

Sectarianism and Fragmentation in The Muslim World: A Qur'anic and Hadith Perspective on The Causes, Consequences, and Path to Unity

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the historical and contemporary sectarian divisions within the Muslim world, particularly the Sunni-Shia split, and their political, social, and economic consequences. The research is motivated by the persistent fragmentation of the *Muslim Ummah*, which has weakened its global influence and made Muslim nations more susceptible to external interference. The study aims to analyze the root causes of sectarianism, assess its impact on the socio-political landscape of Muslim countries, and propose strategies for fostering unity. Using a qualitative research approach, including historical analysis and textual interpretation of Qur'anic and Hadith teachings, this study examines case studies from various Muslim nations to evaluate the real-world implications of sectarian divisions. The findings highlight that disunity among Muslim communities stems not only from theological differences but also from political rivalries and external interventions. Islamic principles such as *wahda* (unity), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *shura* (consultation), and *adl* (justice) provide a strong foundation for overcoming these divisions and strengthening the Ummah's collective sovereignty. This study recommends fostering inter-sectarian dialogue, promoting mutual understanding, and establishing cooperative frameworks among Muslim nations, particularly between influential countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Future research should explore practical mechanisms for implementing these strategies at institutional and governmental levels and the role of Islamic education in countering sectarian narratives. Strengthening unity through Qur'anic values and Prophetic guidance can enhance the Muslim world's resilience, dignity, and autonomy in the face of global challenges.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's Muslim world is distinguished by considerable internal divisions, with one of the most pronounced being the principal split between Sunni and Shia Muslims, which arose from political rather than strictly religious disputes following Prophet Muhammad's death (Gaiser, 2022). This rift, fostered by Saudi Arabia and Iran's geopolitical rivalry for religious and regional domination, has been exacerbated by the establishment of several other sects and interpretations (Kalim et al., 2016). These internal conflicts have split the Muslim community (Ummah), with serious political, social, and economic ramifications that diminish Muslim nations' collective strength and prevent them from presenting a united front in the global arena (Dasopang et al., 2022; Kogan et al., 2020). The rich, heterogeneous, and complex history of the Muslim world continues to challenge the notion of unity, as fragmentation and rivalry persist.

Islamic unity is a fundamental principle emphasized in both the Qur'an and Hadith, with clear directives for believers to hold fast to the "rope of Allah" and avoid division, as seen in Surah Al-Imran (3:103). The Prophet Muhammad Peace be Upon Him (PBUH) reinforced this message by likening the Muslim community to a single body, where the suffering of one part affects the whole as stated in Hadith Sahih in both Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 6011, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 2586 that, Al-Nu'man ibn Bashir reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, *"The parable of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever."* Despite these teachings, contemporary Muslim societies face numerous challenges, including political, economic, and social issues, exacerbated by internal disunity, sectarianism, ethnic prejudices, and power struggles (Husna et al., 2023). These divisions, compounded by historical, political, and external influences, have not only weakened the collective strength of Islamic nations but also contributed to social unrest, fragile economies, and increased vulnerability to foreign intervention. Scholars argue that addressing these challenges requires combining religious and political leadership, rejecting orientalist narratives, and fostering a sense of brotherhood among Muslims, as unity is essential for social stability and the revival of Islamic influence in the modern world (Jafar & Dhalvi, 2022).

Internal disparities among the Islamic world have seriously weakened Muslim countries politically, economically, and socially. Sectarian conflicts and territorial rivalries, particularly between Iran and Saudi Arabia, have destabilized nations, from Syria's civil war to ongoing crises in Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen, impeding cooperation and promoting new alliances that further divide the Islamic world (Mustafa & Bano, 2020). These differences have impeded economic collaboration, reducing the ability to use collective resources, while many Muslim countries continue to face poverty and unemployment. Socially, extremism and terrorism have thrived, aggravating internal disputes and fostering distrust. The main root causes of these issues are both internal (weak government and corruption) and external (Western hostility and Islamophobia) (Jaber, 2022). Unlike the West, where internal coherence has led to global domination, Muslim countries remain fractured. To solve these issues, Islamic countries must prioritize unity, cooperation, and peaceful cohabitation, while also rebuilding trust among them.

This paper aims to address the pressing issue of sectarianism in the Muslim world by analyzing its root causes, its far-reaching consequences, and the solutions provided by Islamic teachings. The study will delve into the historical origins of division, explore the role of external forces in exacerbating these conflicts, and examine the Qur'anic and Prophetic guidance on unity. Ultimately, the paper seeks to offer practical insights into how the Muslim Ummah can

overcome these internal divisions and reclaim its strength through adherence to the principles of unity, cooperation, and brotherhood espoused by Islam.

2. METHODS

This section outlines the qualitative approach employed to analyze and interpret selected Qur'anic verses and Hadith texts that address the themes of unity, sectarianism, and division within the Muslim world. The methodology integrates thematic analysis, interpretive frameworks, and scholarly exegesis to provide a well-rounded understanding of these Islamic teachings and how they relate to the modern-day challenges of disunity among Muslim nations. The study adopts a qualitative interpretive approach, focusing on a close reading of primary Islamic texts—the Qur'an and Hadith—complemented by insights from traditional and contemporary Islamic scholarship. This approach allows for a deep engagement with the meanings and implications of selected verses and Hadith, revealing how Islamic teachings address the issues of unity and division. By drawing on theological and ethical perspectives, the research framework is designed to contextualize these teachings both historically and in relation to present-day issues within the Muslim world.

Key Qur'anic verses and Hadith were chosen based on their relevance to themes of unity, community, division, and reconciliation. For instance, verses that emphasize the importance of holding together as one community (e.g., Surah Al-Imran, 3:103) and Hadith that caution against disunity were prioritized. The selection process involved consulting classical Islamic exegeses (tafsir), such as those by Ibn Kathir and Al-Tabari, as well as contemporary sources, to ensure a balanced representation of traditional and modern interpretations. After selecting relevant texts, a thematic analysis was conducted to identify and categorize recurring concepts related to unity and division. This method involved coding the texts according to themes such as: First, verses and hadiths condemn sectarianism and warn against groups. Second, encourage togetherness by reading texts that promote social solidarity and collective identity and Third, Islamic norms for settling disagreements and promoting harmony. Each theme was examined in light of its theological implications and its potential applications in addressing sectarian issues in the Muslim world today.

To enrich the interpretation, the study incorporated classical and contemporary exegesis. Works by classical scholars (e.g., Ibn Kathir, Al-Tabari) provided historical context and traditional interpretations, helping to ground the analysis in established Islamic scholarship. Contemporary sources, including those by scholars like Muhammad Asad and Fazlur Rahman, were used to explore modern interpretations and applications of these teachings. This dual approach offered a broader perspective, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how foundational Islamic teachings on unity may address modern issues of fragmentation and sectarianism.

The selected texts were further analyzed to extract practical implications and solutions that Islamic teachings propose for achieving unity. This interpretive step involved comparing thematic insights from the Qur'an and Hadith with contemporary issues, such as political disunity and socio-economic fragmentation among Muslim-majority countries. The study focused on exploring ways in which these teachings could inform strategies for fostering unity, emphasizing principles like mutual respect, consultation (*shura*), and justice as outlined in Islamic teachings.

This study acknowledges certain limitations in interpreting religious texts. The selection of verses and Hadith was based on their relevance to the themes of unity and division, meaning other aspects of sectarianism may be underexplored. Additionally, reliance on scholarly interpretations is inherently subject to the interpretative biases of each source. The study mitigated these limitations by consulting a variety of exegeses and incorporating both historical and modern perspectives. Given the sensitivity of interpreting religious texts, the research followed ethical guidelines to ensure a respectful and accurate representation of Islamic teachings. Interpretations were framed with caution, prioritizing the fidelity to core Islamic principles and respect for diverse perspectives within the Muslim community.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The scholarly discourse on sectarianism and fragmentation within the Muslim world unveils a multifaceted interplay of theological, historical, and socio-political influences that have contributed to rifts within the Ummah. This section analyzes Islamic scholarship, focusing on interpretations of Qur'anic verses and Hadith that warn against discord and emphasize the sanctity of unity. By exploring the root causes of sectarian divides and assessing their impact on the Muslim community, this review not only examines the obstacles posed by disunity but also seeks guidance from Islamic teachings to identify potential avenues for fostering solidarity. In contextualizing these issues within the framework of Islamic principles, this study aims to illuminate both the challenges and the hopeful prospects for achieving cohesion in a world marked by fragmentation.

3.1. The Concept of Unity in Islam

3.1.1. Qur'anic Perspective

Islam places significant emphasis on the concept of unity among its followers. The Qur'an repeatedly calls for Muslims to remain united and avoid division, recognizing the collective strength that comes from solidarity. One of the key verses that highlight the importance of unity is found in Surah Al-Imran (3:103):

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you – when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together, and you became, by His favor, brothers."

This verse is a direct instruction for Muslims to seek cohesion and to avoid splitting into factions. The "rope of Allah" symbolizes the guidance provided by Islam, through which Muslims can remain steadfast and united under a single cause—faith in Allah. The verse further reminds believers of how, before Islam, they were enemies, yet the message of Islam brought them together as brothers. This powerful reminder underlines that division contradicts the essence of Islam and that unity is a favor granted by Allah, essential for the strength and well-being of the Muslim community. In Surah Al-Hujurat (49:10), Allah further emphasizes the concept of brotherhood: *"The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers and fear Allah that you may receive mercy."*

This verse reiterates that all Muslims are part of one brotherhood, bound by faith, and calls upon them to resolve any disputes among themselves, maintaining peace and harmony. Unity

is thus presented as a key to earning Allah's mercy and ensuring stability within the Muslim Ummah.

In Surah Al-Hashr (59:9-10): (59:9) *"It also belongs to those who were already settled in this abode (of Hijrah) 17 having come to faith before the (arrival of the) Muhajirun (Emigrants). They love those who have migrated to them and do not covet what has been given them; they even prefer them above themselves though poverty be their own lot.18 And whosoever are preserved from their own greed, such are the ones that will prosper."*

(59:10) *"(And it also belongs to) those who came after them, and who pray: Lord, forgive us and our brethren who have preceded us in faith, and do not put in our hearts any rancour towards those who believe. Lord, You are the Most Tender, the Most Compassionate."*

These verses exemplify the spirit of unity, mutual support, and brotherhood that should exist among Muslims.

In summary, the Qur'an contains numerous verses that emphasize the critical importance of unity among the Muslim Ummah. From urging believers to hold firmly to the "rope of Allah" and avoid division, to reinforcing the concept of brotherhood and resolving conflicts, these teachings highlight the need for cohesion, cooperation, and solidarity within the Islamic community. The message is clear: unity strengthens the Muslim world, while division weakens it. Therefore, fostering unity remains not only a religious obligation but also a key to the collective strength and prosperity of the Ummah.

3.1.2. Hadith Perspective

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also emphasized the importance of unity through his teachings and actions. In a famous Hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The believers, in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one of the limbs suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever." — Sahih al-Bukhari (6011) — Sahih Muslim (2586)

This statement echoes the Qur'anic message of fraternity among Muslims. The Prophet (PBUH) likened the Ummah to a single body, where if one part suffers, the whole body feels the pain. This analogy highlights the interconnectedness of the Muslim community—any division, no matter how small, impacts the entire collective. The teachings of the Prophet further emphasize that maintaining unity is not only a religious duty but also a social necessity for the well-being of all Muslims.

In another Hadith reported in Sahih Muslim, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

"Do not envy one another, do not inflate prices for one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from one another, and do not undercut one another, but be slaves of Allah and brothers (amongst yourselves). A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim: he does not oppress him, nor does he fail him, nor does he lie to him, nor does he hold him in contempt. Taqwa (piety) is here" (and he pointed to his chest three times). *"It is evil enough for a man to hold his brother Muslim in contempt. The whole of a Muslim is inviolable for another Muslim: his blood, his property, and his honor."* — Sahih Muslim (2564)

This teaching directly addresses the behaviors that often lead to division—envy, hatred, and animosity. By discouraging such negative traits, the Prophet laid the foundation for unity

and brotherhood. His message is clear: Muslims must prioritize compassion, cooperation, and reconciliation over conflict, envy, and division.

In another Hadith which promotes support for fellow Muslims, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other." The Prophet then clasped his hands with the fingers interlaced (to demonstrate the unity). Sahih al-Bukhari (481) and Sahih Muslim (2585)

This Hadith portrays the concept of solidarity and mutual support among believers. It emphasizes that just as the parts of a building reinforce each other, believers should strengthen and uphold one another in faith and actions. The Prophet's gesture of interlacing his fingers symbolizes unity and collaboration, highlighting the importance of community in Islam.

The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also emphasized the importance of maintaining unity and avoiding disputes among Muslims. In a Hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik (may Allah be pleased with him), he said,

"Do not desert (stop talking to) one another, do not nurse hatred, do not be jealous of one another, and become as fellow brothers and servants of Allah. It is not lawful for a Muslim to stop talking to his brother (Muslim) for more than three days." (Sahih al-Bukhari 6065 and Sahih Muslim 2559). Similarly, the Prophet (PBUH) warned about the dangers of disunity in another Hadith narrated by Ibn Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), where he said,

"The wolf devours the lone sheep" (Sunan Abu Dawood 547). This metaphor underscores the vulnerability of individuals when separated from their community, stressing the need for solidarity and brotherhood.

In summary, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized unity, brotherhood, and mutual support among Muslims, warning against division, envy, and animosity. His teachings highlight the interconnectedness of the Muslim community and the vital importance of solidarity for the well-being of all believers.

3.2. Unity during the Time of the Prophet and Early Islamic History

The period of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the early Islamic community serves as a model for achieving unity. When the Prophet migrated to Madinah, one of his first acts was to establish a pact of brotherhood between the Muhajirun (emigrants from Mecca) and the Ansar (helpers from Madinah) (Othman et al., 2021). This was a revolutionary act that transcended tribal loyalties and created a united Muslim community based solely on faith, not lineage or ethnic background. This brotherhood played a crucial role in the successful establishment of the first Islamic state, where unity enabled political, social, and economic prosperity.

Additionally, the Prophet's (PBUH) efforts in resolving disputes among different tribes and communities in Madinah exemplify how unity was not just a spiritual goal but a practical necessity for the survival and success of the early Muslim community. The Constitution of Madinah, a social contract drafted by the Prophet, brought together Muslims, Jews, and other tribes under a unified framework of cooperation and mutual protection, demonstrating that unity within diversity was possible and essential (Zahid & Qureshi, 2024).

Following the Prophet's (PBUH) death, the first four caliphs (the Rashidun Caliphs), who succeeded Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), maintained unity through principles of Shura (consultation), Adl (justice), and adherence to Quranic teachings (Aziz, 2021). The Qur'an outlines essential principles of Islamic polity, including Tawhid, Shari'ah, and Hurriyah, which were practiced by the Prophet and

the Rashidun (Aziz, 2021). Each caliph implemented a different political system based on the conditions of their era. The succession of caliphs involved various methods, including the Saqifa meeting for Abu Bakr, Omar's appointment by Abu Bakr, and the complex circumstances surrounding Uthman's death and Ali's accession (Haroun, 2024). These caliphs faced challenges but maintained stability through their wisdom and good conduct. Despite challenges, the early Muslim community remained largely united, which allowed them to expand Islam's influence across vast territories and establish a powerful and cohesive civilization.

In summary, both the Qur'an and Hadith emphasize the vital importance of unity within the Muslim Ummah. The early history of Islam, particularly during the life of the Prophet and the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, shows how unity was not only achieved but also preserved through adherence to Islamic teachings. Today, the lessons from that time remain relevant, reminding Muslims that division weakens the Ummah, while unity strengthens it both spiritually and materially.

3.3. The Causes of Division Among Muslims

3.3.1. Historical Roots

The division within the Muslim Ummah has its roots in the period immediately following the death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 632 CE. This event marked a pivotal moment in Islamic history, as the question of succession—who should lead the Muslim community after the Prophet's passing—emerged as a major source of conflict. The initial disagreement revolved around the rightful leader, which ultimately led to the enduring split between Sunni and Shia Muslims (Rogerson, 2010). The Sunni Muslims believed that the leadership of the Muslim community should be determined through a Shura. Based on this principle, they supported the appointment of Abu Bakr, a close companion of the Prophet, as the first caliph (Oweidat, 2019). This decision, in their view, was in line with the Prophet's teachings on collective decision-making and consensus. On the other hand, Shia Muslims held that the leadership should have remained within the Prophet's family, particularly with his cousin and son-in-law, Ali ibn Abi Thalib (ra). The Shia position was rooted in the belief that the Prophet had designated Ali (ra) as his rightful successor, thus establishing a divinely appointed line of leaders known as the Imamate, which would continue through the Prophet's descendants (Ahl al-Bayt) (Abidin et al., 2018).

This political disagreement over succession was not merely a matter of governance but soon became a defining ideological divide within the Muslim world. It was further compounded by theological differences. Sunnis emphasized that the role of the caliph was to serve as a political leader chosen by the community, without requiring any divine sanction. In contrast, Shia Muslims viewed the Imamate as both a political and spiritual office, with the leader having a divinely ordained authority (Rahman, 2005). The dispute, which began in Medina, the heart of the early Islamic community, quickly spread across the rapidly expanding Islamic empire. As Muslim rule extended throughout the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, the division between Sunni and Shia Muslims deepened, evolving from a political debate into a sectarian divide that shaped much of Islamic history. The aftermath of these early disputes saw political conflicts transform into sectarian ideologies, with distinct religious interpretations and practices taking root within each group. Over the centuries, theological debates about the nature of leadership in Islam, coupled with differences in Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), further cemented this divide. Sunni Islam saw the emergence of four major schools of thought—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—each offering different approaches to Islamic law and practice (Daniah, 2022). The development of these four schools was not intended to create divisions within the global Muslim community. Instead, they enhance one another by offering diverse interpretations of Sacred Islamic Law, shaped by their varying understandings of legal principles and the contexts in which they

arose. Meanwhile, the Shia community developed its own schools and interpretations (Haider, 2011). Although these variations in Islamic thought were not always antagonistic, they contributed to the diverse landscape of Islamic theology, law, and ritual practice.

Ultimately, the division within the Muslim Ummah has its roots in the very early days of Islamic history, driven by both political and theological disagreements over leadership. What began as a political question of succession has persisted for centuries, influencing the socio-political landscape of the Muslim world and giving rise to complex sectarian identities. The legacies of this division remain evident today, as Sunni-Shia tensions continue to shape global and regional conflicts within the broader Muslim community.

3.3.2. Theological, Political, and Social Origins of Islamic Sectarianism

Islamic sectarianism, deeply rooted in theological, political, and social divergences, has significantly influenced the development of the global Muslim community. The central division between Sunni and Shia Islam arose from disputes over the rightful successor to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (Iqbal, 2020). These theological foundations, alongside evolving political struggles and ideological differences, have created multiple Islamic denominations and schools of thought, shaping Muslim identities across regions. This paper explores the historical roots of sectarianism, focusing on the major Sunni-Shia split, and examines its role in contemporary Muslim societies, addressing how sectarianism has persisted and shaped modern political and social landscapes.

The theological origins of Islamic sectarianism stem from divergent interpretations of leadership following Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) death in 632 AD. Sunni Muslims, comprising 85-90% of the global Muslim population, recognize the legitimacy of the first four caliphs, while Shia Muslims, representing around 10-15%, argue that Ali (ra), was the rightful successor (Makdisi, 2019). These initial differences solidified into distinct sects, with Sunni Islam giving rise to four major schools of jurisprudence—Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali—and Shia Islam dividing into Twelvers, Ismailis, and Zaydis, with the Twelvers being the largest group (Makdisi, 2019). Smaller sects, such as Ibadism, and spiritual movements like Sufism, also emerged, further diversifying the Muslim world. Early schisms, such as the Kharijite movement, which rejected both Sunni and Shia claims to religious legitimacy, played a crucial role in shaping these divisions (Daftary, 2015). Over time, political struggles, notably during the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates, intensified these theological rifts, as rulers' manipulated sectarianism for political gain (Abdo, 2017).

The persistence of Islamic sectarianism can largely be attributed to its political utility. Throughout history, sectarian divisions were often exploited by political elites to consolidate power, with rulers favoring one sect over another to maintain control. This practice continues in modern contexts, as seen in the use of sectarianism by regimes in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, and Bahrain to suppress dissent and reinforce political authority. Theological differences, particularly the Shia focus on the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and the Sunni emphasis on the Rashidun caliphs, have evolved into markers of political and social identity. Sectarianism has also been a catalyst for social conflict, with violent confrontations between Sunni and Shia groups occurring in regions like Syria, Iraq and Lebanon. Additionally, intra-Sunni clashes, such as those between Deobandi and Barelvi groups in South Asia, illustrate how sectarianism has fractured Muslim societies on multiple levels (Matthiesen, 2023). Despite these divisions, modern movements like Islamic Neo-Traditionalism and Islamic Liberalism have sought to challenge traditional sectarian structures, while non-denominational Muslims advocate for a more inclusive approach to faith that transcends sectarian boundaries.

In brief, Islamic sectarianism, while originating in early theological debates, has been sustained by political manipulation and developing ideological divides. Complex divisions within Islam, such as the Sunni-Shia split and smaller sectarian factions, have formed the Muslim world's history and contemporary terrain. While sectarianism has frequently been a source of strife, it also showcases the diversity of Islam. As current movements seek to redefine sectarian identities, the future of Islamic sectarianism is a critical subject for scholarly research, providing insights into how these divisions may grow in response to contemporary political and social issues.

3.3.3 External Influences

External influences, especially during the colonial era and subsequent Western interventions, have played a pivotal role in exacerbating divisions within the Muslim world. Colonialism introduced new power dynamics that exploited and deepened pre-existing religious and ethnic divisions for political control. During the 19th and 20th centuries, European powers, particularly Britain and France, implemented policies of "divide and rule" to weaken Muslim societies by amplifying sectarian tensions (Wimmen, 2014). In the Middle East, British colonial rule in Iraq deliberately empowered Sunni elites over the Shia majority, fostering deep-seated resentment between these two sects (Dawisha, 2009). Similarly, in Lebanon, the French Mandate exacerbated divisions by aligning with the Christian Maronite community and marginalizing Muslim groups (Zogheib, 2014). This legacy of colonial manipulation entrenched distrust and rivalry among Muslim communities, destabilizing the political and social fabric of the region even after independence.

The consequences of these colonial-era policies became even more pronounced with the interventions of Western powers in the post-colonial period. The Iraq War of 2003 serves as a glaring example of how external intervention can reignite and escalate sectarian tensions. The U.S.-led invasion toppled the Sunni-dominated Ba'athist regime of Saddam Hussein, paving the way for Shia political ascendancy. The resulting power vacuum gave rise to fierce sectarian violence between Sunnis and Shias, with armed militias and extremist groups taking advantage of the chaos. The deepening Sunni-Shia divide not only destabilized Iraq but also contributed to regional instability, as neighboring countries became involved in supporting their sectarian allies. The ripple effects of this intervention extended to countries like Syria, where the civil war—triggered by the 2011 uprising against President Bashar al-Assad—became a proxy battlefield for regional powers, with Sunni-majority nations supporting the opposition and Iran and Hezbollah backing Assad's Alawite regime, a Shia offshoot (Suechika, 2018).

In addition to military interventions, Western powers have also used economic and political strategies to manipulate sectarian divisions for broader geopolitical gains. The West, along with regional actors like Saudi Arabia and Iran, has often aligned with sectarian factions to secure strategic alliances. For example, the rivalry between Saudi Arabia, a Sunni-majority state, and Iran, a Shia-majority state, has been a driving force in sectarian conflicts across the Middle East (Rabitha et al., 2021). In Yemen, the conflict between the Saudi-led coalition and Iran-backed Houthi rebels has turned the country into a sectarian battleground, mirroring the broader Sunni-Shia competition for regional dominance (Hiro, 2019). Western nations, by supporting their regional allies—often based on sectarian lines—have further entrenched these divisions. The persistent external interference has created an environment where Muslim-majority nations struggle to achieve internal cohesion or unite against common challenges, such as external political domination, economic exploitation, and cultural marginalization.

External influences have significantly impacted the Muslim world, deepening internal divisions and hampering Pan-Islamic movements aimed at unity. Despite initiatives to foster collective identity in response to colonialism, these efforts have often been disrupted by geopolitical interventions prioritizing strategic interests over the welfare of Muslim communities. The Sunni-Shia divide, amplified by external forces, remains a key obstacle to collaboration on critical issues like development, security, and global representation. As long as external powers exploit sectarian divides for their agendas, the Muslim world faces ongoing challenges to unity in addressing shared adversities.

Islamic teachings in the Qur'an and Hadith emphasize the necessity of unity and denounce division. The Qur'an, specifically in Surah Al-An'am (6:159), warns believers against fragmentation and encourages collective adherence to a single community. Similarly, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) cautioned against sectarianism, underscoring the importance of peaceful dispute resolution, as illustrated in the Hadith literature (Sunan Ibn Majah 3992, Book 36, Hadith 67), which forewarns the consequences of division within the Ummah. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"The Jews split into seventy-one sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy in Hell. The Christians split into seventy-two sects, seventy-one of which will be in Hell and one in Paradise. I swear by the One Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad, my nation will split into seventy-three sects, one of which will be in Paradise and seventy-two in Hell". It was said: "O Messenger of Allah, who are they?" He said: "The main body".

Despite historical and external forces that have fueled disunity, foundational Islamic teachings provide a directive for cohesion. Thus, addressing modern divisions requires a revival of these core principles, emphasizing harmony, collective strength, and alignment with the Qur'anic and Prophetic call for unity within the Ummah.

3.4 Consequences of Division

3.4.1. Political Weakness

The political fragmentation within the Muslim world, particularly fueled by sectarianism, has significantly eroded the potential for collective strength and unity among Islamic nations (Rabasa et al., 2004). This lack of cohesion has led to increased vulnerability to external interference, exploitation of internal divisions by foreign powers, and the erosion of influence on the global stage. One of the most prominent consequences of this political weakness is the establishment of U.S. military bases in several Muslim-majority countries. Nations such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait have allowed the presence of U.S. military installations, often in exchange for security guarantees or economic incentives (Wallin, 2022). These bases have fundamentally shifted the balance of power in the region, enabling Western powers to exert control and maintain a strategic foothold. The presence of these foreign military bases has weakened the political autonomy of these nations, limiting their ability to respond when other Muslim nations are attacked or invaded, as seen in conflicts involving Palestine, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. The reliance on foreign military support has also fostered a sense of dependency, preventing a coordinated military or political response to issues that affect the broader Muslim community. For example, when Iraq was invaded in 2003, many neighboring Muslim nations refrained from taking decisive actions against the U.S.-led coalition, partially due to their geopolitical reliance on U.S. military support. This geopolitical entanglement has also deepened sectarian divisions, particularly between Sunni and Shia populations (Salloukh, 2013). Countries like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen have become battlegrounds for proxy wars, where external actors (such as the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and Iran) exploit these sectarian differences to further their own interests. For instance, the Saudi-Iran rivalry has fueled Sunni-Shia conflicts in Iraq and Yemen, prolonging violence and hindering any attempt at political unity (Crepay, 2018). The region's resource wealth, especially in oil

and gas, has the potential to serve as a formidable asset in international markets (Amhar & Prima, 2023). However, due to political disintegration, Muslim countries often pursue divergent and occasionally competing economic agendas. Western powers, particularly the U.S., have exploited these divisions by establishing advantageous trade agreements with individual Muslim states, further reinforcing their economic dominance in the region (Gassama et al., 2020). This lack of coordination impedes the possibility of forming a unified economic bloc that could leverage collective resources for greater global impact. Moreover, the ongoing reliance on Western markets and technology has stymied efforts toward self-sufficient, diversified economies, leaving Muslim-majority countries vulnerable to external economic pressures (Diop et al., 2012).

Political fragments among Muslim countries undermine collective diplomatic efforts, particularly on issues such as the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Disunity has resulted in contradictory attitudes in international forums, reducing the impact of diplomatic measures such as UN resolutions and undermining Muslim countries' reputation on a global scale (Kösebalaban, 2014). This fragmentation has also made the region susceptible to international influence. For example, Western nations, particularly the United States, have regularly intervened in Muslim countries, alleging security or democratic concerns. These measures, however, have frequently exacerbated conflicts and prolonged instability, as witnessed in Libya, where the 2011 intervention produced a power vacuum that fostered militia activity, and in Iraq, where the 2003 invasion aided ISIS's growth and widened sectarian divides (Yosufi, 2016). Furthermore, the Syrian conflict demonstrates how external players use regional divisions for geopolitical gain, perpetuating a cycle of violence that undermines unity in the face of common threats (Mustafa & Bano, 2020). Pan-Islamic institutions, particularly the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), have also struggled to promote unity (Mustafa & Bano, 2020). Established to handle common challenges such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the crises in Yemen and Syria, the OIC's efficacy has been hampered by internal conflicts and a lack of coherence, limiting its authority (Cordesman, 2022). This lack of unity has weakened the OIC's worldwide impact, adding to the Muslim world's declining political and diplomatic power.

3.4.2 Economic Consequences

The disunity among Muslim nations has had profound economic repercussions. In a globalized world, regional and international cooperation is vital for economic growth and development. However, political fragmentation, sectarian tensions, and external interventions have hindered the potential for meaningful economic collaboration among Muslim countries, resulting in both internal disparities and external exploitation.

3.4.2.1. Economic Sanctions and Isolation

One significant factor that has contributed to the economic struggles of many Muslim countries is the imposition of economic sanctions by the United States and its allies. Countries like Iran, Iraq, Libya, and Syria have faced long-standing sanctions aimed at crippling their economies, which, in turn, have devastated their populations and economic development (L. Brown, 2011). For instance, Iran, one of the world's largest oil producers, has seen its economy severely impacted by U.S. sanctions, which have drastically reduced its ability to sell oil on the global market. This has resulted in inflation, unemployment, and economic stagnation, limiting the country's ability to invest in infrastructure, education, and technological advancement. In Libya, sanctions and foreign intervention during and after the NATO-led military campaign of 2011 have contributed to prolonged instability and economic decline, despite its rich oil reserves (Ezugwu et al., 2023). The inability to stabilize the country and reintegrate into the global market has left much of the population in poverty and dependent on foreign

aid. The sanctions imposed on Syria have likewise exacerbated the humanitarian crisis and impeded any form of economic recovery amid ongoing conflict (Moret, 2015).

2.4.2.2 Oil Wealth Paradox and Intra-Muslim Disparities

The economic paradox within the Muslim world is stark: while some Muslim-majority nations are extremely wealthy due to their vast oil and gas reserves, others remain mired in poverty. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE boast some of the highest per capita incomes in the world, driven by their control of significant portions of global oil and gas production (El Amine, 2023). In contrast, nations like Yemen, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, and Afghanistan suffer from chronic poverty and underdevelopment (N. Khan et al., 2020). This vast disparity is not only a result of differences in resource endowments but also of the lack of economic solidarity and mutual support between wealthy and poor Muslim nations. Geopolitical rivalries, sectarian conflicts, and the influence of external powers have prevented wealthy Gulf States from providing meaningful financial or developmental assistance to poorer Muslim countries. For example, while Gulf countries invest heavily in luxury real estate, high-tech industries, and global financial markets, they have largely failed to implement coordinated efforts to assist struggling nations like Yemen, Syria, and Palestine which faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in modern history.

3.4.2.3 The Role of External Powers and Exploitation

The absence of a unified economic strategy among Muslim-majority states has facilitated Western hegemony in trade and resource negotiations, reinforcing systemic economic disparities across the Muslim world. Western nations, particularly the United States and Europe, have prioritized bilateral trade agreements with individual Muslim states, often structured to serve Western economic and strategic interests (Hasnat, 2006). This bilateralism constrains Muslim nations from leveraging collective bargaining power, thus weakening their global negotiating stance and limiting opportunities for cohesive economic growth and self-sufficiency. A prime example lies in energy-rich Muslim countries, whose vast oil revenues are largely mediated by Western corporate and political agendas. While oil exports generate significant income, the resultant wealth often accumulates among elite ruling classes with minimal distributive impact across wider populations (Nasr, 2009). This concentration of resources perpetuates economic inequality and stalls advancements in key areas such as technological innovation, educational access, and infrastructure investment. Consequently, Western control over high-value sectors like technology, finance, and manufacturing intensifies dependency, hindering the Muslim world's progress towards economic autonomy and cohesive development (Heshmati, 2021).

3.4.2.4 Lack of Economic Integration

Despite the enormous potential for economic cooperation, Muslim countries have struggled to establish regional economic blocs or collective trade agreements that could help them compete on the global stage. The OIC, which includes 57 member states, was intended to promote economic, political, and social cooperation among Muslim countries (Kayaoglu, 2015). However, due to political disagreements and sectarian divisions, the OIC has been largely ineffective in advancing meaningful economic integration (Mustafa & Bano, 2020). The absence of a unified Islamic economic bloc has also resulted in missed opportunities for leveraging the vast natural resources, human capital, and markets that exist within the Muslim world. While organizations like the European Union (EU) and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have successfully integrated their economies to enhance regional cooperation and global competitiveness, the Muslim world remains fragmented, with countries pursuing divergent economic policies. For instance, the OIC has not been able to replicate the success of organizations like the EU or the ASEAN, where economic cooperation and integrated markets have led to significant growth and global influence (Mottaghi & Ahmadi Khoy, 2015). The Muslim world

remains divided by trade barriers, political rivalries, and economic protectionism, limiting the potential for growth and development.

3.4.2.5 Failure to Leverage Oil Wealth for Collective Development

The failure to create a cohesive economic strategy has also meant that the oil wealth of Muslim countries has not been leveraged for the collective development of the broader Islamic world. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), an organization comprising the wealthy Gulf states, primarily focuses on its own internal economic and security concerns, rather than investing in broader regional development initiatives that could benefit poorer Muslim nations. While countries like Saudi Arabia and the UAE invest heavily in international financial markets, luxury projects, and high-tech industries (Bianco & Sons, 2023), they have failed to provide meaningful assistance to countries like Yemen, Syria, Sudan, Palestine, and Somalia, which remain among the poorest in the world. This economic disparity further fuels resentment and perpetuates divisions within the Muslim world, as poorer nations feel abandoned by their wealthier counterparts. By examining these additional factors, including the impact of U.S.-led economic sanctions, the oil wealth paradox, the exploitation of resources by external powers, and the failure of Muslim countries to create cohesive economic strategies, it becomes evident that the economic consequences of division are profound and multifaceted. The Muslim world's inability to unite economically has not only hindered its development but has also made it more susceptible to external domination and exploitation. Addressing these divisions is crucial for unlocking the true economic potential of the Muslim world and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities across Muslim nations.

3.4.3 Social and Religious Fragmentation

The divisions within the Muslim world have not only weakened political and economic structures but have also contributed to severe social and religious fragmentation, leading to profound and long-lasting consequences for the global Muslim community.

3.4.3.1 Sectarianism and Internal Conflicts

One of the most visible manifestations of division is sectarianism, particularly the long-standing rift between Sunni and Shia Muslims. This divide has been at the heart of many conflicts in the Muslim world, exacerbating internal tensions and making peaceful coexistence increasingly difficult. Countries like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen have been devastated by sectarian violence, where communities that once lived together in relative harmony have been torn apart by deep-rooted religious and political differences (Salloukh, 2013). These conflicts are not just driven by internal sectarianism but are often exploited by external powers to further their own geopolitical goals. For instance, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two regional powers representing Sunni and Shia leadership respectively, have been involved in numerous proxy wars across the Middle East. In places like Yemen and Syria, sectarian divides have been manipulated to fuel conflicts, resulting in further devastation and deepening the chasm between different Muslim communities (Crepy, 2018).

3.4.3.2 The Rise of Extremist Groups

The fragmentation within the Muslim world has also created fertile ground for the rise of extremist groups such as ISIS, Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Boko Haram, and other violent factions that exploit sectarian tensions and social instability. These groups thrive by positioning themselves as defenders of one sect against the other, using religious rhetoric to justify their brutal tactics (Suleiman & Akhmetova, 2020). By claiming to represent the "true" interpretation of Islam, these extremist organizations fuel a

cycle of violence that targets not only non-Muslims but also other Muslims who do not adhere to their extremist ideology. For example, ISIS leveraged the Sunni-Shia divide to gain support among marginalized Sunni populations in Iraq and Syria, portraying themselves as protectors against Shia oppression (C. M. Brown, 2015). Similarly, Al-Qaeda has capitalized on political instability and sectarian tensions to entrench itself in conflict zones, further spreading their radical ideology and inflaming violence (Novenario, 2016). The proliferation of these extremist groups has led to an increase in inter-Muslim violence, where different sects and interpretations of Islam are pitted against each other, destroying communities and undermining the core Islamic principles of peace, tolerance, and unity (Alhashmi, 2023).

3.4.3.3 The Global Impact of Fragmentation

The consequences of social and religious fragmentation in the Muslim world extend far beyond its borders. The rise of extremist groups, coupled with the continuous violence in Muslim-majority countries, has contributed to a global rise in Islamophobia (Al-Khudairi, 2022). These negative perceptions are often fueled by media coverage of terrorist activities and conflicts in the Muslim world, leading many in the West and elsewhere to associate Islam with violence and extremism (Al Mannan & Al-Af, 2017). This perception overlooks the fact that the majorities of Muslims are peaceful and oppose the actions of extremists. Moreover, the misrepresentation of Islam by extremist groups has led to the alienation of Muslim communities living in non-Muslim countries. Muslims in countries such as the United States, France, and the United Kingdom often face suspicion, hostility, and discrimination due to the actions of a radical minority (Rafiq & Khan, 2021). This environment of fear and prejudice has increased hate crimes against Muslims, the marginalization of Muslim communities, and policies such as the Muslim travel ban imposed in the U.S., which target Muslim-majority countries (Everett Marko, 2019).

3.4.3.4 Erosion of Islamic Unity and Values

The internal divisions have also eroded the fundamental values of unity and solidarity that are central to Islam. The concept of the Ummah, or the global community of Muslims, is meant to transcend national, ethnic, and sectarian divisions, uniting all Muslims under the banner of shared faith and values. However, this ideal has been severely compromised by the growing divisions within the Muslim world. Rather than working together to address common challenges such as poverty, illiteracy, and underdevelopment, Muslim countries often engage in sectarian rivalries and political disputes that further fracture the community. The lack of unity has undermined efforts to support causes that are important to the Muslim world, such as the Palestinian struggle, which has been weakened by the inability of Muslim countries to present a united front.

3.4.3.5 Cultural and Religious Polarization

Fragmentation within Muslim societies has deepened cultural polarization, where rising religious extremism suppresses moderate and liberal Islamic interpretations. This shift often erodes traditional practices that foster coexistence, dialogue, and intellectual engagement. The spread of hardline ideologies escalates social tensions, putting pressure on women, minorities, and secular groups. Meanwhile, young Muslims, particularly in Western contexts, grapple with cultural dissonance—struggling between familial expectations and the secular, sometimes antagonistic, nature of their surroundings (Zimmerman, 2014). This dynamic frequently results in alienation and identity crises, further straining the relationship between Muslim communities and their host societies. These factors reveal how social and religious fragmentation drives not only internal discord but also global

challenges. Extremism, sectarianism, and polarization have tarnished Islamic values and contributed to a negative global perception, fostering Islamophobia and isolating Muslim communities. Without addressing these divisions, the Muslim world risks persistent social and religious disunity, which undermines both its internal cohesion and global influence.

In summary, The Qur'anic and Prophetic warnings regarding the perils of disunity have proven to be profoundly prescient, manifesting in the observable fragmentation of the Muslim Ummah with far-reaching geopolitical, socio-religious, and economic repercussions. Politically, this disunity has facilitated external interventions, diminished the collective agency of Muslim states, and eroded their sovereignty, as evidenced by the entrenchment of foreign military influence and the exploitation of intra-Muslim rivalries. Socio-religiously, sectarianism and regional schisms have fractured the essential bonds of Islamic solidarity, undermining the cohesive identity of the Ummah and fostering conditions ripe for internal instability and external manipulation. Economically, the absence of integration has prevented the harnessing of vast resources through coordinated strategies, instead perpetuating dependency on external powers and exacerbating wealth disparities within the Muslim world. This multidimensional weakening underscores the veracity of the Qur'an and Hadith's emphasis on unity as a theological imperative and strategic necessity. Thus, the reinvigoration of collective Muslim solidarity, grounded in the ethical and doctrinal framework of Islam, is critical for restoring the Ummah's geopolitical strength and internal cohesion.

4. Discussion

A Path to Reclaiming Unity: Islamic Solutions to Division

Qur'anic Call for Unity and Prophetic Model of Mediation

The Qur'anic call for unity and the Prophetic model of mediation combine to form a comprehensive framework for addressing sectarian divisions and political fragmentation, with the Muslim Ummah as the central entity. Theologically, the Ummah is bound by tawhid (the oneness of God), which extends to collective social and political unity. Politically, this collective identity is essential for fostering cohesion and resisting division.

In Qur'anic Call for Unity, the Qur'an commands the Ummah to avoid division and adhere to collective responsibility, as illustrated in Surah Al-Imran (3:103):

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you—when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together, and you became, by His favor, brothers." This verse calls for social cohesion and unity, mirroring political theories of communitarianism, where collective responsibility serves the public good and prevents factionalism. The Qur'an's emphasis on collective responsibility serves as a foundation for national integration and political unity, urging the community to resist internal divisions.

In Prophetic Model of Mediation, the Constitution of Medina set an early example of pluralistic governance, where the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) brought together warring tribes and diverse religious groups to form a cohesive society (L. A. Khan, 2006). This model of conflict resolution and shared governance offers a practical framework for modern power-sharing agreements and conflict mediation. The Prophet's approach to conflict resolution aligns with the Hadith in Riyad as-Salihin 249: the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said "The person who (lies) in order to conciliate between people is not a liar, when he conveys good or says (something) good." In this Hadith narrated by Umm Kulthum bint 'Uqbah, it is explained that lying is generally

forbidden in Islam, but there are exceptions. These include lying in the context of war, reconciling between people, and within conversations between spouses. In war, lying may be necessary to protect lives, while in reconciliation; a small lie might help mend relationships. This highlights the importance of mediation, dialogue, and resolving disputes amicably—a principle that remains applicable in addressing modern political conflicts within the Muslim world.

Therefore, Both the Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings emphasize that unity is not just a moral imperative but also a political necessity for ensuring stability and governance. Unity is required to fulfill the divine command of tawhid (the oneness of God), and the fragmentation of the Ummah weakens its collective strength. Politically, unity is linked to legitimacy, stability, and the prevention of factionalism, resonating with realist political theory where a united polity enhances governance and international standing (Cross, 2024). To achieve this, the Qur'anic call for unity and the Prophetic example emphasize adherence to Shari'ah as a unifying force, guiding the Ummah away from sectarian divisions. The Constitution of Medina serves as an enduring model of how diverse communities can coexist under a shared governance framework. Modern applications of these principles include the use of coalition governments, mediation, and dialogue, all aimed at fostering unity and strengthening the global Muslim community. This synthesis of theological and political strategies provides the Muslim world with a framework to resolve internal divisions, enhance political cohesion, and promote global Muslim solidarity while upholding the Qur'anic principles of justice (adl) and consultation (shura).

Contemporary Islamic Movements for Unity

In recent decades, movements across the Muslim world have accelerated efforts to bridge sectarian, ideological, and geopolitical divides to reinforce a shared pan-Islamic identity. These initiatives target both internal conflicts, such as Sunni-Shia divisions, and external pressures affecting the global Muslim Ummah. Notably, organizations like the OIC and the World Muslim League (WML) have played leading roles, implementing diplomatic interventions in conflict zones and promoting Islamic solidarity by addressing divisive ideologies (Ali & Sultan, 2023). Academic institutions, including Al-Azhar University in Egypt and the International Islamic University of Malaysia, contribute by advocating for critical Islamic thought, especially through Ijtihad (independent reasoning) and Tajdid (religious renewal), to address the modern sociopolitical challenges faced by Muslims worldwide (Wimmen, 2014). The central objectives of these movements include fostering a united ummah that transcends national and sectarian boundaries by emphasizing maqasid al-shariah (the objectives of Islamic law) to address shared issues of poverty, inequality, and social injustice (Manzur-E-Elahi & Osmani, 2011). Additionally, efforts to counter extremism and sectarianism, led by the WML and OIC, highlight the theological emphasis on Tawhid, which underpins the unity imperative in Islamic thought. These movements seek to strengthen resilience within Muslim societies and address ideological rifts that threaten cohesion. Geopolitical considerations remain central to these movements. The Middle East, with its contested political landscape and symbolic religious sites, is especially significant, with nations like Iran and Saudi Arabia, representing Shia and Sunni influence, being critical to unity efforts (Mabon & Wastnidge, 2019). These movements recognize that fragmented Muslim states are susceptible to external exploitation; thus, fostering asabiyyah (social solidarity) and drawing on theological-political ideals, such as khilafah (unified Islamic governance), serve to counter such vulnerabilities. Through technology, forums, and academic exchange, these unity initiatives today promote dialogue among Muslim intellectuals and youth globally, aiming

to sustain an inclusive identity rooted in shared faith and mutual respect across diverse Islamic traditions.

Practical Solutions Based on Qur'an and Hadith

The initial focus on fostering unity within the Muslim ummah, drawn from the Qur'an and Hadith, creates an essential basis for broader collaborative action. Dialogue, educational reform, and cooperation across social and economic spheres enable the cultivation of mutual respect, which serves as a prerequisite for tackling contemporary challenges on a community-wide scale. As the ummah strengthens its internal bonds by promoting shared values and countering extremism, it becomes better positioned to implement governance principles that embody Islamic ideals of justice, consultation, and compassion. In this regard, Shura, Adl, and Rahma serve as structural principles that can operationalize unity and transform it into a force for positive societal reform. Shura, reinforces the initial phase's emphasis on discourse by incorporating it into community government, as per Qur'anic guidance: "who obey their Lord and establish Prayer; who conduct their affairs by consultation, and spend out of what We have bestowed upon them;" (Qur'an 42:38). This consultative method incorporates unity efforts into a governance framework that prioritizes inclusive interaction, ensuring that policies reflect the ummah's collective desires. The principle of Adl then underscores a commitment to justice, extending the earlier focus on mutual respect to a social and political scale. The Qur'an's directive to "stand firmly for justice" (Qur'an 4:135) affirms the necessity of impartiality and equality. Adl mandates policies that promote equitable treatment, combat corruption, and support redistribution through mechanisms like Zakat (obligatory almsgiving), furthering unity by addressing socio-economic disparities that often contribute to division "Zakah expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy and for those employed to collect [zakah] and for bringing hearts together [for Islam] and for freeing captives [or slaves] and for those in debt and for the cause of Allah and for the [stranded] traveler – an obligation [imposed] by Allah. And Allah is Knowing and Wise;" Surah At-Tawbah (9:60). Finally, Rahma, embodied by the Prophet Muhammad's example of compassion, enhances social cohesion by addressing the community's emotional and physical welfare. By fostering compassion-driven initiatives—such as community welfare, inter-sect cooperation, and refugee support programs—Rahma provides a concrete approach to support individuals and transcend sectarian divides. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The merciful are shown mercy by the Merciful. Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from Who is above the heavens." (Sunan al-Tirmidhi 1924).

This integrated approach, linking the initial steps to foster unity with the broader principles of Shura, Adl, and Rahma, provides a comprehensive pathway for building a cohesive, resilient, and prosperous ummah. By embedding Qur'anic teachings into the social fabric and governance structures, the community can strengthen its capacity to address modern challenges while upholding Islamic values. Together, these phases exemplify how unity within the ummah, combined with governance principles rooted in Islamic teachings, empowers the community to confront contemporary issues with justice, consultation, and compassion.

The Role of Global Muslim Institutions

Global Muslim institutions serve as essential pillars in addressing the diverse social, political, and economic challenges faced by the Muslim ummah. These organizations bridge regional divides and significantly influence international policy, fostering unity and social justice in alignment with Islamic principles as outlined in the Qur'an and Sunnah. Rooted in both religious and political science frameworks, these institutions champion global cooperation on

shared Islamic values, prioritizing *maqasid al-shariah*—the objectives of Islamic law—to promote societal welfare, human dignity, and equity. Through varied functions, global Muslim institutions address the political, economic, and social needs of Muslim communities worldwide. Their mission spans political advocacy, economic development, humanitarian support, religious education, and peace-building. Anchored in Islamic values such as *Shura*, *Adl*, and *Rahma*, these organizations approach each sphere with dedication to the shared values of the Muslim world.

Political Advocacy and Conflict Resolution

In March 2023, China brokered a pivotal rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran (Mashwani et al., 2024), marking a significant step in addressing sectarianism within the ummah. By bridging the deep-rooted Sunni-Shia schism, this intervention aligned with *ummah wahidah*, the Qur'anic ideal of a united community founded on mutual respect and collaboration. This diplomatic success not only counters fragmentation but strengthens pathways toward regional stability and cooperation.

Concurrently, leading Muslim institutions act as diplomatic voices for the ummah, advocating for *adl* and *wahda* in international forums. These entities promote *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) by addressing issues vital to the Muslim world, from the defense of oppressed communities to conflict resolution, reinforcing collective resilience against external pressures. Together, China's mediation and institutional efforts embody actionable models rooted in Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings for advancing unity amidst complex global challenges.

Economic Development Initiatives

Economic empowerment is another key area where these institutions work to address disparities within Muslim-majority regions and support economic development more broadly. Through financing infrastructure projects, providing loans, and supporting sectors like education and health, these organizations prioritize the eradication of poverty and strive to build sustainable welfare systems. Initiatives often incorporate Qur'anic mandates on social responsibility, such as *Zakat*-funded programs and interest-free loans, to support the marginalized and create opportunities for economic resilience. This commitment to social welfare reflects the Qur'anic value of *falah* (prosperity), aiming to lift communities through economic equity and support.

Humanitarian Assistance and Social Welfare

Humanitarian assistance is a cornerstone of global Muslim institutions' mission, encompassing support for those affected by natural disasters, conflict, or displacement. These efforts are inspired by the principles of *Rahma* and *ukhuwwah*, which guide their outreach to displaced and marginalized communities both within and outside Muslim-majority regions. Humanitarian programs provide immediate relief, build capacity, and promote resilience among vulnerable populations, embodying the Prophetic model of mercy in times of crisis. By extending aid to Muslims affected by ongoing conflicts, they demonstrate a commitment to brotherhood, regardless of regional or cultural differences.

Religious Education and Scholarship

Institutions dedicated to religious education play an essential role in shaping a balanced understanding of Islamic teachings, countering extremism, and promoting an inclusive, moderate approach to faith. These organizations emphasize *ijtihad* and *tafsir* to ensure that Islamic teachings remain relevant and constructive within contemporary societies. By advocating

for a curriculum rooted in wasatiyyah, these institutions provide a platform to address sectarian tensions and promote unity, offering guidance on ethical and theological issues that strengthen the collective identity of the ummah.

The Significance of Global Muslim Institutions

The importance of these institutions lies in their ability to actualize Islamic principles on a global scale, addressing challenges with a holistic approach that integrates religious values with contemporary needs. Through collective action, they foster unity, facilitate economic equity, and advocate for social justice as outlined in Islamic teachings. These organizations uphold the Qur'anic directive to "hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah" (Qur'an 3:103), working against divisions within the Muslim community and fostering a shared sense of purpose.

In their pursuit of social justice and economic equality, global Muslim institutions address issues of poverty and marginalization with a strong emphasis on ethical principles. Economic projects, funding for social programs and humanitarian initiatives serve as tangible expressions of the Qur'anic mandate to "*stand firmly for justice*" (Qur'an 4:135). Additionally, these institutions provide an essential safeguard against extremism and misinterpretations of Islam. By promoting moderate views and balanced scholarship, they help counter sectarianism, building bridges within the Muslim community while preserving its core teachings.

Through diplomatic channels and policy advocacy, global Muslim institutions extend their influence into international relations, advocating for human rights and ethical standards that align with Islamic values. Their role in areas like conflict resolution, anti-Islamophobia efforts, and humanitarian intervention underscores their commitment to protecting the dignity and rights of Muslims worldwide.

In sum, global Muslim institutions are indispensable to the wellbeing of the ummah, transcending religious mandates to encompass political, economic, and social spheres. They offer a vision for a united, just, and compassionate Muslim world, guided by Qur'anic values and Prophetic teachings. These institutions exemplify the enduring relevance of Islamic principles, as they respond to contemporary challenges with integrity, fostering a global Muslim society that is both grounded in faith and actively engaged with the wider world. Together, they contribute to the ummah's resilience and shared purpose, reinforcing a model of collective responsibility and ethical stewardship that is both timeless and essential in today's interconnected society. The following table summarizes the above descriptions.

Table 1. Discussion results and research summary findings.

No	Aspect	Description
1	Political Advocacy and Conflict Resolution	China's mediation in Saudi-Iran rapprochement (2023) aligns with <i>ummah wahidah</i> and promotes regional stability. Muslim institutions advocate for <i>adl</i> and <i>wahda</i> in global forums, strengthening unity and resilience.
2	Economic Development Initiatives	Institutions support economic growth through infrastructure financing, loans, and welfare programs. They apply <i>zakat</i> and interest-free loans to reduce poverty and promote <i>falah</i> (prosperity).
3	Humanitarian Assistance and Social Welfare	Inspired by <i>rahma</i> and <i>ukhuwah</i> , institutions provide aid to conflict-affected and marginalized communities, offering relief, capacity building, and resilience programs.

4	Religious Education and Scholarship	Institutions promote <i>ijtihad</i> and <i>tafsir</i> to ensure Islamic teachings remain relevant. Emphasizing <i>wasatiyyah</i> , they counter extremism and sectarianism through balanced curricula.
5	The Significance of Global Muslim Institutions	These institutions integrate Islamic values with modern needs, addressing justice, economic equity, and sectarianism while advocating for human rights and ethical global policies.

5. CONCLUSION

This study systematically underscores the urgency and necessity of unity within the global Muslim Ummah, particularly in an era where unity serves both spiritual and strategic imperatives. Despite parallels in internal challenges within Christian and Muslim communities, Christian denominations have historically overcome doctrinal divides to mount cohesive responses to crises. Conversely, the Muslim Ummah faces ongoing fragmentation in addressing crises in Libya, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen—often due to political divides, regional rivalries, and external interference.

The analysis demonstrates that Islamic principles, grounded in the Qur'an and Hadith, emphasize *wahda* and *ukhuwah* as foundational mandates for the Ummah's cohesion and socio-political efficacy. Core Islamic values such as *shura*, *adl*, and *rahma* provide a clear framework for transcending ethnic, political, and ideological divides that weaken the Ummah's collective strength, sovereignty, and *izzah* (dignity). This study contends that a return to these principles, reinforced by inter-sectarian dialogue and mutual understanding, could mitigate internal strife and promote *wilayah* (guardianship) among Muslim nations, empowering them to resist external exploitation and reinforcing their autonomy on the global stage.

Reflecting on the historical role of the Ottoman Empire as a defender of the Ummah, this analysis suggests a renewed coalition grounded in Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic principles—a coalition that unites Muslims under a single *Liwa al-Islam* (Islamic banner). If influential nations such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, each with considerable religious and geopolitical clout, were to align under a shared commitment to Qur'anic values, they could catalyze a formidable movement towards *wahdat al-Ummah* (unity of the Muslim community), reclaiming the dignity and autonomy of the Ummah while enhancing its socio-political resilience. Ultimately, this study calls upon Muslim scholars, leaders, and individuals to uphold these foundational principles, fostering a future where the Ummah, guided by divine directives, achieves lasting solidarity and strength beyond divisions.

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