

ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP IN THE CHANGING ASEAN:

FOSTERING PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT



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CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

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The world needs a new Islamic leadership that is enlightened and is capable of addressing the peace and development needs of the ASEAN. This leadership that is pro-peace and pro-development must be well-versed with the inner resources of Islam, as derived from the Qur'an and from Islam's rich history of leadership.

Introduction

I am honored to be here this morning. I really appreciate the kind invitation extended to me to deliver this keynote address. Before I received your invitation, I was in the middle of making a decision as to whether I should accept an earlier invitation to go to Tehran, Iran to attend an international conference on Islamic education. But the volcanic eruption

in Iceland which caused havoc to air travels in many parts of the world delayed my decision. In the meantime I received your letter of invitation. Reflecting on it, I told myself that I must honor my neighbor first; moreover, the topic of address on *Islamic Leadership in the Changing ASEAN* is of more significance to me and to the Institute with which I am currently associated. So I decided to accept your kind invitation.

This brings me to my second appreciation of this conference. In my view, the theme of the conference is a very important one as it is an acknowledgement on the part of the organizers of the need to recognize the important role that Islam can play, and the important contribution it can make towards the realization of peace and development in ASEAN. In this part of the world, there is more media coverage on the type of "Islamic leadership" that is seen as fostering extremism and terrorism. I sincerely hope that the media is covering this Conference right now since it is concerned with the true concept and practice of Islamic leadership, and not with the fringe, marginalized, and militant type. What I intend to discuss here is very important and fundamental, and it pertains to the core teachings of Islamic leadership which is actually the belief of mainstream Islam, and not

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the belief of its fringe groups. So I say “Congratulations to the co-conveners of this forum” for their good choice of the Conference theme.

Why Issues of Islamic Leadership Relevant to ASEAN

Let me begin with my address by emphasizing how relevant issues of Islamic leadership are to ASEAN. Acknowledging the need for ASEAN to be concerned with issues of Islamic leadership has a sound basis for at least two reasons. One is demographic and the other, cultural and civilizational. From the demographic point of view, it is important to highlight the still widely unknown fact that Muslims constitute about 40 percent of the total population of the regional community. This demographic fact makes them the biggest religious group in ASEAN. In the light of this demographic factor alone, therefore, ASEAN Muslims can argue that they deserve to be considered as a major stakeholder in the regional community’s future development and civilizational venture and in its future wellbeing. They may also argue that it would only be fitting if they were to play a major role in the realization of a progressive and developed ASEAN.

But, it is not just demography that makes Islam and Muslims important and highly relevant to ASEAN’s future. There is also the factor of Islam’s cultural and civilizational richness that Muslims would like to share with other members of the community. Islam claims to have the inner resources or the intangible wealth in the form of its universal and contemporaneous teachings that may be tapped for answers and solutions to many of the problems we are now facing both within our national borders and in the region and beyond. As a living civilization that is now in the 15th century of its existence, Islam also claims

to have inherited a rich treasury of historical experiences that may offer the world with useful insights on some of the major issues with which it is currently confronted.

Let me mention five of these issues and challenges which, in my view, are of particular importance to ASEAN and also of deep interest to Islam.

First, there is the **issue of knowledge-based or knowledge-driven society**. This issue is becoming increasingly important in our contemporary global society. More and more people are talking, for example, about the need for a knowledge-economy (k-economy). In this new discourse, issues of knowledge and knowledge divide between societies feature prominently. The belief underlying this new thinking is that knowledge investment would be the key to future development and progress, particularly in the economic sphere. Just to illustrate the growing popularity of these issues, the Institute with which I am associated has been approached recently by several European embassies in Kuala Lumpur on the possibility of co-organizing seminars, conferences and other forms of discussion where these issues can be adequately addressed. The New Club of Paris, currently the world’s leading think-tank on the subject, will be organizing with our Institute in June this year a seminar on the theme of “value-based development”. The reason why the Institute, an Islamic think-tank, has been approached by various Western embassies and organizations for collaborative programs to address the issues at hand is because they are interested to know what Islam has to say about the idea of a knowledge-driven society and related issues.

Second, there is the **issue of tradition and modernity**, which is very much related to the issue of change and permanence in human society. This is an issue faced

by every society, especially by developing societies in ASEAN, including Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In this region as in other parts of the world, there have been approaches to economic development and social progress that tend to belittle or marginalize cultural traditions. We, of course, know very well that advanced countries in the West have long marginalized religious traditions as well in their path to development and progress. But in our region, more so among its Muslim communities, despite the rapid modernization and development, many elements and aspects of its religious and cultural traditions still thrive to this day. Reconciling between tradition and modernity is an on-going concern in the region. There is a large constituency out there in ASEAN societies who still believe in the importance of tradition and who insist on its continuing relevance. To the extent that religious and cultural traditions are still alive and strong in ASEAN, issues of the interactions between tradition and modernity will continue to engage the minds of many academics and scholars and community leaders in the region. In Muslim societies in particular, given the pervasive influence of tradition, their encounter with modernity and modernization has also generated ideas and movements for religious reforms. One of the most important religious reforms going on in Muslim societies today is in the field of religious education. I am happy to know that here in the Philippines the *ulama* have organized themselves into a group, meeting regularly to discuss issues that are important to the future of the minority Muslim community in the country, including the issue of reforms in the traditional institution and the role of the *ulama*.

Third, there is the **challenge of globalization and glocalization**. We live in what is now popularly known as the age of globalization. People generally understand globalization to mean that our contemporary world

is characterized by greater flow of ideas and goods across national borders and increasing interdependence between member nations of the international community. If we view globalization as an all-embracing phenomenon and as a total global process to embrace all kinds of ideas and goods including the economic and financial, the political, the religious and cultural, and the scientific and technological, then we can see how impactful it has been on the lives of nations. The whole world has been impacted by globalization, both positively and negatively. Southeast Asia is traditionally well-known as a region that is quite open to all sorts of cultural influences from the outside world. So it is not at all surprising to see ASEAN receiving a more extensive impact of globalization than many other regions of the world.

The manifold challenges of globalization are well-known. Muslim leaders in the region have responded to at least some of these challenges with varying degrees of success. But problems remain. Generally speaking, in response to the challenges of globalization, Muslim leaders in ASEAN countries appear to be guided by the principle that the benefits of globalization should be exploited to the fullest and at the same time its negative impact minimized. When Malaysia's present Prime Minister, Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak, was still in the number two position of national leadership, he sought to popularize the idea of "glocalization" as a response to globalization. Glocalization is presented as the guiding principle that would help a nation define its national interests in the light of both the positive and negative impacts of globalization.

Fourth, there is the **challenge of cultural pluralism**, which I understand here in the broad sense to include religious pluralism. ASEAN as a whole is well noted for its cultural pluralism. Followers of all the world's major

religions, not to mention of many others among the minor ones, are found in huge numbers in the region. The Philippines is predominantly Catholic. Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim nation. Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar are predominantly Buddhist. And there are many Hindus in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore. Of all the regional groupings in the world today, ASEAN is easily the most heterogeneous. Some ASEAN countries are more pluralistic than others. Malaysia is perhaps the most pluralistic of them all. Even before the post-colonial wave of globalization the Southeast Asian region was already pluralistic. But globalization only makes it even more complex in its cultural makeup. Cultural pluralism poses numerous challenges that are not easy to overcome. It would indeed be a tremendous challenge for ASEAN to emerge as a fully integrated regional community given its unmatched cultural diversity. The experience of Muslim leaders in addressing the issue of cultural pluralism in their respective countries may provide useful input into the regional discussion on the subject. Malaysia, in particular, has often been cited as a Muslim-majority country that has done relatively well in managing cultural pluralism and diversity.

Fifth and a final one, there is the issue **of sustainable development**. As ASEAN becomes more developed in the sense conventionally understood, which means more and more of its natural resources depleting without replacement, the more it has to worry about its future resources and about the fate of its future generations. A new philosophy of development and a new approach to it is needed. Sustainable development is now presented as the most sensible alternative for the world to adopt. This idea is now very much talked about in the Muslim community. Muslim academics, scholars, intellectual and political leaders, and non-governmental activists have all embraced the idea and, moreover, they have done so by

claiming that it accords with the core teachings of Islam. The regional discourse on sustainable development has by no means reached an advanced stage. From the point of view of many people, what is even more important is the fact that the concept and philosophy of sustainable development is yet to be practiced on a wide scale with good results that everyone can see.

Let me reassert my earlier claim that the issues I have just briefly discussed are of great interest to the religion of Islam and many contemporary Muslims. These issues are of much interest to Islam in the sense that they are being addressed in its core teachings as embodied in the *Qur'an*. Since these issues will become more engaging to the region in the years to come, and since these are at the same time of major concern to Islam and the Muslims, we can expect to see a more visible role of Islamic leadership at all levels in addressing these issues. Within the Islamic community itself, the successful treatment of the issues in question will be inevitably linked to the issue of the quality of Islamic leadership. For non-Muslims in ASEAN to understand why this is so, it is enough for them to follow contemporary Muslim discourses in Indonesia and Malaysia on issues of Islamic leadership. Muslims may differ from one another on what is to be regarded as the most important characteristic of Islamic leadership, but by and large there is a fairly broad agreement among them on the qualities of leadership demanded by Islam. In my view, given the importance accorded to the place and role of leadership in Islamic teachings as I, in fact, intend to show in the following pages, it would be an appropriate thing if we were to focus on the issue of Islamic leadership in our efforts to illustrate the possible role and contribution of Islam and the Muslims in providing answers to the above-mentioned issues.

The Theory of Islamic Leadership: Important Concepts and Principles

Before I proceed to discuss the theory and practice of Islamic leadership, including in its Southeast Asian and ASEAN historical contexts, and also the kind of Islamic leadership most suited to the needs of a fast changing ASEAN of the twenty-first century, I would like to highlight on the centrality of the idea of leadership in Islamic thought by emphasizing two things. First, I wish to refer to the Prophet Muhammad's saying in which he identified two types of leadership as having a qualitative impact on a community. The two, which stand out as the most prominent in Islam, are the political or ruling leadership (*al-umara'*) and the intellectual and scholarly leadership (*al-'ulama'*). The Prophet Muhammad made it very clear that these two groups of leaders will determine the quality of a community; if these two groups are good, then the community will be good, and if they are not good, then the community also will not be good. For this reason, Muslims generally would like to see the two groups in the best of relations, and working together harmoniously in the pursuit of Islam's noble societal goals and in the pursuit of the common good. Second, I wish to refer to Islam's rich intellectual legacy on the theme of leadership which goes to confirm the centrality of this idea in Islamic thought. There is an exceptionally rich literature on the subject of leadership produced over the centuries both in Islam's times of greatness and in its times of decline.

It is important to discuss the main conceptual issues of leadership before moving on to the more practical issues in Islamic leadership.

The first important point to be noted about the Islamic idea of leadership is that ***Islam calls for a knowledge-***

based leadership. I have just referred to the scholars and intellectuals (*al-'ulama'*) as perhaps constituting the most important branch of leadership in Islamic societies. The word "*ulama*" itself is associated with knowledge; literally it means "knowledgeable people" or "people endowed with knowledge". According to the Prophet Muhammad, men of knowledge are the true inheritors of the prophets of God. Thus, the knowledge dimension is very important to Islamic leadership. With such an emphasis it has placed on knowledge-based leadership, we can understand why Islam looks at the issue of knowledge-society and knowledge-economy as something central to its societal concern.

The second point about the theory of Islamic leadership that I would like to emphasize here concerns the place and role of the Prophet Muhammad as a leader. On the basis of the *Qur'an*, Muslims strongly believe that the ***Prophet Muhammad is the perfect model of human leadership.*** They see him as providing a role model in the realm of leadership for all peoples and for all times. The Muslim mindset is very much shaped by the idea that the Prophet's leadership is all-embracing in the sense that it is relevant in all aspects of human life and in all periods of human history after his death, including the present era. Muslims of every generation believe that he has been sent by God to provide exemplary leadership in all domains of human life. For this reason, the Prophet is to be emulated by all Muslims, especially those in positions of leadership regardless of which branch they are in.

We may summarize the Prophet's qualities and characteristics of leadership as follows:

- The Prophet's leadership is multi-dimensional, all-embracing, and all-round. It is unique and distinguishable from other brands of leadership we normally see around us. We know very well how

difficult it is in practice to find a leader who possesses excellent qualities of leadership in all fields of human endeavor. What we normally have is someone who is recognized as a leader in one or two fields of human activity but who does not at all display qualities of leadership in the rest of human activities.

- The Prophet displays within himself a remarkable and unique combination of the best traits of spiritual and moral leadership and the best traits of temporal leadership. This unique combination, not even shared by some of the other great prophets, makes his leadership exceptionally attractive and appealing and a great source of inspiration even to many non-Muslims, let alone the Muslims. As such he is considered as the best qualified to serve as a role model for humanity's future leaders, especially for those interested in finding solutions to the conflict between "the religious and the secular." In this connection, it is interesting to note that it was in a twentieth-century ranking of the most influential leaders in history that he has been chosen to head the list, the study citing that "he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels."

- The Prophet's qualities of leadership deserve to be emulated, because he is knowledgeable and wise, kind and compassionate, and just to all, irrespective of creed, race, gender, class and social positions; and, moreover, he lived moderately and was moderate in all things, be it in thinking or in acting. The Prophet showed in his life the best example of moderation.

- The Prophet was a guide to the fulfillment of all kinds of human needs, namely the spiritual, the intellectual, the psychological, and the physical. He

has also shown the way how to seek all these different needs in a balanced way.

- The Prophet was most sensitive to the needs of the poor, the needy, the orphans, and the oppressed. As he was deeply concerned with the plight of these unfortunate groups who are in the lowest rungs of society yet constitute a large segment of today's humanity, his leadership becomes more relevant than ever.

- The Prophet leads through example. This is indeed one of the most precious traits of leadership universally acknowledged by all humanity.

There are many other important teachings in Islam related to the idea of leadership, but time does not permit me to dwell on them. However, let me just mention some of these other concepts and principles of leadership that are dear to Islam. These are the idea that every person in his or her life is both a leader and a follower; the importance of civil society leadership; and the complementary nature of the roles of males and females in leadership and followership. What I mean by each person being both a leader and a follower is that he or she is a leader in one context and a follower in another.

The Practice of Islamic Leadership

While the principles of leadership are more or less one and the same for the whole Muslim *ummah* except for the few fundamental differences between the *Sunni* and *Shiite* schools of thought, there is diversity of leadership practices across the different geo-cultural regions of the *ummah*. Knowledge of Islamic history is important if we want to understand the *ummah's* Islamic leadership patterns in the different periods of its history and in its

different geographical regions. Having said this, I would like to stress the point here that there is both unity and diversity in Islamic leadership practices.

There is both unity and diversity, because, first of all, the same Islamic principles and qualities of leadership are applicable to all branches of leadership (economic, political, education, etc.) in the sense that each principle is in conformity with the nature of the leadership branch in question. But to the extent that the branches of leadership are different from each other, the principles allow for variety and diversity in leadership expressions and manifestations.

Secondly, there is both unity and diversity, because the same principles and qualities of leadership are applicable to different epochs and cultural regions, thus conveying the message that leadership practices are to be in accordance with the needs of time and space. In Islam, the main source of the principles and qualities of leadership is the *Shari'ah* (Islamic divine law). It is to the credit of the traditional philosophy of Islamic law that it tolerates local and indigenous traditions to the point of elevating them to the status of a source of law. Thus in Southeast Asian Islam, local customs known as *adat* have been recognized for a long time as secondary sources of Islamic law. I have referred earlier to glocalization as the local or indigenous response to globalization. In the legal sphere, I can say that glocalization is a form of appreciation of local customs and indigenous traditions. During the Muslim-dominated wave of globalization from the 9th to the 15th centuries which brought Islam to the Malay Archipelago with its *Shari'ah* as its main component, many people in the region converted to the new religion and embraced its globalized law; but the new law was glocalized in the sense of being adapted to the local conditions, both natural and cultural.

Throughout Islamic history, diversity of leadership practices could be observed in a wide range of its social institutions, including the family which has been traditionally considered as the core institution, the political institutions such as the caliphate, the sultanate and the post-colonial republics, the judiciary, the universities and other institutions of higher learning of which the Muslims were the real founders and pioneers, the economic and financial institutions, professional organizations, and the military.

In speaking of Islamic leadership practices, it is also important to refer to the issue of women in positions of leadership. The issue is a divisive and controversial one especially in our modern times partly because there is the widespread belief that Islamic history is barren with women leaders. The truth of the matter is that there have been far more women leaders in Islamic history than in Western history. And if we go by the geo-cultural regions of the Islamic world then we can say that Southeast Asian Islam has done fairly well in producing a good share of women leaders. There have been several Muslim women rulers especially before the colonial period. Of course, more recently, Indonesia produced its first woman President in the person of Megawati Soekarnoputri. Given the fact that Muslim females in ASEAN today are better educated than before, to the point of even outperforming the males in education, it would not be long before we see female leaders in greater numbers in all walks of life.

Changing Islamic Leadership Patterns in History

I would like to present some sort of overview on the changing Islamic leadership patterns over the centuries. Generally speaking, we find that different eras in Islamic

history have been characterized by particular forms or styles of leadership.

The Prophet Muhammad's Medina Community. Let me begin with leadership in the first Muslim community since it presents itself as a model for all future generations. According to tradition, the Prophet's community in Medina is the best Islamic community of all times; the idea of the best here is, of course, to be understood in spiritual, moral and cultural terms, and not in material, scientific and technological terms. In Medina of the Prophet, as traditionally seen by the great majority of Muslims, we find the best leadership as provided by the Prophet and the best followership as provided by the Companions. Moreover, we have in the City of the Prophet both a knowledge-driven and an action-oriented community, motivated not by the promise of material gains or fear of legal enforcement, but by high-spirited personal conscience (*iman*). Many Muslim scholars have made the claim that the human quality of the congregation of individuals exemplified by the hundreds of companions of the Prophet was such that it could never be surpassed by later generations until the end of time.

The Era of the Four Rightly-Guided Caliphs. Then came the post-Prophetic era, the era of the Companions, which is also very significant to the Muslims at least as far as issues of Islamic leadership are concerned. This is also known as the era of the four rightly-guided Caliphs. There are many important lessons that can be learnt from their respective leaderships. I provide below some of the essential characteristics of each of these leaderships that may serve to illustrate the beginning of a diversification of Islamic leadership patterns in history:

Abu Bakr al-Siddiq, the first Caliph and successor of the Prophet, may be described as an upholder

and champion of "conservative" leadership. The term "conservative" is to be understood here in its original and positive sense and not in the pejorative way as we find in modern politics. I am using the word "conservative" to mean "preservative, restorative, integrative, and *tawhidic* or unity-conscious." These are apt terms to describe Abu Bakr's leadership. He had to face the challenge of how to conserve the Prophetic leadership and the exemplary traits of the community. He had to preserve the *tawhidic* and moderate nature of the *ummah* especially when there were already signs and tendencies noticeable towards extremism and radicalism within the community at that time. It fell on his shoulders to ensure that the moderate identity of the Muslim community as the people of the middle path, or *ummatan wasatan* as the *Qur'an* calls it, is preserved. He also had to conserve the unity of the spiritual and the temporal in Muslim life, both individual and collective. Attempts at creating a cleavage between the spiritual and the temporal such as by distinguishing between canonical prayer (*salah*) and alms-tax (*zakat*) as two duties of different natures altogether, the former spiritual and the latter temporal, could not be tolerated if the identity and integrity of Islam and the *ummah* is to be preserved. Given the many challenges confronting the young community, Abu Bakr clearly had to deal with the issue of priorities in public policies.

'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph, exercised innovative leadership in response to changing realities and the needs of an expanding empire. He had also to deal with the Islamic state's newfound wealth. The abundant challenges arising from the state's vast territories and fast accumulating wealth together with his zeal for social justice called for an innovative leadership which he, in fact, successfully provided. He is remembered for having introduced innovations in the important areas of law, governance, administration, and finance. In the

implementation of the *Shari'ah*, for example, he was found to be innovative enough to take the step of suspending a criminal law based in the *Qur'an* out of deep concern that its continuing implementation against a background of unjust social realities would go against the very spirit of the *Qur'an* that stands for social justice. In responding to this particular innovation by 'Umar, scholars of Islamic law try to explain its rationale by saying that in deciding to suspend the law in question, he had interpreted it in the light of the higher objectives of the *Shari'ah* (*maqasid al-shari'ah*), one of which is social justice, and had not viewed it as a legal piece that is independent or stands in isolation of the rest of the injunctions of the *Qur'an*.

Eager to see a state administration that really serves the public interest 'Umar introduced many innovations in administrative and public policies. Among other things he created new ministries and portfolios with the main view of ensuring efficiency in the public sector. In this respect the administration of 'Umar also saw the empowerment of women in the public sector. Women were appointed to such posts as inspectors, controllers, and supervisors in various Ministries that would be equivalent to our present-day senior government officers.

'Uthman ibn 'Affan, the third Caliph, is known for a leadership that may be described as "distributive" in nature and as decentralizing in its tendencies. What I mean by "distributive" refers first and foremost to distribution of political power, duties, and responsibilities between the state and civil society. 'Uthman's distributive leadership may be seen as favoring the empowerment of civil society. He was reported to have said that the best of states is the one which has the least interference in the lives of its citizens. This means that the affairs of the nation should be run as much as possible by civil society, thus minimizing the role of the government. Such a distributive

leadership could only mean a decentralization of power that would result in the crystallization of leadership into its different branches as well as the crystallization of civil society roles. In such a societal environment the possibility of dictatorship is diminished and the possibility of enlightened democracy.

'Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Caliph, is noted for his intellectual and spiritual leadership. It was in acknowledgment of his brand of leadership that the first Rector of the International Islamic University of Malaysia, the late Professor Dr. Muhammad Abdul Rauf wrote a book on him entitled "Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib: The First Intellectual Muslim Thinker." 'Ali's expression of intellectual and spiritual leadership was mainly in response to the influx of new ideas and various political, philosophical and spiritual beliefs arising from the increasingly pluralistic nature of the Islamic state. It was also in response to the growing materialism and worldliness arising from the new affluence.

But apart from having to deal with the intellectual and spiritual challenges of his time, 'Ali also had to face the serious problem of factionalism, sectarianism, and political disunity within the *ummah*. He attributed these problems to the decline of quality of followership in the community. In response to this decline he recognized the need to reaffirm the importance of both good leadership and good followership in the community. Let me cite an anecdote that relates Caliph 'Ali's encounter with a citizen who complained of too many troubles during his rule. The citizen asked the Caliph, "Why is it that during your time there is much chaos and trouble compared to that of your predecessors?" Ali replied, "Well, during the times of my predecessors, we had Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman as leaders, and the followers were people like me; but now that I am the leader, I have followers like

you.” Ali’s insistence on good followership is undeniable in this anecdote.

The era of the Companions, which may be considered as the golden age of Islamic leadership if we are to set aside the era of Prophetic leadership, was followed by a very long period of dynastic rule. This dynastic rule lasted until the end of the caliphate in the early 20th century, and the emergence of Western colonial rule over most of the Islamic world.

The Dynastic Era. The post-Companions or the Dynastic era marked the gradual decline and eventually the disappearance of universal or all-around leadership that was witnessed during the era of the Companions. But its loss was compensated by the appearance of collective leadership of various types generated by the changing needs of the *ummah* within the constraints of dynastic rule. This collective leadership remained to a certain extent holistic and *tawhidic* as insisted by Islam as it was still able, in practice, to combine many, if not all, of the qualities and contributions of leadership coming from its different and specialized branches. However, there were still brilliant leaders who excelled in more than one area of leadership who appeared from time to time, in different parts of the Islamic world. It is possible then to say that, in general, the dynastic era has been able to witness the alternate flowering and decline of individual branches of Islamic leadership.

The Colonial Era. Islamic leadership suffered a further decline during the colonial era as a consequence of the destruction of certain traditional institutions. This led to the destruction of the specialized leadership associated with each one of these institutions, particularly the traditional economic, legal, political and educational institutions. The era saw the expansion of secular space

at the expense of traditional religious space. However, following political independence from colonial rule, we also witnessed widespread Muslim attempts at a redefinition of Islamic leadership in the context of the global reality in the 20th century. The post-colonial era also saw the reconstruction of various Islamic institutions, particularly in the political, educational, legal and economic domains. This reconstruction involves working out some kind of institutional marriage between tradition and modernity in these various fields since, granted their way, Muslims generally refuse at the level of ideas to totally embrace modernity and modernization. The specialized institutional reconstructions, such as the setting up of modern Islamic universities, Islamic banking and financial systems, and other *Shari’ah*-compliant systems, also mean that issues of Islamic leadership in these specialized fields and professions have to be debated and addressed.

Islamic Leadership Patterns in Southeast Asian and ASEAN History

Islam first came to Southeast Asia during the dynastic era when it has already been thoroughly institutionalized. What I mean by this is that its theological and legal ideas have already manifested in various schools of thought and its societal teachings crystallized as institutions and systems in various shapes and colors. It was this institutionalized Islam that came to the region beginning in the 12th century. In my upcoming book entitled “Islam and the Three Waves of Globalization,” I mention that Islam had set in motion the first major wave of globalization in human history. This wave of globalization, generated and sustained primarily by global Muslim trade and global Sufi *da’wah* (missionary work), brought Islam to this region. With the coming of this institutionalized Islam, the region was introduced to contemporary

Islamic leadership values and models and contemporary institutions, among other things.

A gradual process of Islamization of thoughts, practices and institutions took place for centuries, which necessitated the moderating force of glocalization. What this means is that the indigenous people of the region while being Islamized by the Islam that came had also moderated it in light of their natural climates and pre-Islamic cultural heritage. Consequently, the Islam as practiced in the region is not the same as we find in other geo-cultural regions of the Islamic world such as in the Middle East. For example, in Islamic education a different terminology came to be used locally for the *madrrasah* system – Indonesian Muslims use the word *pesantren*, and Malaysian and Thai Muslims *pondok*. In the field of politics and governance, Islamization transformed the pre-Islamic Hindu monarchy into the sultanate peculiar to the region. In the new political culture were to be found a number of women rulers and leaders such as in Aceh in present-day Indonesia, the Malaysian state of Kelantan, and Pattani in present-day Thailand. In the economic domain, Islamic globalization brought the Sufi Orders and their respective guilds to the region. With these Orders and guilds becoming well established in the Archipelago and assuming certain indigenous traits in the process, they emerged with a significant role in regional trade until marginalized centuries later by the monopolistic European colonial trading companies.

Looking back at history, we could observe parallels between Muslim communities in Southeast Asia and other parts of the Islamic world concerning the impact of colonialism. Malacca became the first Muslim state to be colonized when it fell into the hands of the Portuguese in 1511. Then there came the Spaniards, the Dutch, the British, and later the Americans to colonize different parts

of Muslim-ruled Southeast Asia. Colonial rule resulted in the marginalization or even, in some cases, the destruction of traditional leaderships particularly in the political, educational and economic spheres, and their respective institutions. In political life there was either the destruction or the remaking of the sultanate. In Indonesia, the Dutch almost completely destroyed it; a similar thing happened in the Philippines, first, at the hands of the Spaniards, and later of the Americans. In the case of Malaysia the British did not destroy it but “remade” it in the image of their monarchy by taming and cutting it to acceptable size.

In education, colonialism made possible the spread of secular Western type of educational institutions which challenged the traditional authority and influence of Islamic educational institutions and their leadership. There was the shrinking of traditional Muslim types of “secular knowledge” as taught in such subjects as science, mathematics, geography, economics, and history. Eventually, secular education of the modern Western type succeeded in becoming the dominant educational system in all Muslim communities in the region. In economic life, monopoly trade pursued and enforced by the European colonial trading companies resulted in the destruction of traditional Muslim trade as represented, for example, by the Sufi guilds.

Colonialism did not stay unopposed. There was continuous Muslim resistance to colonial rule led by both religious and secular leaders. The fight for independence has led to the emergence of new brands of leadership in the Muslim communities of the region, both among men and women. Pre-independence women leaders attempted to arouse patriotism and nationalism among their own gender by encouraging education and inculcating political consciousness and through social work. Muslim leaders of independence movements were

divided along ideological lines since Western-originated political ideologies such as secular nationalism and communism, and Middle Eastern-originated Islamic political ideology have made their impact on the region. Not only were they divided into the religious and the secular types but the latter group itself was divided into the secular nationalist, socialist, and communist-Marxist factions. Significantly, these movements for independence also acquired a regional dimension as they established networks across the region. This was especially true of the more ideologically motivated movements such as the pan-Islamic and the communists since their political ideologies tended to be transnational and globalist in outlook.

There was a fierce power struggle among the leaders of these independence movements to wrest control of national leaderships from the colonial rulers. It was also to wrest control of regional influence and dominance. Anti-colonialism not only helped to bolster the forces of nationalism but also to give birth to a new spirit of regionalism that was to survive well into the post-colonial era. It could be claimed with some justification that the seeds of regionalism that were to eventually grow and develop into ASEAN were first sown in the regional initiatives and networking of these independence movements in the Malay Archipelago. Malay-Indonesian Islamic leadership was thus a major contributor to the birth of ASEAN itself.

The post-colonial era saw the emergence of three Muslim-majority countries, namely Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam. In Indonesia and Malaysia, it was the secular-nationalist groups who wrested control of the national leadership. But the ideological tension and conflict between Islamic leadership and secular leadership that was already visible at all levels during the years of struggle for independence dragged on into the post-colonial era till today. Issues of contention between

them have mostly changed over the centuries but some fundamental issues remain unchanged. The most important of these fundamental issues is perhaps the place and role of Islam in the national political leadership, the national ideology and national identity, and in national development. But the contents of the national discourse and debates on these issues underwent substantial changes over the decades as a result of changing realities on both the national and international scenes.

Undoubtedly, in both Indonesia and Malaysia, one new reality that significantly impacted the national discourse on the place and role of Islam in society was the departure from the corridors of power of the nation's founding leader and other first generation independence leaders. President Soekarno of Indonesia and Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra of Malaysia were both forced out of power following bloody national tragedies. Soekarno was partly to be blamed for the abortive 1965 communist-led uprising that led to the anti-communist bloodbath. Likewise, Tunku Abdul Rahman was partly to be blamed for Malaysia's worst ethnic riots in 1969.

Both tragedies invited national responses that led to the increasing influence of Islam and Islamic leadership, both traditional and modern, in society. Although the succeeding leaders, Suharto in Indonesia and Tun Abdul Razak in Malaysia, were basically secular-nationalists, for various reasons – their Administrations had to tolerate a more visible role for Islamic leadership-based groups in national development, but most interestingly, both tragedies were closely followed by the global Islamic revival of the 1970s of which both Indonesia and Malaysia were active parts. This revival was of great significance to the development of Islamic leadership in the region. It saw the reassertion of Islamic leadership models in various fields of societal life as necessitated by the rise of Islamic civil

society, the pursuit of both state-sponsored Islamization and *ummatic*-Islamization led by civil society groups, and the rise of women leadership. Civil society groups like the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdatul Ulama in Indonesia, which are the two biggest Muslim organizations in the world, and ABIM (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) in Malaysia were the prime movers of this revival. A new breed of young Muslim leaders emerged out of the challenges and opportunities provided by the revival. As for the emerging women leadership, its future can only be bright when the unmistakable trend for over more than a decade now points to females outperforming males in higher education, in both quantity and quality. In Malaysia, for example, in a growing number of universities, females account for at least 60 percent of the students. This female superiority cuts across all disciplines, and female academics have grown steadily in number over the years to the point of outnumbering their male counterparts. The majority of the new professors in Malaysia are now women.

In response to popular Muslim reception of the revival, more often than not, out of political expediency rather than any other consideration, governments created new Islamic institutions especially in the religious, *Shari'ah*-legal, educational, economic, and financial sectors. These new institutions demand in turn the emergence of new specialized professional leadership. Nowadays, leadership in the following institutions is very much in demand:

- Muslim educational leaders to administer and manage both public and private Islamic universities and other institutions of higher learning;
- Professional Muslim leaders in economics and finance made necessary by the establishment of new Islamic institutions in fields such as Islamic banking;

- Muslim intellectual leaders who are well versed with the issue of the synthesis of traditional and modern knowledge;

- Muslim political leaders capable of meeting the challenges of globalization, democratization, and cultural-religious pluralism; and,

- Muslim civil society leaders who can provide enlightened leadership in the wake of the mushrooming of NGOs.

On the regional front, the post-colonial era also saw a number of early initiatives by both government and non-governmental leaders to foster regional co-operation and unity. It is perhaps permissible to say that these leaders were generally aware of the significance of their initiatives. In a sense, their initiatives, aimed at regional integration, were not new to the region. There was an open regional community in the Malay Archipelago prior to the colonial fragmentation of the region. With independence, the regional leaders tried to embark on regional re-integration.

The earlier post-colonial attempts aimed at regional cooperation were the Association of South East Asia (ASA) founded in 1961 by the Philippines, Thailand and Malaya (now part of Malaysia); and the grouping known as MAPHILINDO (1963) comprising Malaya, the Philippines and Indonesia. What eventually proved to be fateful to the whole of Southeast Asia was the creation in 1967 of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). Initially a five-founding member grouping (Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand), ASEAN grew to embrace the whole of Southeast Asia, except Timur Leste which gained independence from Indonesia.

Islamic leadership in the region has been a positive factor in this decades-old pursuit of regional cooperation and integration. It may be said that as its formation and subsequent expansion have shown, ASEAN leaders had displayed a kind of openness to cultural heterogeneity and pluralism rarely found in other regional groupings, not even in the European Union, generally considered the most successful of them. The people of the Malay stock, the ethnic majority group in the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam, the majority of whom are also Muslims, were generally pro-regional integration. They contributed significantly to the birth of ASEAN.

Contemporary Challenges to ASEAN

Today's ASEAN is confronted by two types of challenges, one internal and the other, external. The internal challenges to ASEAN that Islamic leadership must face together with the non-Muslim community is the long-standing problematic majority-minority relations as defined in ethnic and religious terms, which generated debates and discourses that have persisted to this day. Islamic leaderships in Muslim-majority Indonesia, Malaysia, and Brunei Darussalam have to come to a lasting understanding with their respective non-Muslim minorities on how to ensure mutual community rights, to share power and wealth equitably, and to create a just society. Islamic leaderships in Muslim-minority countries in turn – the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, and Myanmar – have to properly define their rights and responsibilities as minorities and pursue them peacefully with their respective majority communities through dialogue and other peaceful means. It is most unfortunate that in the case of the Philippines, Thailand, and Myanmar, the problem of majority-minority relations has turned into a violent conflict that has dragged on for decades. While we are speaking here in

this conference, peace is nowhere in sight in Mindanao and Pattani. But we all pray that peace will return to these conflict-ridden regions as soon as possible, and that peace negotiations in Malaysia between the Philippines government and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) will bear fruit. The other ASEAN countries may be more fortunate in not having violent inter-ethnic and inter-religious conflicts, but the challenge of inter-ethnic and inter-religious peace remains. Religious radicalism is on the rise that can put the future of inter-ethnic and inter-religious relations in doubt.

ASEAN is also beset with external challenges. There is the challenge of globalization and the emergence of China as the new economic power which can adversely affect ASEAN's economy. ASEAN is confronted with the impact of globalization of ideas, people, science and technology, economic and financial goods, and cultural goods on its societies. Globalization has made ASEAN culturally and politically more pluralistic – both within individual state members and within ASEAN as a regional whole. As a result of the globalization of ideas, there are new discourses on pluralism that tend to challenge the "traditional" discourse. People in the region have to deal with various types of discourses originating from the West, such as discourses on women and gender issues, democracy, and human rights. In light of these developments, the new Islamic leadership must be alert and comfortable in dealing with these issues.

Contemporary Islamic Leadership in ASEAN

Certainly, given the abundance and complexity of challenges confronting the ASEAN, a new type of Islamic leadership is needed. The traditional type of leadership drawn from the religiously educated in the conservative mould by itself can no longer offer the very much

needed solutions. There is a need to address the present shortcomings in Islamic leadership.

The key feature of the new leadership that is needed is that they must be blessed with the knowledge and the intellectual power necessary to the pursuit of a synthesis of tradition and modernity. What this means is that the new Islamic leaders must be well-versed with the teachings of Islam as well as with the challenges of the contemporary world. It is only then that Islamic leadership would be able to constructively contribute to the solutions of the problems faced by ASEAN, now and in the future.

In light of the new realities faced by ASEAN, there is a need to create Islamic leadership in the following areas:

- Intellectual leaders in inter-cultural dialogue to deal with problems arising from cultural pluralism; pro-dialogue intellectual and religious leaders are needed to deal with issues of cultural diversity and the creation of peaceful pluralistic societies.
- Media leaders given the influential and impactful nature of media coverage on people's lives and thoughts.
- Business and other professional leaders.
- Educational leaders for the 21st century institutions of higher learning.

Towards an Islamic Leadership Model for ASEAN

By way of summary, I can say that the new Islamic leadership suited to ASEAN and its contemporary and future needs should be well balanced in its approach to

tradition and modernity; enlightened in its treatment of pluralism; committed to the idea of the common good of all ASEAN people and deeply respectful of irreconcilable differences that separate its diverse communities apart; pro-dialogue; and, pro-regionalization and pro-globalization, yet sensitive to the needs of glocalization.

Conclusion: Islamic Leadership for Peace and Development

In light of what I have discussed in my address on various aspects of Islamic leadership, there is a clear necessity for a new Islamic leadership that would be enlightened and capable in addressing the present and future needs of ASEAN. Peace and development are the two most important objectives of ASEAN. People in ASEAN are in real need of development pursued in a climate of peace. As made clear by the teachings of the *Qur'an*, Islam is pro-peace and pro-development. Thus the new Islamic leadership should be well-versed with the inner resources of Islam pertaining to ideas and practices on peace and development. The new leadership should be active proponents of dialogue for peace with emphasis on dialogue as the chief means to resolve conflicts. In conformity with Islamic philosophy of development, the new Islamic leadership should also champion the ideas of a balanced, holistic and sustainable development. I believe these will be humanity's future needs, not just of ASEAN, and as such, these ideas need to be disseminated to all, and translated into practical programs and agendas for our societal salvation.

Thank you.

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(1) How was it that after the four Caliphs, no other Caliphs were found? And, after 400 years, Islam's lead in science had disappeared, except for Abdul Salam who won the Nobel Prize?

Dr. Osman Bakar: After the four "rightly-guided Caliphs" came the Dynastic Caliphate Era wherein leadership became hereditary. This does not mean that Islamic leadership was not to be found. I referred to the end of universal leadership. By this I mean leadership of the prophetic and the rightly-guided Caliph types in which all the good qualities of an Islamic leader are combined in a single individual can no longer be found. There was no longer an all-around leader in that sense. During the Dynastic Era, there was, however, a flowering and decline of individual branches of leadership.

Also, there was a Golden Age of Islamic science and technology, from the 8th to the 15th century. This was the time when Islamic civilization produced good and creative scientific and technological leaders. So for about seven centuries the Muslims led the world in these branches of knowledge. Islamic leadership was not absent, but certainly the leadership pattern underwent changes over the centuries.

(2) Thank you for your inspiring speech. (a) My first question is on globalization and its impact. The new market driven economy that enhances competition and individualism is against the principle of the *ummah*, namely the social unity in Islam. What kind of Islamic leadership is suitable to maintain the principle of social cohesion amidst the competitiveness of the world? (b) Secondly, I am proud that you spoke about women leaders in Islam. But there is an irony compared to the reality that patriarchy still prevails, and the status of common women in general (not the leaders) is still very much a big concern. I think you forgot to mention the plight of many women in Muslim society.

Dr. Osman Bakar: The globalization of ideas, culture, science and technology is a universal trend that cannot be reversed. We have to accept this as an inevitable process. Yet we need to know that there are many dimensions of globalization, and there are several flows and streams of globalization. What is the objective of Islamic leadership in terms of globalization? It is to point out to the Muslims and the global community at large that globalization is acceptable as long as it serves the common good of humankind. Let us refer back to the Islamic wave of globalization in history. There are lessons that can be

learnt from this particular brand of globalization. In theory and practice, this globalization was guided by the ideal of the common good of humanity. It wanted to create one single human community, the universal *ummah* based on ethics, morality and justice. As for globalization in our times, there is no doubt that it is an immense challenge. There are both good and bad elements in contemporary globalization, and the two need types of elements to be separated from each other with the help of all kinds of knowledge at our disposal. The impact of globalization on society is real, and, in the case of Muslim communities in ASEAN, we are talking about its impact on the lives of about 230 million people. What is the impact of all these on our thinking and values? The impact is considerable, but I am quite optimistic that if we understand what the inner resources of Islam really are and what they can contribute to the positive shaping of our mindset, then we can confront these challenges.

There are Muslim countries where 50 percent of the population (women) is deprived of real education as by Islam. However, women achievements in education and many other fields in this part of the world are found to be much greater and more visible compared to many other Muslim countries or regions. I was often asked in the United States, what is the difference between Islam in Southeast Asia and Islam in the Middle East? One big difference pertains to women participation in public space, and in various roles and capacities. Education has made this possible. Right now the best of Muslim graduates in many universities in our region are females.

(3) How do you regard the sultanate as an institution? Is it based on the caliphate system?

Dr. Osman Bakar: Many Muslim political thinkers have emphasized the point that the *Qur'an* talks a lot about the values and qualities, and other principles of leadership, but it is non-committal on what constitutes the ideal form of leadership that is suitable for all times and places. There must be a profound reason for this stand of the *Qur'an*. According to many Muslim scholars, the reason is that the issue on forms of leadership would be better left to human ingenuity in accordance with the needs of time and space, as long as the revealed principles of societal development and social justice are being observed.

As for the sultanate, it has been traditionally accepted as one of the legitimate Islamic political institutions. It has emerged during the dynastic era. Its emergence in Islamic political history has to do with the evolution of the dynastic caliphate. In other words, the emergence of the sultanate may be viewed from the perspective of the evolution of the traditional Islamic state. For many centuries, sultanates existed in various parts of the world, including the Malay Archipelago, parallel to the caliphate in the heartland of the Islamic world. It is true to say that the first sultanates have emerged as branches of the caliphate but eventually as a result of new political realities the sultanates became independent political entities. I suppose the emergence of sultanates independently of the caliphate must have to do also with the issue of the viable size of a state. Philosophically speaking, it may be said that any living organism including of the cultural type cannot go beyond a certain size without encountering problems of administration and control. So it is understandable that at some point in the territorial expansion of the caliphate,

“break away” from the parent entity has to happen. This was how we had the sultanates, the emirates, and similar political entities. To the question of whether the sultanate is based on the caliphate or not, I would say yes. The traditional sultanate was almost a caliphate in miniature.

In talking about the sultanate I also would like to say that its evolution has also been influenced by Western political thought. At the time when modern European intellectuals were talking about state nationalism in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Islamic caliphate has become weakened and fragmented. This type of nationalism influenced the thinking of Muslim states outside the caliphate to the point of making them further apart from each other in their political relations. Colonialism only made the situation worse. It even destroyed many sultanates, including in Indonesia. In the post-colonial era, independent Muslim states tried to live and behave like the Western nation-states of the pre-colonial period when the latter were reversing their nationalistic tendencies. Now, European countries are building the European community which is still expanding.

With such a beautiful concept of the *ummah* that the *Qur'an* has taught, I think, it is high time, indeed long overdue, that we go back to the spirit of the community. There is a real need to address the issue of the *ummah's* unity especially now when we see that the Arab world, traditionally the most strategic branch of the *ummah*, is so troubled politically. Insofar as the contemporary Arab world is concerned, it is interesting to note that compared to the republics and non-monarchies in the Arab world, its monarchies are found to be relatively more politically stable.



There are both good and bad elements in contemporary globalization, and the two need types of elements to be separated from each other with the help of all kinds of knowledge at our disposal.

PLENARY 1 – ISLAMIC LEADERSHIP CONCEPTS AND PERSPECTIVES

