace Building*' and '*Peace and Security in Context*'.

The book has raised and discussed many fundamental and important topics. Kamal Hasan in his article entitled '*Understanding Jihad and Peaceful Change*' had divided *jihad* into economic *jihad*, educational *jihad* and intellectual *jihad* by observing Muslim societies

in which substantial labours needed to exert to develop their educational and economic status. The article has pointed out that the offensive *jihad* which is being conducted by deviant groups around the world, has no room in Islam, especially in the present scenario of today where the defensive *jihad*, the obligatory one is not fought, to free and keep Muslim lands safe from occupiers and aggressors. In addition to that, in today's world, Muslims are free to pronounce and practice their faiths independently and many Muslim countries are reliant on non-Muslim world for their own securities, therefore, how and why Muslim World would raise a war against non-Muslim World. To change the unjust order, Muslims must calculate whether their efforts creating damages to people and society or producing welfare and prosperity. If the danger is greater than the benefit, they must abstain from it, by accepting the lesser evil over the greater one.

Jasser Auda through the '*land of Islam and land of war*' discussion; a very controversial issue reasoned by many anti-Muslim groups to demonstrate Muslims as separatist or trouble makers as happening in India, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and many other. The author has argued

that presence of Muslim population about 50% or more or less in certain country does not make it 'land of Islam' or 'land of war' as claimed, until or unless, it preserves the human dignity, freedom of expression, liberty of faith, justice and equality. And by having these criteria, many European countries fall into the category of 'land of Islam' compared to many so-called Islamic or Muslim countries today. The book also challenged the traditional and early scholars' points of views on Muslim-World relations with others which are not based on conflict and perpetual struggle to dominate but based on peace, cooperation and mutual respect. The point which distinguishes Islam is its call for the betterment of all mankind as mentioned above and development efforts should not be limited to man-made borders of a state as happens on the name of national interests and national security.

Today's world order is by-product of the creation and promotion of nation-state system based on sovereignty, secularism and non-interference, hence the diplomacy. This secular-oriented diplomacy, however, became insufficient in resolving many national and international

issues today. It is time to restore religious principles in it as they are powerful drive in people and strong foundation of many societies as noted by Elmira Akhmetova in her article entitled '*Diplomacy in Islam: A Historical Review*'. She argued that diplomatic missions carried by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), his successors and Muslim sovereigns around the world are not different of what has been highlighted into the Article 3 of Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961) from representation to negotiation, arbitration and creating economic and cultural links except that those missions used to be time-bounded, based on need and circumstances unlike today where through the concept of establishment of embassies, representatives of one country can stay in another country permanently. This is quite reasonable due to dissimilar political and social structure of today and earlier time.

Analysing Muslim FBOs (Faith-Based Organisations) and Muslim donors in the post- 9/11 world, Amjad Saleem argues that human security assistance should not be limited to unexpected befallen problems and their dealings, rather should empower individuals to face and overcome the likely occurring threats before they take place. In

“binding” alms giving ritual, about 200 billion to 1 trillion US Dollars are being distributed annually, across the Muslim World, according to an estimation. But due to lack of proper management and distribution skills, still thousands of Muslims are below poverty line. Muslim FBOs required to develop systematic approach, to serve weaker section in society better. An approach developed in the light of today's context, should be transparent, biased- free and liable. There is no harm in borrowing Western- charity models if they are effective, efficient and harmonized with Islamic teachings. Today, in many cases including the discussed one, Muslims' own intellectual bankruptcy and indecorous understanding of Islam has exhibited malicious picture of Islam and Muslim societies to the world. Thin understanding of medics kills limitless patients similarly shallow and spirit- less understanding of Islam by its followers makes people and society vulnerable and disgrace.

To highlight the role of '*ulama* (religious scholars) and their contribution to the society, especially for the purpose of coexistence of varied faith-oriented groups and individuals, Qamar-ul Huda argued that '*ulama* who got involved in interfaith dialogues

(IFD) believe that the current IFD practice is not indigenous to them, neither it is consistent with their actual goals. Moreover, they think the IFD is their lesser work which according to Huda, is a wrong understanding. That's why Huda mentioned that to boost 'ulama confidence in IFD, 'ulama-centred peace building and interfaith dialogue (IFD) programmes should be initiated and should be stressed on positive outcomes which will be accomplished by their involvement. 'Ulama (religious scholars) of different faiths have greater potential in normalizing the conflict and skirmish around the world. The *Common Word* campaign initiated by 100 Muslim scholars in 2007 based on love of God and love of neighbours to the Christian world is a successful example as scholars from both faiths referred to their scriptures and identified verses encourage on co-existence and being good to their neighbours. However, the difficult task is how to translate individuals' personal chaotic experiences such as war, violence, poverty and other dreadful issues in a way that not only remedy their grievances but also give them a good and positive thinking in living together. Unfortunately, knowingly or unknowingly, numerous terrorist

groups around the world defend their activities based on their religious understanding, while it is known in Islam and Christianity that to wage a just war or *jihad*, people require a lawful authority, a just cause and right intention. But a thinnest observation on the battles being fought around the world today expose them that they are defaming their faith in which they believe. A beautiful discussion is made by George Joffe in his write-up entitled "*Differing Traditions of "Just War" in the Contemporary World*".

The book has presented varied topics in historical and analytical manners. However, it could be wonderful, if book had detailed in presenting early Muslim scholars' contribution in the field of diplomacy and international law and how it is transformed to the West. Hugo Grotius who is considered pioneer of international law was inspired by Muslim sciences and recently, Hans Kruse who not only recognized Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Shaibani contributions in the field but established a Foundation of International Islamic Jurisprudence because of him. What appears is that discourse presented in the book is a kind of similar discourse observed in Islamization of Knowledge and *Maqasid-e-Shrai'*

approaches. The greatest drawback is it has a defensive approach in proving that Islam is a peaceful religion and it has insights that can be employed in all human spheres. It was and is significant to discuss what are happening around the world due to wrong policies of the West, especially in the Middle East and Afghanistan. Trump and many western politicians' hate comments against Muslim community is not good as same as they and majority of Muslims around the world consider ISIS and al-Qaeda's activities. The book's central theme of offering or suggesting a new religion or faith-oriented diplomacy norms could be more acceptable to readers, if there were attempts by simplifying some trouble making situations by the virtue of adhering faith-based norms. I do not dare to say that thoughtful readers cannot figure out that how faith-based norms explained in the book can simplify and solve numerous issues that world is facing today but the nature of presentation is implicitly.

However, it will be unfair not to mention that what is the main contribution of this book. In one hand, this book has clarified a number of issues that affect Muslim communities on daily basis in defending their religious

view related to *jihad*, terrorism and whether the country in which they reside it is '*place of war*' or '*place of peace*' and how it would be determined. On the other hand, this book has established and took the ongoing discourse of accepting importance of religion and religious norms in conducting international relations by explaining how many world-wide trouble making issues can be resolved, if people of different faiths come together. The scholars of international relation after the establishment of Israel in 1947 had started discussing how religion play important role in international structure as well as it was seen when Ayatollah Khomeini had installed religion-based rule in 1979, in Iran after overthrowing the kingship. The book is theoretical as well as practical at the same time and it can be used a new strategy in international relation. The book-cover inspired by beautiful Islamic-architecture into sea-like blue page stimulates readers to get a dip into it.

BOOK DATA

Title: Islam and Diplomacy: The Quest for Security

Editors: Prof. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, Dr. Karim Douglas Crow & Dr. Elmira Akhmetova

ISBN: 978-967-978-990-4

Publisher: IAIS Malaysia & Pelanduk

Year of Publication: 2017

Cover Front and Back:



