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THE PROPHETIC MISSION AND THE FORMATION OF THE ISLAMIC POLITICAL SPHERE

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ABSTRACT

The political dimension, alongside the doctrinal aspect, featured prominently in the message of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He dedicated significant effort to founding and consolidating the Islamic state, highlighting the central role of politics in Islam and its importance to the Prophet's mission. His role extended beyond spiritual guidance and preaching to include the governance and organization of society in all its facets—a fundamental political function. Consequently, the Prophet (PBUH) was deeply committed to uniting Muslims and regulating their collective affairs in accordance with Islamic law. Over time, this comprehensive mission evolved into a structured political system known as the "civil state."

The scientific method calls for a precise clarification of the scope and nature of the relationship between Islam and politics in general, and more specifically between religion and politics within the context of the Prophetic Mission. Such an approach serves as a critical foundation for exploring this topic from the audience's perspective. This is particularly relevant given that the interplay between the religious and the political in Islam—especially during the era of the Prophet—has long been a subject of scholarly debate. Scholars remain divided into two principal schools of thought, each offering its own interpretation of this relationship. This divide can be summarized as follows:

Keywords: Prophetic Mission, Formation, Islamic Political Sphere.

INTRODUCTION

The First Perspective:

Proponents of this view argue that the Prophetic Mission was inherently intertwined with politics, maintaining that it embodied a political project from the very beginning. Among the leading scholars who support this perspective are Mohammed Abed al-Jabri, in his book *The Arab Political Mind: Its Determinants and Manifestations*, and Abdelwahab Elmessiri, in *The Formation of the Islamic Political Sphere: Prophethood and Politics*. Al-Jabri asserts that historical accounts almost unanimously indicate that the Muhammadan message was accompanied from its inception by a clearly defined political project, which remained a central objective until it was ultimately fulfilled. (1). Similarly, Elmessiri leans toward the belief that the political question lies at the heart of Islam and was a central issue from its early stages (2).

In the same vein, another scholar pointed out that the Prophetic Mission was not based solely on reward and punishment, or promises and warnings, but also incorporated political concepts that positioned the Messenger of God (PBUH) as the sole authority confronting Quraysh. It portrayed him as a figure qualified for political leadership, in line with tribal notions of leadership, where leadership is granted to the wisest and most prudent of men. By that measure, the Messenger of God (PBUH) was the most qualified for political leadership, as evidenced by his life and actions (3).

It is worth noting that this perspective has also found support among some Orientalists, such as **FitzGerald** and **Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb**. The former viewed Islam not only as *a religion* (AReligion) but also as *a political system* (political system). The latter argued that Islam was not merely a set of individual religious beliefs but required the establishment of an independent community with its distinct mode of governance, laws, and institutions (4).

This summarizes the position of the first perspective.

The Second Perspective:

In contrast, scholars in the second school of thought contend that Islam, by its very nature, is purely a religion and does not encompass political elements, as political engagement would contradict its core principles and spiritual values. From this perspective, the methodology of the Prophet (PBUH) was not directed toward founding a state, but rather focused exclusively on spiritual guidance and moral reform.

The most notable advocate of this view is **Ali Abdel Raziq**, in his influential work *"Islam and the Foundations of Governance"*, where he contended that the Prophet (PBUH) did not combine political authority with his religious role, and therefore, he was not the founder of a political state (5).

A similar stance was taken by researcher **Abdulaziz Al-Omari**, who argued that although the Prophet (PBUH) endeavored to unify and organize his community according to the principles of Sharia, led military expeditions, appointed governors, and assigned judges, he did not do so as a political leader, but rather in his capacity as a divinely-sent Prophet (6).

Thus, these represent the two dominant scholarly positions on this complex issue. The question then arises: *Which of these perspectives is more compelling or widely accepted?*

To answer this question objectively, it is necessary to examine the context and details of the Prophetic biography. It is well known that the Messenger of God (PBUH) was sent in Mecca to call people to Islam, and that the choice of both his person and the location of his mission carried significant social implications with political as well as doctrinal dimensions.

On the social level, the tribe of Quraysh held a central position among the Arabs in terms of lineage and status. It occupied a place of great prestige, as affirmed in a narrated tradition attributed to the Messenger of God (PBUH): *"When God intends to send a prophet, He looks to the best tribe on earth and sends the best man from it"* (7).

This general principle was also reflected on a more specific level, as illustrated in another saying of the Prophet (PBUH): *"When He created me, He made me from the best of His creation; when He created the tribes, He placed me in the best tribe; when He created souls, He made mine the best; and when He created households, He made mine the best of them. So, I am the best in lineage and the best in soul"* (8).

Thus, the Banu Abd Manaf were considered the noblest clan of Quraysh and the most honorable of its households.

The Messenger of God (PBUH) undertook a challenging and arduous mission within his Qurayshi and Arab environment, which extended over a period of twenty-three years, calling people to embrace Islam. According to some sources, his call was not devoid of material promise; he assured them of dominion over the lands of the Romans and the Persians if they embraced Islam and declared La ilaha illa Allah (There is no god but God) (9).

One researcher notes that this statement by the Prophet (PBUH) indicates that political thinking was present in the Prophetic Mission alongside the religious message. This suggests the significance of political empowerment (10).

Undoubtedly, pursuing such a goal and realizing it requires the organization of life affairs on various levels, both individually and collectively. It necessitated the unification and construction of a society fractured by tribal conflicts and foreign dominance. Thus, the Prophet (PBUH) sought to transform this tribal society into a broader entity—the society of the ummah—in embodiment of the Qur'anic verse: "**You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoy what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Book had believed it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient**" (11).

The Prophetic Mission, during its development from a spiritual call to the foundation of a state, progressed through two procedural phases: the **Meccan phase** and the **Medinan phase**. Each of these phases had its context and distinct characteristics, as reflected in the Meccan and Medinan chapters of the Qur'an.

The **Meccan phase** focused on affirming the tenets of monotheism and acknowledging the truth of the Prophet's (PBUH) message. During this phase, the Messenger of God (PBUH) faced intense opposition from the Qurayshi elite in spreading his call within his native land. This resistance stemmed from multiple factors, foremost among them being **tribal rivalry** and **economic interests**.

The Prophet's (PBUH) affiliation with Banu Hashim served as a powerful motive for the Qurayshi elite to oppose his mission—driven by resentment and envy that prophethood might be added to the existing honors already held by Banu Hashim. This is reflected in **Abu Jahl's** response to **Ubay ibn Shurayk** (12), in which he said: *"Do you think Muhammad is lying?"* Abu Jahl replied: *"How could he lie about God when we used to call him the Trustworthy, and he never lied? But if the responsibilities of providing water to pilgrims, hospitality, consultation, and now prophethood are all granted to Banu Abd Manaf, what will be left for us?"* (13).

Abu Jahl also stated: *"We and Banu Abd Manaf have long competed for honor. They fed [the pilgrims], and so did we. They carried burdens, and so did we. They gave generously, and so did we. Until we were like two horses neck and neck in a race. Then they said, 'A prophet has emerged among us who receives revelation from the heavens.' How can we ever match that? By God, we will never believe in him or affirm his message"* (14).

The **economic factor** also played a significant role. The Prophet's (PBUH) attack on idol worship and his call to the worship of one God threatened to dismantle the very foundation that attracted Arab tribes to Mecca for pilgrimage, along with the commerce that accompanied it. The idols were a major source of Quraysh's wealth and the cornerstone of its economy, as Mecca served as a central shrine for the tribal deities of Arabia. Tribes would come to worship, present offerings, and organize markets around or near the city.

Therefore, the attack on idol worship posed a direct threat to the revenues generated by pilgrimage and its associated commercial gains (15). In addition, the success of the Prophetic Mission promised to introduce a new value system founded on religious equality before God—an idea that placed the **Qurayshi elite (al-mala')**, a small minority, on the same level as most of the population, including slaves and marginalized individuals not affiliated with dominant tribal lineages (16).

Unquestionably, these marginalized groups saw Islam as a rare opportunity to escape the harsh conditions imposed on them by the authority of the Qurayshi elite. At the same time, this shift represented a serious threat to the elite's power and privileges. In response, they carried out harsh measures against those among the slaves and the disenfranchised who embraced Islam, either to deter others from converting or to coerce converts into renouncing their faith.

Ibn Abbas described the extreme cruelty of the Qurayshi elite toward new converts as follows: *"They would beat one of them, starve him, deprive him of water, and beat him again until he could no longer endure. Then they would demand he renounce his faith. They would say to him, 'Are al-Lat and al-'Uzza your gods instead of Allah?' And he would reply, 'Yes,' under duress"* (17).

Islamic historical records offer numerous examples of such abuse, including the torture inflicted on **Ammar ibn Yasir** and his parents, who were subjected to scorching heat on the burning sands of Mecca. The Messenger of God (PBUH) would pass by and offer them words of encouragement, saying: *"Be patient, O family of Yasir, for your promised abode is Paradise"* (18).

Another example is the brutal torture of **Bilal ibn Rabah**, the Ethiopian companion, who was forced to lie on the scorching desert ground while a massive stone was placed on his chest at noon to force him to renounce Islam (19). These are but a few among many such incidents (20).

It is also noteworthy that the Qurayshi elite's cruelty extended beyond the marginalized classes. Even **Banu Hashim** were subjected to a severe economic and social boycott that lasted three years in the valley of **Abu Talib**, isolating them from the broader Meccan society (21).

Considering the foregoing, the intense opposition of the Qurayshi elite and their harsh measures against the emerging Islamic call in its earliest setting—Mecca—posed a significant concern and formidable challenge for the Messenger of God (PBUH). This situation required him to take swift and strategic action on two critical fronts.

The **first** involved protecting and preserving the small but growing Muslim community—a community whose formation had been a difficult and strenuous process, especially during the early stages in the face of the Qurayshi elite's relentless brutality.

The **second** challenge was the need to seek an alternative location from which to spread his message, far from the dominance and interference of Quraysh.

Accordingly, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) took two measures. The first concerned the preservation of the believers, as he ordered them to migrate to Abyssinia (22), which he viewed as a safe environment for them due to the presence of a just king there. This occurred in the fifth year of the prophetic mission (23). There is no doubt that by this measure, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), with his insightful mind, recognized the necessity of transferring the call and introducing it beyond the Arabian Peninsula, especially since it had reached its fifth year. On one hand, and on the other, this measure could potentially deprive Quraysh of an economically supportive power with whom they maintained friendly relations. Moreover, it would occupy Quraysh with this matter to pursue the subsequent step, which was to find another place for the call. This is a consideration that falls within the mindset of a political leader. In this regard, some researchers have indicated that this migration was a political plan in which the political thought of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) manifested, understood by his insightful intellect to safeguard the believers from the tyranny of Quraysh (24).

Building on this systematic planning and to achieve the second objective, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) began presenting his call to the Arab tribes; however, he found no one willing to respond to his invitation. Although some interpreted it politically, recognizing that his call would have a significant impact in the future in terms of governance and sovereignty. An example of this is what a man from the Banu Amir ibn Sa'sa'a said: "By Allah, if I

were to take this young man from Quraysh, I would dominate the Arabs through him" (25). Undoubtedly, this statement by the man from Banu Amir, whoever he may have been, reflects a full awareness that the prophetic call was not limited merely to a doctrinal dimension but also carried a political aspect related to the issue of governance and sovereignty. This is what Murtada al-Askari pointed out in his book *Ma'alim al-Madrasatayn*, stating that this man understood the matter of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) as sovereignty and rule over the Arabs (26). We may also find in the response of Hawdhah ibn Ali al-Hanafi (27) to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) when he invited him to Islam, which reads: "How good and beautiful is what you call to! I am the poet and orator of my people, and the Arabs respect my position. So, grant me some authority to follow you" (28), a further indication that the tribes' rejection was, at least in part, driven by their desire to participate in leadership on a political level.

The Prophet's (peace be upon him) call ultimately achieved success within the framework of his invitation to the Arab tribes after a long wait and many difficulties when six individuals from the Khazraj of Yathrib (29) responded to his call. These six were later able to attract more from their people after conveying what had transpired between them and the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). They returned the following year, by which time their number had grown to twelve from the Aws and Khazraj. Their pledge became known as the First Pledge of al-'Aqaba, or the Women's Pledge, which 'Ubada ibn al-Samit (30), who was present at the pledge, narrates as follows: "That we shall not associate anything with Allah, nor commit excess, nor commit adultery, nor kill our children, nor bring forth a slander that we invent between our hands and feet, nor disobey Him in what is good. If you fulfill these conditions, Paradise is for you; but if you violate any of these, your matter is with Allah, the Almighty; if He wills, He will forgive, and if He wills, He will punish" (31).

It is clear from the content of the pledge that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) understood that the foundational building block for any society, both doctrinally and politically, must rely on the ethical dimension by establishing standards and ideals that differ from those prevailing before Islam. Therefore, we observe that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) emphasized this aspect through what can be described as the principle of demolition and construction—namely, the removal and dismantling of pre-Islamic values and rebuilding based on Islamic values—due to its impact on creating a cohesive and unified society.

To consolidate these concepts and foster a closer relationship between Islam and the people of Yathrib, the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) sent Mus'ab ibn 'Umair (32) to them and instructed him to recite the Qur'an and teach them Islam (33). Hashim Yahya al-Mallah pointed out that although the general nature and content of the pledge were religious, it was not devoid of a political dimension, as it stipulated that the pledgers undertake not to disobey the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) in what is good—meaning they committed to obeying him. Thus, they entrusted him with leadership not only on a religious level but also on a political one. Additionally, the participation of the Aws alongside the Khazraj in journeying to Mecca to pledge allegiance to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) itself represents a significant success for the call, as it overcame the factor of rivalry and animosity between the two tribes (34).

Mus'ab ibn 'Umair, the envoy of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him), succeeded in firmly establishing and rooting Islam in the hearts of the Aws and Khazraj who accompanied him during the pilgrimage season of the year following the First Pledge of al-'Aqaba. This time their number had risen to seventy-three men and two women. They met with the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) at al-'Aqaba at night so as not to attract the attention or suspicion of Quraysh. He addressed them, saying: "I pledge to you that you prevent me from what you prevent your wives and children from." One of them replied, "We will prevent you from what we prevent our private parts from. We pledge allegiance to you, O Messenger of Allah, for we are, by Allah, people of war and guardians of the circle (ḥalqa), inheriting it from generation to generation." They stipulated to the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) that he should not leave Medina once the word of Allah is exalted and His command is made manifest. The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) smiled and then said, "Rather, blood for blood, destruction for destruction. I am from you, and you are from me. I fight those you fight and make peace with those you make peace with" (35).

With these contents, the Second Pledge of al-'Aqaba was concluded, marking a significant turning point in the history of the prophetic mission. It initiated major transformations that would have a clear impact on shaping the future of the call both doctrinally and politically. The success of the Messenger of Allah's (peace be upon him) call and the pledge of the Aws and Khazraj not only provided substantial support and momentum for the call in terms of increasing the number of converts, but after this pledge, he was no longer merely a prophet whose message was believed by the people of Medina. Rather, he became a political leader whose commands were obeyed by all the Ansar (36).

"The extent of the Prophet's (PBUH) political awareness can be discerned from his keenness to organize those who pledged allegiance to him from the tribes of al-Khazraj and al-Aws, when he requested that they choose twelve leaders (naqibs) from among themselves to act as guarantors for their people. This was aimed at ensuring their unity, proper organization, and sound governance. After their selection, the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the gravity of the

responsibility entrusted to them, saying: *'You are guarantors for your people in the same manner as the disciples (ḥawāriyyūn) were guarantors for Jesus son of Mary, and I am a guarantor for my people.'* They replied, *'Yes.'"* (37) One researcher pointed out that another political implication of the Second Pledge of al-'Aqabah was the preparation of the new converts for a future phase that differed significantly from the current reality—specifically, one involving warfare. War, in this context, is considered a political act dictated by certain circumstances. (38)"

It is worth noting that this transformation was not limited to the success of the Prophetic mission outside the boundaries of Mecca. Rather, it also triggered a shift in the thinking of the opposing side—namely, the Qurayshi elite (al-malaʾ al-Qurashi). In the face of the Prophet's (PBUH) growing success, they came to realize that the methods they had previously relied upon in dealing with him and his followers were insufficient and failed to achieve their intended objectives. This realization drove them to adopt a far more audacious tactic: eliminating the Prophet (PBUH) himself through assassination. Their plan involved selecting one man from each tribe to strike him simultaneously in his bed, so that his blood would be divided among the tribes, thus making it impossible for Banu ʿAbd Manaf to seek retribution for his death.(39)

However, Divine Providence thwarted this plot, as conveyed in the verse: *'And [remember] when those who disbelieved plotted against you to restrain you or kill you or evict you. But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.'* (40) In this context, it was reported from the Commander of the Faithful, Imam ʿAli ibn Abi Ṭalib, the following: *'Gabriel descended upon the Prophet (PBUH) and informed him of the plot, telling him the exact night and hour when they would gather around his bed. He ordered him to depart at that time to the cave. The Messenger of Allah (PBUH) informed me of the matter and instructed me to lie in his place and shield him with myself. I rushed to fulfill his command, joyful to sacrifice my life for his.'*(41)

This heroic stance, envied even by the angels, is reflected in the historical tradition that attributes to Gabriel the words: *'Well done! Who is like you, O son of Abu Ṭalib? By Allah, the Almighty takes pride in you before the angels.'*(42)"

As a result of the Qurayshi elite's actions, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) instructed the Muslims to emigrate to Yathrib. This migration would mark a pivotal transition for the Prophetic Mission from a mere call to faith to the foundation of a state. The Muhammadan mission would henceforth proceed on two fronts: internal state-building and engaging in political dealings with Quraysh through alternative means. (43) One of the key outcomes of this migration was that it transformed the Muslims from being merely a group of believers into a cohesive political and religious community. (44)"

The transformation from a call to faith into a fully-fledged state would unfold through a series of deliberate steps at the internal level, aimed at laying the foundation for this new phase. The first of these steps was the redefinition of the historical identity of the city of Yathrib in a manner consistent with this transformation. Thus, its name was changed to 'The City of the Messenger of Allah (PBUH),' signifying its new status as the capital and political center of the emerging Islamic state. It became the arena in which the principles of statehood were to be implemented in accordance with Islamic doctrine. In this way, Yathrib—now al-Madīnah—moved from the periphery to the center, both theologically and politically, becoming the alternative to Mecca.

In line with this transformation, it became necessary to rebuild the Islamic society that was forming in the city, and to structure it according to a new system that reflected a deep sense of solidarity, shared destiny, and common purpose. To achieve this, the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) established the system of brotherhood (muʾākhāh) between the Muslims residing in the city and those who had emigrated to it. The aim was to create a unified social body in which distinctions dissolved, and whose members were given designations that reflected their contributions to Islam, free from the tribal affiliations that often carried connotations of division and fragmentation. This was in accordance with the Qurʾanic methodology, which assigned to those who emigrated the title *al-Muhājirūn* (the Emigrants), and to the residents of the city the title *al-Anṣār* (the Helpers), as stated in the verse: *'And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them with good conduct—Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. And He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment.'* (45)"

In harmony with this transformation, the next step came in response to the demographic composition of the city, which included Jews alongside Muslims. This necessitated the establishment of a new framework for regulating its affairs and governing interactions within it—one that considered the changes that had occurred. As a result, the Constitution of Medina (Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah) was drafted. Its provisions reflect a remarkably advanced political vision, laying the foundations for interaction based on the principles of genuine citizenship, without negating or excluding the other.(46) This, if anything, is indicative of the Prophet's ((PBUH)) profound political awareness, one that aligned with the nature of the evolving stage and its challenges. As one researcher observed, although the Prophet's ((PBUH)) political and religious authority initially centered primarily on the Muslim community of Muhājirūn and Anṣār upon his arrival

in Medina, the nature of the social relationships among the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj and the Jewish communities allowed his authority—albeit to a limited degree at first—to extend and exert influence over the broader population of the city. This influence expanded progressively with the spread of Islam and the growing strength of the Muslim community, until the Prophet ((PBUH)) emerged as the supreme authority in Medina. The city-state consequently gained a defined and influential political identity with the drafting of the Constitution.(47) In the same context, another researcher noted that a study of the Constitution leads us to conclude that the Prophet ((PBUH)) possessed both political and administrative acumen. In addition to his role as a divinely commissioned messenger, the document encompasses all the fundamental pillars of a political society and the features of a civil state.(48) This aligns with the Qur'anic discourse that rejects centralized and oppressive forms of power, and affirms the agency of the 'other' based on shared humanity in shaping a collective self (*al-ānā al-jamāʿiyyah*), and in building a just state grounded in equality of rights and responsibilities. The Constitution of Medina stipulated the unity of the state's members in the face of common enemies—when the state faced real danger, those who were different were to become united as a national front.(49) Since the Prophet's ((PBUH)) actions transcended the limitations of time and place, and were imbued with vitality and lasting relevance—as embodied in the content of this document—one scholar remarked on the enduring dynamism of the Constitution in contemporary history, saying: *'... its precisely formulated articles continue to attract the admiration of scholars in jurisprudence and constitutional law.'*(50)

Among the signs of political direction in the Prophet's ((PBUH)) state was that he would appoint a deputy from among his companions to govern Medina during his absences, whether he was away for military expeditions or pilgrimage-related journeys.(51)

The political character of the Prophetic state was manifested in the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah (52), which took place in the sixth year after the Hijrah and was described as a 'clear conquest' in the words of the Almighty: *'Indeed, We have granted you a clear conquest.'* (53). This 'conquest' was realized through multiple dimensions, as highlighted by a researcher in his study of the Treaty. The first dimension was intellectual and missionary in nature, as the treaty enabled the free dissemination of the Islamic message throughout Meccan society and its surroundings, both horizontally and vertically, and constituted an official and public recognition of its presence. The second was a strategic political dimension, as the treaty marked the Prophet's ((PBUH)) exit from the sphere of regional and international political isolation and established formal recognition of the Islamic state as a legitimate political entity—even by some of its fiercest adversaries in the region. The third dimension was social and behavioral, in that the treaty allowed Muslims to reconnect with their kin and exert influence over them through the ethical and interpersonal conduct that Islam encouraged. The fourth dimension was military and demonstrative, as the treaty sent a clear message to the Quraysh leadership and other Arab tribes that the Islamic state had become a formidable military force capable of defending its existence, its message, and its leadership within its defined geographical boundaries.(54)

Abd al-Wāḥid Belkziz also noted in his reading of the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah that the Prophet's ((PBUH)) political acumen was remarkably high in this event, as he fully grasped the immense value of securing a truce with Quraysh. Such a truce would provide Muslims with the opportunity to regroup and consolidate their strength, while simultaneously calming their enemy and weakening its internal mobilization against the Muslims. The Prophet's ((PBUH)) interpretation of the treaty's terms—particularly his acceptance of the condition requiring the return of those who left Islam to rejoin Quraysh—reflected his confidence in the Muslim community. He was assured that no one among them would apostatize, at least during his lifetime. Moreover, he saw no loss in those whose faith was weak and who chose to abandon Islam. This was a strategic opportunity to rid the community of the wavering and superficial believers.(55) The Prophet's ((PBUH)) vision came to fruition, as more people entered Islam after the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah than had embraced the faith before it, which is why it was rightfully regarded as a great conquest, as previously mentioned.(56) Imam al-Ṣādiq (PBUH) expressed this by saying: *'Before the end of that period, Islam had nearly prevailed over the people of Mecca.'*(57) Ibn Hishām (d. 218 AH / 833 CE) also pointed to this outcome by quoting al-Zuhrī (d. 124 AH), who stated: *'No conquest in Islam was greater than that of al-Ḥudaybiyyah... During those two years, as many people entered Islam as had entered before—or even more.'*(58) Ibn Hishām reinforced al-Zuhrī's point by noting that the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) had departed for al-Ḥudaybiyyah with 1,400 companions, but when he set out for the conquest of Mecca two years later, he was accompanied by 10,000.(59)

Similarly, Ibn ʿAbd al-Barr (d. 463 AH / 1071 CE) emphasized the significance of the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah, stating: *'No expedition is comparable to Badr, or comes close to it, except the expedition of al-Ḥudaybiyyah.'*(60)"

As for the condition requiring the return of those who embraced Islam to Quraysh, a careful reading of subsequent events reveals that the Muslims' initial apprehension regarding this clause was misplaced. Contrary to their

expectations of negative consequences, the outcome proved to be highly favorable. Those whom the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) returned to Quraysh—such as Abū Baṣīr ibn Asīd(61)—eventually escaped from Mecca and formed an independent group, which grew to number around seventy men. This group exerted significant pressure on Quraysh: they killed any of Quraysh's men they captured and seized passing caravans. Their actions became such a source of concern that Quraysh pleaded with the Prophet ((PBUH)) to intervene, asking him to summon them and to stop returning converts to Quraysh, saying: *'Whoever comes out from among us to you, hold on to him without blame.'*(62) Thus, considering what has been presented, the Prophet's (PBUH)) concession of postponing the ʿUmrah does not appear to have been a major sacrifice—particularly given that it was a short-term goal that could be achieved in the coming years. This must be weighed against the significant strategic gains that were realized, which ultimately placed leadership and authority in the hands of the Muslims. Nevertheless, some voices of opposition emerged regarding the treaty, most notably from ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, whose boldness led him to say: *'Had I forty men with me, I would have opposed him.'*(63)

In another report narrated by Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī(64), it is mentioned that he was sitting with ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb when the discussion turned to al-Ḥudaybiyyah. ʿUmar said to him: *'... By Allah, doubt crept into my heart on that day to the point where I said to myself: If there were a hundred men who shared my opinion, we would never have agreed to it.'*(65)

Despite this, ʿUmar knew well that the command of the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) was, in essence, the command of Allah Almighty. The Prophet ((PBUH)) responded to him by saying: *'I am the servant of Allah and His Messenger. I will not go against His command, and He will not forsake me.'*(66)

Nonetheless, some researchers have attempted to justify ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's position by arguing that his political awareness at the time was not at a level that enabled him to grasp the strategic intent behind the Prophet's ((PBUH)) concession. They suggest that his limited political experience prevented him from understanding the Prophet's strategic approach in dealing with Quraysh. Consequently, he interpreted the concession as a religious and political compromise rather than a calculated and tactical move.(67)

Even if we were to accept the validity of this interpretation—which seems more apologetic than objective—a deeper reading of ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb's objection could lead us to an alternative conclusion: that he may have been seeking prominence and visibility among the Muslims by presenting himself as the strong man deeply concerned with the interests of Islam and the Muslim community. Furthermore, this objection may have been intended to establish, within the collective Islamic consciousness, a highly consequential notion: that the decisions of the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) could be subject to debate and objection. This is evidenced by the fact that this was neither ʿUmar's first nor last objection to the Prophet ((PBUH)). His objections would go on to influence the early development of the Islamic political system, leaving a significant impact—one that would produce negative consequences for the Muslim ummah throughout both its historical and future trajectories.

Based on the foregoing, it becomes evident that the Messenger of Allah ((PBUH)) successfully achieved the intended objectives of the Treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyyah on both the doctrinal and political levels. The treaty brought stability to the state of Medina by neutralizing Quraysh and weakening its power. Consequently, the Prophet's ((PBUH)) leadership began to pursue broader outreach, spreading Islam by sending letters to the chiefs of various Arab tribes, as well as to the rulers of the major political powers of the time.

This marked a clear shift in the Islamic mission—from a local endeavor to a global one—in fulfillment of the divine statement: *'And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.'* (68)

As well as His saying: *'And We have not sent you except comprehensively to all mankind as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. But most of the people do not know.'* (69), and: *'Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds a warner.'* (70).

From this foundation emerges the universality of Islam as the final divinely revealed religion and the culmination of all previous messages. Belief in the messengers is considered an essential pillar of Islamic faith.

What further affirms the political dimension of the Prophet's ((PBUH)) letters to the kings of various states is not merely the fact that they were addressed to ruling authorities, but also other aspects that become evident upon closer examination. One such aspect is that these letters conveyed that the state of Medina, under the leadership of the Prophet ((PBUH)), had attained sufficient strength to address major world powers on equal footing—something unprecedented in the history of the Arabs.

Another key element is the deeply political and doctrinal nature of the language used in these letters. The tone and content of the messages addressed to Heraclius of Byzantium and al-Muqawqis of Egypt, for example, differ significantly from that of the letter sent to Chosroes of Persia, reflecting the doctrinal differences between the recipients. Moreover, these letters displayed a high level of diplomacy, reflecting Islam's fundamental commitment to

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dialogue over confrontation or superiority. The selection of envoys to carry these letters also points to the Prophet's ((PBUH)) high political awareness. These individuals were not chosen at random; rather, their selection was based on specific qualities. They were men of strong faith, deep knowledge of Islam, diplomatic competence, presentable appearance, and familiarity with the customs and context of the regions to which they were sent.(71)

Footnotes

(1) Arab Political Mind, p. 57.

(2) Prophethood and Politics, p. 38.

(3) Khalil, Imad al-Din: *A Study in the Biography*, p. 105.

(4) Al-Rayyes, Muhammad Diya' al-Din: *Islamic Political Theories*, pp. 28–29.

(5) p. 87.

(6) *In Arab Islamic Political Thought: From Imamate to Caliphate to State, An Approach to the Emergence and Development of Sunni and Shia Political Perspectives*, p. 29.

(7) Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/25.

(8) Al-Isfahani: *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah*, 1/66; Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi: *Kanz al-Ummal*, 12/49.

(9) Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/74.

(10) Mahmoud: *The Administration of the State in Islam*, p. 10.

(11) Surah Al Imran, verse 110.

(12) He is Ubayy ibn Shurayq ibn 'Amr ibn Wahb ibn 'Ilaj, an ally of Banu Zuhrah. He was nicknamed "Al-Akhnas" because he withdrew with 300 men of Banu Zuhrah on the day of Badr after learning that Abu Sufyan had escaped with his caravan. Hence, it was said: "Al-Akhnas withdrew Banu Zuhrah." He embraced Islam on the day of the conquest of Mecca and was among those whose hearts were reconciled (Mu'allafatu Qulubuhum). He died in the year 13 AH. For more details, see Ibn al-Athir: *Usd al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifat al-Sahabah*, 4/48; Ibn al-Jawzi: *Al-Muntazam fi Tarikh al-Muluk wa'l-Umam*, 4/152; Al-Safadi: *Al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*, 6/121; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani: *Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah*, 1/179.

(13) Muqatil ibn Sulayman: *Tafsir Muqatil*, 2/22; Al-Suhayli: *Al-Rawd al-Unuf*, 3/82; Al-Maqrizi: *Imta' al-Isma'*, 1/91.

(14) Ibn Ishaq: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 4/170; see also Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, 3/83.

(15) Al-Jabiri: *Arab Political Mind*, pp. 99–100.

(16) Belkziz, Abdelwahid: *Formation of the Islamic Political Sphere: Prophethood and Politics*, p. 40.

(17) Ibn Ishaq: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 4/172; Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1/212; Al-Baladhuri: *Ansab al-Ashraf*, 1/197.

(18) Ibn al-Jawzi: *Kashf al-Mushkil*, 1/341; Ibn al-Athir: *Usd al-Ghabah*, 4/44; Al-Haythami: *Majma' al-Zawa'id*, 9/293.

(19) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1/133.

(20) See Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 4/123; Al-Ya'qubi: *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 2/19; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: *Al-Isti'ab*, 1/556; Ibn al-Athir: *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, 1/663–666.

(21) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/101–122; Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/208.

(22) Opinions vary greatly about the geographical scope of Abyssinia (Habasha) in ancient centuries, with no single consensus. Muslim geographers like Ibn Hawqal (d. 4th century AH), Al-Bakri (d. 487 AH / 1094 CE), and Al-Qazwini (d. 682 AH / 1283 CE) placed it along the Red Sea (Sea of Qulzum) stretching to the land of the Zanj, bounded by the desert between Nubia and the Red Sea, and bordered by Beja, opposite the Hijaz across the sea. It was described as a vast land. Al-Qalqashandi (d. 821 AH / 1418 CE) and Al-Maqrizi (d. 845 AH / 1441 CE) defined its borders between the Nile to the west and the Red Sea to the east, from Nubia in the north to beyond the equator in the south, covering twelve regions — essentially encompassing present-day Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. Ancient Greek and Roman authors used the name for African lands south of Egypt's first cataract, spanning the continent from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea. See: *Surat al-Ard*, p. 16; *Athar al-Bilad wa-Akhbar al-'Ibad*, p. 20; *Kharidat al-'Aja'ib wa-Faridat al-Ghara'ib*, 1/138–139; Boulos Massad: *Abyssinia or Ethiopia at a Turning Point in Its History*, p. 3; 'Ata Muhammad Ahmad: *The Muslims' Migration to Abyssinia and Its Consequences*, p. 232; Ibrahim Tarkhan: *Islam and the Islamic Kingdoms in Abyssinia*, p. 4.

(23) Ibn Ishaq: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/154.

(24) Mahmoud: *The Administration of the State in Islam*, p. 45; Jum'a al-Hamdani: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 328–329.

(25) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/289; Al-Tabari: *Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk*, 2/84; Ibn Kathir: *Al-*

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Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah, 3/171.

(26) 1/162.

(27) He is Hawdha ibn 'Ali ibn Thumama ibn 'Amr al-Hanafi of Bakr ibn Wa'il, governor of Yamamah in Najd. Known as a poet and orator of Banu Hanifah before and during the Prophet's time. His poetry was mostly chaste love poems; he did not compose satire or praise poems. He used to visit Khosrow on important matters. He was nicknamed "Dhu al-Taj" (the Crowned) because he wore beads on his head arranged like a crown. His date of death is unknown. See: Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/262; Al-Isfahani: *Al-Aghani*, 8/466.

(28) Ibn Sayyid al-Nas: *'Uyun al-Athar*, 2/337; Al-Mizzi: *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, 1/198; Al-Zayla'i: *Nasb al-Rayah*, 6/567; Al-Damiri: *Hayat al-Hayawan*, 2/531.

(29) Al-Bayhaqi: *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah*, 2/434.

(30) Abu al-Walid 'Ubadah ibn al-Samit ibn Qays ibn Ahram al-Khazraji. He witnessed all battles with the Prophet ﷺ and taught the people of Al-Suffah the Qur'an. He served as judge of Syria under 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, then moved to Palestine. He died in 34 AH / 655 CE. For more details, see Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 3/547; Khalifah ibn Khayyat: *Tabaqat Khalifah*, p. 442; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: *Al-Isti'ab*, 1/118; also *Ikhtiyar Ma'rifat al-Rijal*, 1/185.

(31) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/295; Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/220; Al-Tabari: *Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk*, 2/88.

(32) Abu 'Abdullah Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr ibn Hashim ibn 'Abd Manaf ibn 'Abd al-Dar ibn Qusay. Described as the most handsome and elegant young man of Mecca. He was the first to lead Friday prayer in Medina, fought alongside the Prophet ﷺ at Badr, and was martyred at Uhud at the age of forty. For details, see Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 3/116; Al-Tabarani: *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, 1/362; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: *Al-Isti'ab*, 4/1473.

(33) Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 3/118.

(34) *Al-Wasit fi al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 153–154.

(35) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/303; Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/216–227; Al-Tabari: *Tarikh al-Rusul wa'l-Muluk*, 2/93; Ibn al-Athir: *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*, 2/99.

(36) Al-Mallah: *Al-Wasit fi al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, p. 169.

(37) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/303; Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat*, 1/223.

(38) Mahmoud: *The Administration of the State in Islam*, p. 46.

(39) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1/480–481; Al-Tabari: *History of Prophets and Kings*, 2/99; Al-Balkhi: *Al-Bada' wa'l-Tarikh*, 4/169.

(40) Surah Al-Anfal, verse 30.

(41) Al-Saduq: *Al-Khisal*, p. 367; Al-Mufid: *Al-Ikhtisas*, p. 165.

(42) Ibn al-Athir: *Usd al-Ghabah*, 4/25; see also Al-Tanukhi: *Al-Mustajād min Fi'alāt al-Ajwād*, p. 10; Al-Daylami: *Irshad al-Qulub*, 2/224; Ibn Jabr: *Nahj al-Iman*, p. 305.

(43) Al-Jabiri: *Arab Political Mind*, pp. 91–92.

(44) Belkziz: *Prophethood and Politics*, p. 40.

(45) Surah Al-Tawbah, verse 100.

(46) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 2/350; Ibn Sayyid al-Nas: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 1/261; Ibn Kathir: *Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah*, 3/275.

(47) Al-Mallah: *Al-Wasit fi al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 169–170.

(48) Mahmoud: *The Administration of the State in Islam*, p. 48.

(49) Qutay, Halima: *The Philosophy of Coexistence and Acceptance of the Other in the Prophetic Biography – The Medina Charter as a Model*, p. 500.

(50) 'Imara, Muhammad: *The Islamic State between Secularism and Religious Authority*, p. 216.

(51) Belkziz: *Prophethood and Politics*, p. 145.

(52) A medium-sized village, located one stage from Mecca and nine stages from Medina. See Yaqut al-Hamawi: *Mu'jam al-Buldan*, 2/229.

(53) Surah Al-Fath, verse 1.

(54) Al-Mallah: *Al-Wasit fi al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, pp. 261–262.

(55) *Prophethood and Politics*, pp. 111–113.

(56) Al-Waqidi: *Al-Maghazi*, 1/607.

(57) Ibn Shahr Ashub: *Al-Manaqib*, 1/175.

(58) *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 3/786.

(59) The same source, 3/786.

(60) Al-Halabi: *Al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah*, 2/704.

(61) Historians differed on his name; some said 'Ubayd Allah ibn Usayd ibn Harithah, others said 'Utbah ibn Usayd

ibn Harithah. They also differed on his lineage; some said he was from Quraysh, others said from Thaqif. His year of death is not known, but it is mentioned he died while reading the Prophet's letter inviting them to join the Muslims. See Al-Safadi: *Al-Wafi bil-Wafayat*, 1/108.

(62) Ibn Shahr Ashub: *Al-Manaqib*, 1/176; Al-Waqidi: *Al-Maghazi*, 1/627; Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 3/788.

(63) Al-Qummi: *Tafsir al-Qummi*, 2/312; Al-Kashani: *Al-Tafsir al-Safi*, 5/35.

(64) He is Sa'd ibn Malik ibn Sinan, born ten years before the Hijrah, belonging to Banu Khudrah ibn 'Awf of the Khazraj tribe. He was one of the distinguished Ansar and among the notable Companions of the Prophet ﷺ. He did not fight at Uhud due to his young age but joined later battles, including the Battle of the Trench and pledged allegiance at Al-Hudaybiyyah. He reportedly died in 74 AH / 694 CE and was buried in Al-Baqi' cemetery in Medina. For more details, see Ibn 'Abd al-Barr: *Al-Isti'ab*, 4/671; Al-Tabrizi: *Al-Ikmal fi Asma' al-Rijal*, p. 102; Al-Dhahabi: *Siyar A'lam al-Nubala'*, 3/168; Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalani, 3/78.

(65) Al-Waqidi: *Al-Maghazi*, 1/607.

(66) Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 3/782; Ibn Hanbal: *Musnad Ahmad*, 4/325; Al-Tabari: *History of Prophets and Kings*, 2/281.

(67) Belkziz: *Prophethood and Politics*, p. 111.

(68) Surah Al-Anbiya', verse 107.

(69) Surah Saba', verse 28.

(70) Surah Al-Furqan, verse 1.

(71) For the letters and messengers sent by the Prophet ﷺ, see Ibn Hisham: *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah*, 4/1025; Ibn Sa'd: *Al-Tabaqat al-Kubra*, 1/259; Al-Ya'qubi: *Tarikh al-Ya'qubi*, 2/77; Ibn Hibban: *Al-Thiqat*, 2/6; Al-Mizzi: *Tahdhib al-Kamal*, 1/196; Abu al-Fida': *Al-Mukhtasar*, 1/141.

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