



The Relevance Of Prophet Muhammad's peace be upon him Diplomatic Strategies and Ethical Leadership in Modern International relations

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Abstract

There is no gain doubt in fact that man is a social animal. Ever since his creation man has always felt the need to socialise and cooperate for common goods. Human societies though complex in their structure and composition but are meant to coexist harmoniously. The creation of man to take on divers form was deliberate and made for a purpose.

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“The Relevance Of Prophet Muhammad’s peace be upon him Diplomatic Strategies and Ethical Leadership in Modern International relations”

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Introduction:

There is no gain doubt in fact that man is a social animal. Ever since his creation man has always felt the need to socialise and cooperate for common goods. Human societies though complex in their structure and composition but are meant to coexist harmoniously. The creation of man to take on divers form was deliberate and made for a purpose.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ [13/49]

“O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.”

The purpose of divine scheme is to provide mutual understanding and brotherhood, encompassing all aspects of human nature.

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافُ اَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَالْوَالِدَاتُ اَلْأُمَّهَاتُ لِيَعْلَمْنَ [22/30].

The verse alludes to diversity in language, race, nationality, and ethnicity. This diversity includes not just differences in race and nationality but also in worldviews.

لِكَلِّمَ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَا جَا ۗ [48/5].

The nation of Islam, from Adam to Muhammad’s time, had a strong belief in one God. Despite this shared belief, they weren’t all the same. They had different values and ways of looking at the world. This diversity is what makes Muslim civilization unique, setting it apart from others, whether from the East or the West. Diplomacy, which means dealing with people sensibly and tactfully, was an important part of how the Prophet engaged with others.

وَلَوْ كُنْتَ فَطًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ [159/3].

The Shura (consultation), similar to multilateralism, is an important concept in Islamic politics. It helped the Prophet unite previously hostile communities to form a common front. He used his diplomatic skills to address issues effectively, as mentioned in the verse. This verse suggests that if he had been harsh and authoritarian, he wouldn’t have gained significant followers. This paper aims to highlight Muhammad’s diplomatic skills and their relevance today.

The prophet was a successful and convenient diplomate whose state policy was a representation of Peace, coexistence and conflict resolution¹. His peace be upon him era of diplomacy can be divided into three phase . First phase is the passive aggression by the people by the people of Makkah; when the Muslims were in minority. The initial years of this period was covert preaching. It was followed by a violent phase of overt preaching which started non resistance to the physical torture lashed out by the Quresh. The Holy Prophet peace be upon him at that time, was not only in relations with non Muslims in Makkah but also have diplomatic relationship with non Muslims outside Makkah, he also communicated with the regional powers and communities such as Negus(Habsha) , Taif and Yathrab² .

Secondly, the post migration strategies in the nascent city state of Medina, and the prophet’s relations with Jews , the Makkahns and with the neighboring tribes where the prophet sent the message of Islam. These were the years of constant war.

Thirdly the post Hudabia period ,when the prophet sent letters to notable Powers of the contemporary e.g Persia and Rome , followed by the succeeding victory in Makkah after which Islam dominated entire Arabia³

Methodology:

This study employs qualitative research methods for data collection, utilizing descriptive, analytical, and historical models. It relies on secondary data sources. Counter-arguments are considered to foster an objective approach to examining the relevance of Prophet Muhammad's diplomatic strategies and ethical leadership in modern international relations. The study's scope is limited to this specific aspect.

Hazrat Muhammad's peace be upon him Diplomatic Wisdom Before Prophethood:

For the Muslims, the prophet's conduct is God-breathed and is relevant for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

(لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا) (الأحزاب: 21/33)

He was twenty during a time of wars that caused a lot of harm between two groups: Quraish and Banu Kinanah on one side, and the Qais 'Ailan tribe on the other. Normally, young men like him would fight in these wars, but he didn't. He believed that God shaped his character.

وَأَلَمْ نَشْرَحْ لَكَ صَدْرَكَ (1) وَوَضَعْنَا عَنكَ وَزْرَكَ (2) الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ ظَهْرَكَ (الشرح: 3-94/1).

He said he only almost did things that weren't right twice, but God stopped him. So, throughout his youth, he showed good social behavior.⁴

He was a great man with a smart mind and good ideas. He was smart, creative, and good at making the right choices.⁵

His early life shows how to be fair and caring. He was known for being fair and not judging others unfairly. People called him "Al-Ameen," which means trustworthy.⁶

These qualities show that he was good at dealing with people. He took part in helpful and positive actions.⁷

Today, these qualities are important for diplomats. A diplomat needs to be fair, humble, calm, patient, and able to keep secrets.⁸

Rebuilding Al-Ka'abah and the Arbitration between the disputing Clans:

Muhammad's remarkable diplomatic skills led him to take charge as a mediator during the crisis of rebuilding the Ka'bah when he was thirty-five⁹. His bravery prevented potential violence among clans vying for the honor of placing the Black Stone (Al-hajar Al-aswad) in its rightful spot¹⁰. Chosen freely by the disputing clans to settle the matter, Muhammad showed his commitment to fairness and justice. He simply asked each side's representative to lift a corner of the cloth carrying the stone. This simple act resolved the issue, placing the stone where it belonged. In just a few minutes, he solved a problem that could have led to violence that lasted for several days¹¹

Relavance:

This arbitration is important in Islamic ethics for resolving conflicts. From it, we can learn some important aspects of a fair arbitration process. One key aspect is that parties in conflict must agree on the legitimacy of the arbitrator. If they don't, the decision won't be accepted because one side might not trust the process or the outcome. This is similar to how modern dispute resolution works, where groups choose a neutral party to settle their disagreements. In legal systems like English law, the arbitrator's decision is final. In the case of rebuilding the Ka'bah, the clans agreed on the prophet as their arbitrator, and his fair judgment was accepted by everyone. Today, international organizations like the IAEA and UNODA play a similar role in resolving disputes on a global scale. However, there can be challenges with bias, as weaker countries sometimes feel these organizations favor stronger ones. The prophet's neutrality as an arbitrator gives hope to these institutions, especially when powerful countries' policies are divided. The international system often falls into zero-sum politics, where one side's gain is seen as another's loss. This can cause problems, but fair arbitration can help overcome them.

Hilf Al-fudul:

This significant diplomatic event was known as Hilf al-fudul due to its exceptional virtue. It was a 7th-century alliance formed by different individuals in Makkah. The prophet was nearly 40 years old at the time and was about to become a prophet¹². The alliance was created because visiting merchants in Makkah faced severe injustices. During one incident, a Yemeni merchant named Zabid delivered goods to a well-known member of the Salim clan¹³, who then refused to pay the agreed price. The prophet played a leading role in forming the alliance, which took place at the house of Abdallah bn Jad'an. Representatives and chiefs from various tribes pledged to:

- i. **Follow the principles of justice.**
- ii. **Intervene together in conflicts to establish justice¹⁴.**

Hilf al-fudul is often translated as the league of the virtuous. It promoted moral standards above ethnic and tribal ties. The prophet praised its outcome and promised to uphold its principles. Even after becoming a prophet, Muhammad continued to refer to Hilf al-fudul and followed its principles, despite it being a pact from the pre-Islamic era.¹⁵

Relavance:

Hilf al-fudul is symbolic in Islamic ethics as it illustrates the principles of the Islamic value system regarding fairness and protection of human rights. Regardless of political implications, justice and fairness are prioritized in all diplomatic or political decisions. In Islamic beliefs, justice applies universally and without limits. The prophet never attempted to replace Hilf al-fudul, despite its origins in the pre-Islamic era. He consistently advocated for justice and defended the rights of the weak and vulnerable.

Unlike the perspectives of realists and liberals, which envision a bipolar or unipolar international system, the prophet sought alliances to cooperate in defending justice and promoting interdependence and a shared destiny. Therefore, interest group politics played a crucial role in diplomacy for the prophet. One significant aspect of the prophet's approach to interest group politics is his concern for society's collective needs, particularly justice. Burdett and Cigler accurately emphasize the importance of this prophetic guidance on interest group politics.

However, in today's international system, interest group politics may lose significance when collective justice is not prioritized. According to Islamic thought, the struggle for collective justice knows no boundaries, and national sovereignty becomes less effective, especially in critical situations. In the contemporary world, the decisions of many sovereign states have the potential to lead to dangerous consequences. Broadly, Hilf al-fudul embodies the four main principles of social justice: equity, access, participation, and rights. Even before his prophethood, Muhammad exemplified virtuous qualities.¹⁶

Part two: Muhammad peace be upon him Diplomacy After Prophethood:

This prophet was on a lofty moral pedestal even before his appointment as a prophet. The earlier sections of this paper showcased some of his achievements during that time. What can we anticipate now that he is divinely guided? His outstanding and unparalleled ethical standards will always be pertinent for instructing, admonishing, rectifying, and educating in righteousness, as we will illustrate in this section. Therefore, Part two accentuates his achievements in Makkah and Madinah.

Muhammad's pacifist Diplomacy at Makkah:

His 13yr legacy at Makkah could best be described as pacifist sui generis. His actions resonate an uncommon pacifist diplomacy that is seldom seen in the history of human civilization;

إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ خُلُقٍ عَظِيمٍ (القلم:4/68).

Translation: "And indeed, you are of a great moral character."

Thou art on a high moral pedestal is the heavenly attestation to his moral standing. Those who believed in his cause at its nascent stage faced brutal persecution in the hands of pagan Quraysh .

وما تقموا منهم إلا أن يؤمنوا بالله العزيز الحميد [البروج: 85/8].

Their only fault was that they believed in Allah. Many were killed, maimed and dehumanized. Yet he urged his followers to show restraint "O family of Yasir! Be patient you will certainly find your place in paradise."¹⁷

This was his response to Ammar, Yasir (Ammar's father), and his mother, when they were tortured for accepting Islam.

Relavance:

Pacifism, a philosophy centered on opposition to war, militarism, and violence, holds significant importance in international relations. A related concept, Ahimsa (meaning 'to do no harm'), is a fundamental teaching in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Although some may perceive Islam as distant from these ideals, a closer look at the Prophet's actions in Mecca reveals that pacifism is not foreign to Islamic culture. The Prophet's initial strategy, characterized by diplomacy and statecraft, underscores the compatibility of Islam with non-violence. By embracing this culture of non-violence even in the face of persecution, Muslims can enhance the image of Islam. Contemporary Muslim thinkers, including the Hizmet organization, are actively promoting the concept of peace through peace within Muslim intellectual circles. By formalizing the Islamic culture of non-violence, it can complement the contemporary international system, which is torn between the realists' stance of unlimited self-defense and the liberals' hesitant approach to limited self-defense.

MUHAMMAD'S PEACE BE UPON HIM FIRST INTERNATIONAL DIPLOMATIC CAREER:

Muhammad (SAW) began his first inter-continental diplomatic career at Makkah before founding the Islamic state. In the fifth year of the Hijrah, when persecution of vulnerable group of Muslims becomes severe, he ordered a group of his companions comprising twelve men and four women to migrate to Abyssinia. Negus, ruler of the Achsumite kingdom of Habash accommodated them and refused to repatriate them amidst pressure from the Makkans¹⁸. The pleasant diplomatic exchanges between the prophet and Negus led to the migration of a second group which is almost eight times larger than the first. The prophet loved Najjashi. And when the latter died, he was divinely informed where he offered Salat al-janazah for him in absentia. He was said to have accepted the Islamic faith secretly, though.

Muhammad's Olive Branch Diplomacy:

In the 10th year of his prophet hood, Muhammad (SAW) extended his invitation to tribes within the Arabian region calling them to Islam. In the 11th year his olive branch diplomacy yielded fruit. The first Aqabah pledge was made. Where twelve men from Madinah embraced Islam. Hence, the prophet sent his envoy to Madinah; Musáb bn Umair Al-Abdari who doubled as Muslim Ambassador and spiritual guide to the people of Madinah. This paves the way to the promulgation of the second Aqabah pledge which was sealed in the 11th year of his prophet hood. Over 70 converts from the Ansar came to Makkah to pledge their allegiance to the prophet (SAW). The articles of the pledge were given as follows:

- i. To listen and obey the prophet in difficulty and ease.

- ii. . To spend in the cause of Allah in plenty and scarcity.
- iii. To enjoin good and forbid evil.
- iv.
- iv. In service to Allah, they will fear the censure of none.
- V. To aid the prophet when he eventually migrated to Madinah and afford him all protection¹⁹.

The Madinans on the other hand gave their own condition on the need for the prophet (SAW) to respect their alliance with the Jews when he assumes leadership role in Madinah. He was said to have smiled and responded: "... Your blood will be my blood in life and death. I will be with you and you with me. I will fight whom you fight and I will make peace with those with whom you make peace"²⁰.

Relevance:

The second Aqabah pledge sets the pace within the realm of collective security- a concept in the contemporary International System that implies a security arrangement, in which each party accepts that the security of one is the concern of all (parties to the arrangement), and as such, commits to a collective response to threats to, and branches to peace. The current wave of security challenges sweeping across the Muslim world require urgent attention from the Muslim bloc; the OIC. In light of the second Aqabah legacy, countries within the OIC must begin to see the security challenges of others as theirs too. Thus, OIC needs to re-strategize and embrace the collective security approach to dealing with insurgencies and terror related activities in some of its member states.

Muhammad's peace be upon him Diplomacy in constitution.

Soon after assumption of the tripartite role as; spiritual guide, Head of state and commander in-chief at the instance of his migration to Madinah, the prophet (SAW) promulgated the Madinan charter (Mithaq al-madinah). A charter that will continue to be remembered due to its historic significance. It is often, and offcourse, rightly touted as the first Magna carta of the world. It was the first known written constitution in human history.

Comprising 57 articles, the charter clearly spells out the rights, duties and priviledges of the state to its citizens and vice-versa, as well as the rights and obligations of citizens one to another. It also referenced some state institutions and their functions; the judicature, the Shura, among others. Article 30 determines the status of the signatories; "And certainly the Jews of Banu Auf shall be considered a community (Ummah) along with the believers (Muslims). The article went a step further to guarantee the religious freedom of each party; "the Jews shall have their religion, this also applies to their freedom". Article 39 on the other hand, establishes the institution of Shura to ensure participation and inclusiveness in governance, "They (parties to the pact), must seek mutual consultation and advice". The promulgation of the charter ushered in a Pax-Islamica which flourished in a primitive tribal corridor of Arabia. The precedence of Mithaq almadinah over the English Magna carta (often, and off course, wrongly touted as the first bill of rights) stems from the fact that the former was conceived over a millennium before the conception of the latter.

Relavance in modern International relations:

The Mithaq has the potential to solve big problems in modern times, especially the idea of multiculturalism that's still developing. It brings together Muslims, Jews, and Christians from the Najran region, who have their own independence. Each group can work well without too much bureaucracy. Nowadays, many Muslim countries face problems because of identity politics, like the Kurds in Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, who want more control over their own affairs. The Mithras's principles of independence and self-determination are really important

for Muslims today. Giving more independence to groups like the Kurds could calm down tensions and end long conflicts in places like Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran.

Hazrat Muhammad's peace be upon him Diplomacy in military :

In the second year of the Hijra, there was a change in military strategy. Instead of the pacifist approach, the Qur'an encouraged Muslims to use a strategy of limited self-defense.

أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بَأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٢٢٣﴾ [الحج: 22/39]

The verse approves of this new approach while also defining its limits. It says that wars should only be fought in self-defense. So, the Prophet's military tactics focused on defense. In the Battle of Badr, the Muslims fought to protect themselves from the enemy. At Uhud, they fought to defend Medina from an enemy just six kilometers away. And during the Battle of the Trench, the Muslims faced an enemy right at their doorstep.

The Muslims never started the fights. Even at Badr, when they captured seventy prisoners, they treated them well and let them go under different conditions. At Uhud, they showed mercy to the enemy by burying their dead soldiers

Relevance:

The Prophet's military diplomacy is relevant to modern times because it shares similarities with International Humanitarian Law (IHL), which guides how wars should be conducted in a humane way. Both Islamic war law and IHL prohibit the use of certain weapons, outline how prisoners of war should be treated, emphasize sparing surrendering soldiers and civilians from attack, and stress the importance of proportionality in military engagements.

However, in many conflict zones involving Muslim communities, such as the Lake Chad basin, Somalia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Iraq, both state and non-state actors often ignore these humanitarian norms. They frequently target civilians and the environment with indiscriminate attacks, disregarding the principles of protecting non-combatants and minimizing harm to civilian populations and infrastructure.

The Prophet's Diplomacy Making Treaties and Alliances:

The treaty of Hudaibiyyah is adjudged to be the first inter-state treaty to have been promulgated by the prophet (SAW). Ratified on March 628 C.E (corresponding to DhulQidah 6 A.H), the treaty signified a peace pact between Makkah (the pagan enclave) and Madinah (the Muslim enclave).

Sulh Hudaibiyyah was like a shining light for how countries make agreements today:

The treaty was a landmark event that took place at the dawn of Islamic history. It was a ten year pact aimed at decreasing tensions between the two hostile neighboring states; Makkah and Madinah.

Sulh al-hudaibiyyah was a relatively short pact with a limited articles numbering only four. But it soon became a pivotal treaty with a far reaching implication whose texture continued to shape and influence international relations until this moment. The terms of the pact are;

- i. There was to be a truce between the Muslims and the Quraysh for a period of ten years.
- ii. If any tribe wishes to enter into an alliance with the Muslims it could do so and whoever wishes to enter into a covenant with the Quraysh was likewise free to do so.
- iii. If anyone from the Quraysh came to the Muslims without a prior permission from his guardian, he was to be returned to the Quraysh. On the other hand, if a Muslim seeks refuge with the Quraysh, he was not to be delivered to the Muslims.

- iv. The Muslims were to shelve their ambition of performing pilgrimage to Makkah that year. However, they were to perform the Hajj the following year and could stay in Makkah for three days²¹.

The companions felt deeply humiliated by the terms of the treaty. Umar (R.A) was particularly bitter about it, and he attempted to dissuade the prophet (SAW) from signing it but the prophet unilaterally signed the agreement. Thus his mission at Hudaibiyyah could best be described as a mission of peace. Hudaibiyyah has also opened a new chapter in Islamic Diplomacy with a shift toward region-wide diplomacy. Having concluded a treaty with the Makkans and having earned their commitment to regional security also, the prophet (SAW) focused his attention toward overseas diplomacy. Where at the tail end of the year 6 A.H, he sent delegations with correspondences to Emperors around the world: Negus(Abyssinia), Muqawqis(Egypt), Chosroes(Persia), Heraclitus(Roman Byzantines) among others. This was an attempt to ensure regional cooperation and interdependent in a volatile climate.

Takeaways from the Incidents at Hudaibiyyah.”

Firstly, despite four attempts by emissaries from the Quraysh to broker a deal, no agreement was reached. Some of these emissaries displayed biased attitudes, with Urwah bn Mas'ud Al-thaqafi even showing disrespect towards Prophet Muhammad (SAW) by grabbing his beard and making unpleasant comments. However, the Prophet always emphasized the importance of exercising restraint in difficult situations, refraining from retaliating against Urwah's disrespectful behavior, which was unbecoming of an emissary.

Secondly, when rumors spread about the killing of Uthman (R.A), who was sent as a Muslim emissary to Abu Sufyan, the prophet urged for calm and did not act hastily on the rumors. He neither rushed to attack nor sought vengeance.

Thirdly, when Suhail bn Amr came as the Quraysh representative for the truce, he arrived with a predetermined script outlining the conditions of the peace treaty, which later became the articles of the pact.

Fourthly, during the signing of the treaty, Abu Jandal, Suhail's son, appeared at Hudaibiyyah seeking to join the Muslims. Suhail insisted on taking his son back, but the Prophet (SAW) pacified Abu Jandal, explaining that they had signed the treaty and must honor its outcome.

Lastly, despite the treaty not being favorable to the Muslims, the Prophet (SAW) was willing to ratify it for the sake of peace. These events at Hudaibiyyah underscore the Prophet's commitment to peace, diplomacy, and restraint, even in the face of adversity and unfair agreements.

It's Relavance:

The prophetic example at Hudaibiyyah was a *jus ad bellum* per excellence i.e. conflict resolution through dialogue before it degenerates into armed conflict. The overriding principles of Hudaibiyyah are at par with the general objectives of the United Nations charter as enshrined in article (1):

To maintain international peace and security, and to that end to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to breach of the peace.

Thus, the points of convergence between Article (1) of the UN charter and the spirit of Hudaibiyyah may be subsumed in the following:

1. Maintenance of peace and security through collective measures by bringing on board all affected parties – Makkans and their allies and Madinans along with their allies unto the negotiating table.
2. Removal of threats to peace and the suppression of aggression through formal ratification of the agreement which aims at freezing all hostilities for ten years.
3. Peaceful settlement of disputes without recourse to violence and or forceful suppression of an adversary which could only result into an uneasy calm.

Hazrat Muhammad's kind and selfless diplomacy:

Muhammad (SAW) was exceptionally selfless. His acts of kindness were central to his diplomatic efforts. When the Makkans and Banu Bakr broke the Hudaibiyah treaty by attacking Banu Khuza'ah, instead of retaliation, he peacefully entered Makkah. In the 8th year after Hijrah, when he triumphantly entered Makkah with thousands of companions, he ordered them not to harm anyone and declared the Makkans safe. Even when he found out his house in Makkah was sold after he moved to Madinah, he chose to settle at Haram.

Similarly, on his deathbed, knowing he was close to passing away, he passionately urged his companions and the entire Muslim community to treat women and the less fortunate with fairness and kindness.

Conclusion:

ضعيفيَّون: المرأة الأرملة، والصب ي اليتيم...²² ات قوا الله في ال

In conclusion, Muhammad's (SAW) dying words emphasized the importance of altruism, particularly towards women and the less privileged. His political and diplomatic principles continue to serve as valuable lessons for teaching, correcting, and guiding righteousness. Muhammad's diplomatic ideals should be the foundation for shaping Islamic diplomacy, offering an alternative to the shortcomings of liberalist and realist approaches in international relations theory. As nations like China develop innovative diplomatic strategies such as Periphery Diplomacy and initiatives like the One Belt, One Road, Muslim intellectuals should actively engage in promoting the Prophet's diplomatic wisdom. By doing so, we can strive towards creating a more integrated and equitable global system, fostering greater interdependence and a shared human destiny for all.

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