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Cover Page Footnote

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Conflict Resolution from an Islamic Perspective From Conflict Resolution to Diversity Management

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Abstract

The paper discusses conflict resolution and management concepts provided earlier in literature. Then, using Islamic concepts and Guidance provided by the Quran, the paper shifts the perspective of conflict into a new dimension, considering diversity as the main root for our model. Diversity can be managed well to create synergy(Good outcome), or, if not managed properly, would drive to conflict which the author considers as the bad outcome of diversity , that is why the Quran regards conflict as the cause of failure. Finally the paper introduces a new model for conflict management process based on Islamic concepts and the Quran.

Keywords: Conflict management, Conflict resolution, Diversity, Management, Islam, Synergy

1.0 Introduction

When a man said to the Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him): “Counsel me.” The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: “Do not get angry.” The man repeated his request many times, but the Prophet (peace be upon him) kept saying: “Do not get angry.”¹

The best given advice by the Prophet clearly contradicts Frued's theory that considers emotional venting during conflict is the best healing technique (Breuer and Freud, 1957). Some researchers agree with Frued as Lee (1995), the conflict management experts Fisher and Shapiro(2005), Lewicki et al(1999) and Ury, (1993).

When other scientists researched for evidences to support the idea that venting releases anger, they found totally opposite results (e.g. Bushman *et al.*, 1999; Geen and Quanty, 1977; Parlamis et al., 2010). They found that venting

¹ This Hadith is referenced from the Arabic book “Fath Albari in sharah Sahih Al Bukhari” – Al-Adab book – author Ahmad ben Hajr Al- Asqlani – Hadith number 5765

did not release anger and in many cases produced greater anger (Berkowitz *et al.*, 1962; Bohart, 1980; Buss, 1966; Geen *et al.*, 1975; Hornberger, 1959; Murray and Feshbach, 1978; Wheeler and Caggiula, 1966; Berkowitz, 1970; Geen and Quanty, 1977)

Different types of negative consequences are also proved as follows: revenge (Bushman, 2002; Bushman *et al.*, 1999), lower self-esteem and increased negativity (Litman and Lunsford, 2009), negative impressions of a negotiator (Van Beest *et al.*, 2008), worse organizational, individual, and interpersonal outcomes when expression is intense (Gibson and Callister, 2010; Gibson *et al.*, 2009).

So the earliest theory that recommends venting for recovery could not stand in the face of research and evidence. Negative emotions in conflict are not the only part of a heated situation, but rather just a small part and fortunately one which can be avoided. Avoiding such a bad outcome can be accomplished through an effective management process for the whole conflict issue starting from not getting angry, advice that was given by Prophet Mohammad (Peace be upon him) as a first step. The effective process is to be stemmed from an effective, comprehensive and realistic perceptive.

Not to allow anger to take place is surely one of the Islamic practices that form with others a total Islamic perception for conflict. Proceeding from this point the author presents the whole concept of conflict from an Islamic point of view, starting by defining the concept of conflict in literature in section 1, then the concept of diversity is presented as a starting point to suggest a new model that digs deeper than regular conflict sources and to begin with diversity as the main reason of conflict. The new model is presented in section 5. Section 6 contains the Islamic application of the new model, followed by conclusion.

2.0 Setting the Stage

2.1 Definition of Conflict

Conflict is considered a very interesting subject for study in the fields of sociology, management and psychology (Nair, 2007). One of the main reasons for this attention is the contradictory and highly effective outcomes that may be widely devastating or highly productive (Robbins, 2002), conflict is also a complex and forked subject involving lots of issues, and great amount of positive and/or negative feelings. (Olson-Buchanan, J.B., & Boswell, W.R. (2008)) This was reflected by the number of studies that looked into the subject carrying different views and, consequently, a different number of definitions.

Earlier traditional views of conflict (1930s – 1940s) showed it as an undesirable event (Robbins, 2002) with dysfunctional outcome that would

minimize performance and cause malfunctioning; so it had to be avoided. (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2012)

As human resource management evolved to give more consideration to human behaviors in the behavioral school(1940s-1970s), the whole perception towards conflict took a new dimension by accepting conflict, perceiving it as an inevitable event, and required in some cases.(Robbins, 2002)(Kreitner and Kinicki, 2012)

Recently a new daring view was reflected by the interactionist. They consider conflict as a productive issue if it is managed properly, but rather their contribution is to keep an ongoing minimal level of conflict in the organization to keep the group alive and creative.(Kreitner and Kinicki, 2012)

Meanwhile, the concept of conflict took three main dimensions formed in three types of definitions: process-oriented, descriptive and conditional(Nair, 2007).

Some definitions were process-oriented. For example Walton (1966, p.411) defined it as “opposition processes in any of several forms – competition, status, rivalry, bargaining, sabotage, verbal abuse, etc.”

Descriptive definitions focused on what happens at the time of conflict such as perceptions and behavior. (Nair, 2007)

For example Boulding(1962, p.4) defined it as:“The situation of competition in which parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is incompatible with the wishes of the other.”

Finally, the conditional approach depends on when conflict is likely to occur, such as incompatible goals, means or activities leading to conflict. For example Kolb and Putnam(1992) defined conflict as when there are real or perceived differences that arise in specific organizational circumstances and that engender emotion as a consequence (Condition: antecedents and consequences) (Nair, 2007).

Most researchers nowadays use Wall & Callister’s (1995) definition. Their definition sees conflict as the process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party.

2.2 Conflict Process

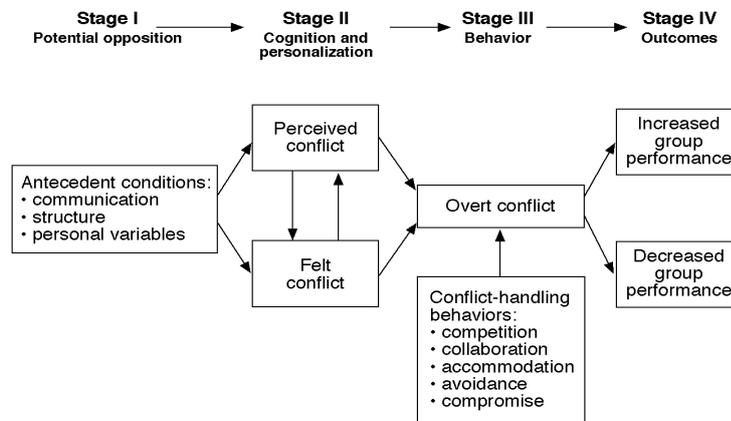


Figure 1: Conflict Process. Robbins(2002)

<p>Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • negative experience in the past • stereotypes • poor or failed communications • repetitive negative behaviour 	<p>Values</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belief systems • right and wrong • good and evil • just and unjust
<p>Externals/Moods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factors unrelated to substance of dispute • psychological or physiological • "bad hair day" 	<p>Data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of information • misinformation • too much information • collection problems
<p>Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limited physical resources (time, money) • authority issues • geographical constraints • organizational structures 	

following Table.(Moore, 2003)

The most adopted process for conflict is Robbin’s (2002) model as shown in Figure (1).The model starts with the potential opposition. Opposing interest may include communication, structure and personal variables as specified by Robbins, but Christopher Moore divides them into what he calls *the circle of conflict* which is divided into five main causes of conflict as shown in figure 2 and detailed in the

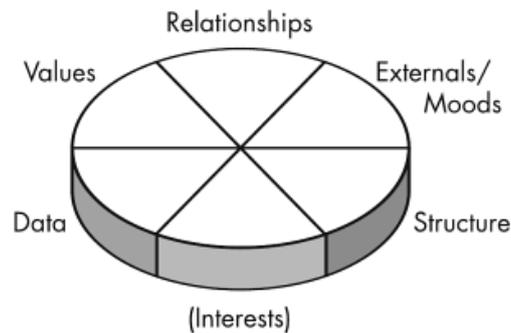


Figure 2 : Circle of Conflict

Robbins continues that if conflict is not managed well then the potential of disagreement becomes realized in the second stage and most importantly aware by one of the two parties. Cognition is not transformed into conflict until feeling is articulated, which by its turn leads to the third stage: conflict itself. Finally Robbins, S. (2002) clarifies that outcomes may be either functional or dysfunctional.

3.0 Diversity:

Diversity is another concept which is used in this research as the starting point of new conflict model presented by the author. A widely accepted definition of diversity is introduced by Diversity Task Force (2001). It defines it as “all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals”

Diversity has been an important issue that is continuously researched, and became a major social and political as well as a management research topic (Kapoor, 2011).

Bogaert & Vloeberghs (2005) list a number of authors who acknowledged the value of diversity, such as van Poeltje and van Silfhout who ensure that it leads to economic or competitive advantage. According to Bogaert & Vloeberghs (2005), Riel (1999) also presents the importance of increasing productivity and profitability through customer satisfaction, which cannot be accomplished without fulfilling their diverse needs. First consideration to fulfill diverse customer satisfaction is to maintain diversity among employees. According to Bogaert & Vloeberghs (2005), Benschop (1999) also emphasizes the importance of appointing employees with different backgrounds to bring new ideas and viewpoints; or in other words new blood to bring life for the organization. The “vigorous exchange of ideas” sentence expresses Peterson’s

(1999, p.19) opinion regarding diversity. Bhasin and Low (2002) also see that diversity can provide a particular country the cutting edge. As it is discussed above, diversity is mostly valued and empowered by researchers. (Fine, 1996; Litvin, 2006). Managing diversity is a new field of study emerged in an attempt to capture the benefits of diversity as clarified in the next section.

3.1 Managing Diversity

Since the early 1990s, several U.S. scholars have promoted the concept of managing diversity, also called “diversity management” (Cox, 1994) as diversity is seen as an asset.

Thomas (1990), presents managing diversity is a way to obtain from a heterogeneous workforce the same productivity, commitment, quality and profit which companies obtain from their homogeneous workforces.

According to Bogaert & Vloeberghs (2005), Glastra (1999) distinguishes four approaches for managing diversity. Two of these approaches (deficit and discriminatory) look at creating diverse organizations to acquire all the previously mentioned benefits of diversity. Creating diversity within organizations is out of the scope of this research.

The other two approaches defined by Glastra(1999): individualization and culturalization focus on achieving a stimulating environment in order to manage diversity.

The first approach, individualization, focuses on considering differences between individuals to motivate individual innovation by applying many tools for diversity management such as labor flexibility, part-time employment, and the stimulation of work-family balance to allow for individualized and diversified personnel management.

The other approach, culturalization, cares about different attitudes, and perceptions within different cultures. It cares about cultural difficulty, and ways to drive different people with different backgrounds to reach integration within cultural differences instead of conflicts especially when these cultures clashes in deep believes , central values and priorities, which might be extremely difficult (Bogaret, S. and vloeberghs, D., 2005)

These last two approaches are assumed and adopted by the author as classification for diversity. They are discussed in the latter sections.

4.0 Diversity & Conflict in the Quran:

Diversity of people is clearly recognized in the Quran and introduced as a clear concept whereas the Quran points to it in Surat al-Roum:22 in terms of colors and languages:

(And of His signs is and the **diversity of your languages and your colors**. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.)

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ خَلْقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ **وَإِخْتِلَافُ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَأَلْوَانِكُمْ** ۚ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

Human general diversity is mentioned in Surat Yunus:19 (**And mankind was not but one community [united in religion], but [then] they differed**.

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا ۗ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِن رَّبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِيمَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ

Quran also indicates the fact of diversity in Surat Hud: 118(And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but **they will not cease to differ**.)

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ

Surat al-Ma'ida:48 refers to the fact that God has the power to unit humans in one nation, but it is of His wisdom not to: (....., He **would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you**;

..... لِكُلِّ جَعَلْنَا مِنكُمْ شِرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۗ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَٰكِن لِّيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۗ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۗ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

The Quran refers to the purpose of diversity in al-Hujurat: 13: “O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female **and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another**.”

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ ۖ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

As discussed above diversity is valued in the Quran, on the other hand conflict is rejected.

While the word “conflict” (Niza’a) is mentioned in the Quran seven times in different contexts, it is associated with failure (which is also mentioned four times in the whole Quran) in three contexts of this seven.

According to Surat Anfal:46,God says (**and do not dispute then you will lose and your strength will fade away**,

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۗ وَاصْبِرُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

This aya clearly describes failure (loss) as a definite consequence for conflict, which is why it is considered an undesirable event.

As Islam considers conflict unsolicited, the author sees that conflict is only one of the two extremely opposing results of human diversity knowing that (as mentioned earlier in this research) diversity is a nature of human being. It is inclusive and it is part of our everyday reality (Kapoor, 2011).

The author believes that diversity is just as any gift of God, if managed correctly would bring positive results (Cutting Edge, Bhasin and Low, 2002), otherwise it would bring a bad outcome; which is conflict.

Not valuing diversity and a lack of understanding of people who are “different” (Thomas, 1991) would bring undesirable behaviors (such as expressions of racism, discrimination and exclusion). These behaviors are the foundation of conflict. Because it is a common sense fact that no individual can be perfect, and each person has his own limitations. Thus if diversity is really valued and respected, it can build on strength and compensate to weakness, it would bring synergy (Covey, 2009).

Synergy is recognized in this research as the other outcome of diversity, which if achieved it could bring a new dimension that never exist. Synergy is a Greek word *synergia συνεργία* from *synergos, συνεργός*, meaning "working together (Segal-Horn, 2004). Covey (2009) also defines it as “working together of two things to produce a result greater than the sum of their individual effects.”

This is why it has been recorded as a good practice for employees to face their differences and seeks synergetic resolution to raise communication, commitment and nurture loyalty (Bogaert & Vloeberghs, 2005).

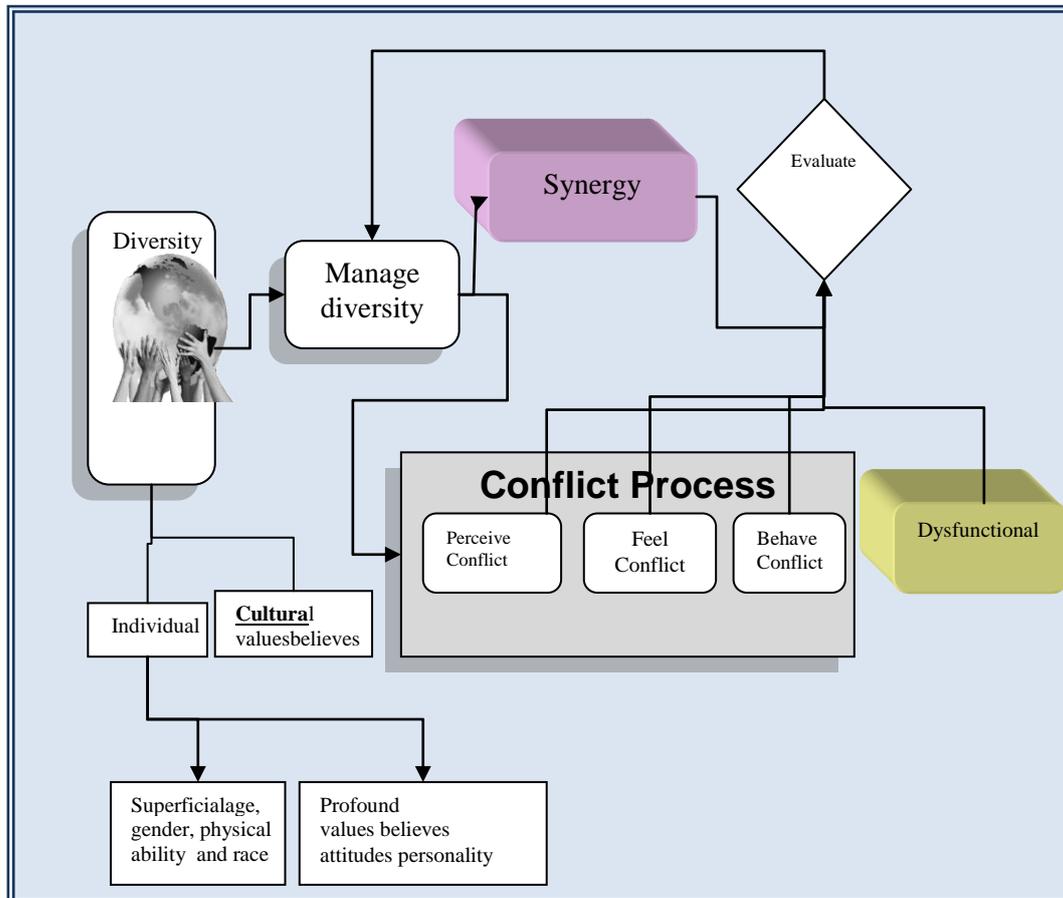


Figure 3 : New Model (Diversity Management Model)

If synergy is the good result of diversity when it is valued and managed well, then conflict would be the other side of the coin; means the bad outcome of diversity if it is mistreated. And surely it would lead to failure as mentioned earlier in the research.

5.0 New Synergy/Conflict Model Process

As mentioned earlier, conflict or synergy are the two contradictory outcomes of diversity. This result highly depends on how the whole process of diversity is managed. Diversity also represents the conditions which might create opportunities for conflicts or synergy. Thus conflict and diversity cannot be separated, and managing conflict must start by managing diversity. Figure (3) shows the suggested model.

The author agrees with Robbins (2002) that potential opposition may cause conflict in some stage, but disagrees with him about considering communication, structure and personal values as main sources of conflict; instead values are the main root for most of the conflicts, if Pareto's rule is considered. Pareto's Rule (80/20, common rule of thumb) summarizes a universal law which predicts the relationship of input to output, whereas Vilfredo Pareto the nineteenth-century economist and sociology mentioned the relevance of the rule as applied to quality control and some applications in marketing and found that, for many events, about 80% of the effects come from 20% of the cause. The rule is now considered in many areas such as: 80% of your profits come from 20% of your customers (Kruger, 2008) and the paper adds: 80% of conflicts are triggered by 20% of the causes.

Communication, structure, data and all other issues are not main factors; they are only avenues that unload the main unhidden drivers.

The author believes that diversity in values is the main driver for conflict. The paper adopts the categorization of diversity from both Kreitner and Kinicki (2012) and Glastra (1999).

Kreitner and Kinicki (2012) show that diversity may appear on either a surface level (age, gender, physical ability and race) or a deep level (values, attitudes, beliefs and personalities). But the author believes that diversity is better categorized based on Glastra's approaches which are presented in Bogaert & Vloebergh's 2005 paper for diversity, being: individual and cultural aspects. And then (based on Kreitner and Kinicki, 2012) individual diversity considers individual differences which can be superficial (age, gender, physical ability and race) or profound (attitudes and personality). On the other hand cultural diversity differs in values and beliefs. Keeping in mind that, although values and beliefs are usually shared among the community members who gathered them in the first place to form a community, sometimes these issues can be unique to some individuals when they depart from the group.

Diversity itself should not be the problem. The problem arises when diversity is neither understood nor managed well by personal or cultural values. Lack of understanding for individuals leads to undesirable behaviors such as racism, discrimination, disrespect for opinions and so on (Omanovic, 2012). Undesirable behaviors could range from subtle and indirect forms of interference to violent, direct and controlled struggle. These behaviors form the foundation for conflicts.

Good diversity management leads to synergy. Synergy can lead to a new creative dimension. It means that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts, and the synergetic outcome is better than individual.

Synergy is also found in everything, even in nature, when certain plants are planted near each other's, roots commingle and improve the quality of the soil so that both plants will grow better than if they were separated, such as planting garlic besides the roots of apple trees. Companion planting is described by lots of authors as an ancient practice of planting different plants in close proximity so that they can help one another in some way. (Mayer,2012; Druse, 2012)

Synergy is recognized in this research as the other side of the coin and the good outcome of diversity as clarified in the model, because strength lies in differences not in similarities that would be void and dull.

On the other hand, as stated above, if diversity is not managed well, that would be the starting point of conflict whereas different parties start to see themselves in opposing places and conflict is perceived. But that would not lead to conflict until it is personalized and feeling emerges, which is when people become emotionally involved. This involvement drives bad feelings, negativity, anxiety, tension and frustration (Robbins, 2002; Kreitner & Kinicki,2012), which would all be as fire under ashes that could explode any moment and in any form. Bad feelings (even if the conflict is resolved) will eventually harm people's deep perceptions or the interdependent relation on the long-run (Covey, 2009). This justifies the reason for the Quran to consider conflict as a cause for failure. The explosion of the bad feelings leads to the next stage in conflict in which members might end up engaging in actions that frustrate the attainment of another's goals or prevent the furthering of the other's interests (Robbins, 2002).

The author adds a new process to the model which is executed automatically by each person or group to evaluate their own behaviors and update them according to their filtering values. Each time the evaluation is performed the person may move forward or backward in the diagram, which means to progress to the conflict stage or return to any of the previous stages.

6.0 Applying the Islamic Perspective to the New Model

Islam does not only value diversity, but also provides a full management strategy for it in order to obtain synergy. The process starts proactively for preventing conflict, by building a full culture that smoothes the ground for synergy, then for each stage in the process several guidelines are provided to hinder the process of reaching conflict.

6.1 First stage: managing diversity

The process prepares the community through building a unified culture. The provided culture is based on Islamic concepts of human well-being and good life which stress brotherhood/sisterhood and socioeconomic justice and require a balanced satisfaction of both the material and spiritual needs of all humans (Chapra, 1992; Yassien, 2011).

These cultural guidelines undermine the value of superficial differences and emphasize the worth of deep differences such as values, perspectives, intentions, attitudes and behaviors.

The first precaution in the cultural dimension seeks to build shared values and perceptions that provide moral filtering to help people evaluate their decisions and behaviors accordingly.

These cultural guidelines are provided in two interrelated forms: unity of values and perceptions, and providing sets of appropriate practices. Although the provided guidelines are extensive, comprehensive and well built, at the same time empty spaces (without certain guidelines) are available in order to keep a pace for diversity to collaborate and innovate in order to achieve innovative individualism and creative synergy.

6.1.1 Unity of Values

Unity of values and perceptions is derived from the interrelated Islamic ruling foundations of unity (Taw hid), God's Governance, equity, accountability, justice and trusteeship and others.

The key concept of Islam lies in a person's relationship with God. Islam goes beyond the concept of human surrender to the will of God to the concept that all life is essentially a unity because it also provides the practical way to pattern all facets of human life in accordance with God's will, Who is the main governance of the world (Rice, 1999; Yassien, 2011).

Numerous verses are found in the Quran which emphasize these concepts, such as:

".....**The decision is only for Allah** ;" Yusuf: 67, a good example for God's Governance.

.... إِنَّ الْحُكْمَ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ

In this sense, unity implies that God is the sole creator of the universe and people are equal partners (brothers or sisters). That means cooperation and equality of effort and opportunity (Rice, 1999).

One of the last words delivered by Prophet Muhammad in his last sermon before his death on the ninth day of the month Thul-Hijjah was: “*All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except **by piety (taqwa)** and good action...*”

(أيها الناس:..، وان أباكم واحد كلكم لآدم وأدم من تراب ، إن أكرمكم عند الله أتقاكم، ليس لعربي على أعجمي ولا لعجمي على عربي، ولا لأحمر على أبيض، ولا لأبيض على أحمر فضل إلا بالتقوى..)

That also means responsibility and accountability because each person only receives what he/she earns, according to his/her work as presented in the last sermon.

Muslims believe that because people are accountable to God, and their success on judgment day depends on their performance in this life on earth, this adds a new responsible dimension to human perception of things and their behaviors in this life (Rice, 1999).

The Quran also teaches that the greatest possible individualism is that “... no bearer of burdens can bear the burdens of another; ... man can have nothing but what he strives for . . .” (Quran 53:38–9). Everyone is responsible for his/her own actions in life and thereafter.

The concept of trusteeship is another pillar of Islamic culture. Trusteeship means that the whole world is owned by God (..... Lord of the Two Worlds –al-Fatiha -2), and people are viewed as trustees of the Earth on behalf of God. The Earth’s protection is a must for each Muslim even in the cruelest form of conflict which is war. Abu Bakr, the first ruler of the Islamic state after Muhammad, sent someone on a war assignment: he warned him not to kill indiscriminately or to destroy trees, plants or animals, even in war and in enemy territory.²

Trusteeship facilitates sustainable development and social responsibility of ethics (Rice, 1999). Models of sustainable development do not regard natural resources as a free good, to be spoiled at the free will of any nation, any generation or any individual (UNDP, 1994).

Lots of values, perspectives and priorities form the ground for Islam’s followers, because Islam is a comprehensive system include all aspects of

2Al-Maleki - al-Montaqa – Mowata’a Malek Explanation – book of al-Jihad -

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life(Yassien, 2011; Al-Akaila, 2013).Before leaving this area, a related perspective must be retouched. The previous section introduces the concept of conflict as cause of failure. We can add to that another perspective mentioned several times in Quran, which is that conciliation is the best choice as stated, for example, in Surat al-Nisa:128 as follows:

“And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - **and settlement is best**. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah - then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, acquainted.”

وَإِن امْرَأَةٌ خَافَتْ مِن بَعْلِهَا نُشُوزًا أَوْ إِعْرَاضًا فَلَا جُنَاحَ عَلَيْهِمَا أَن يُصْلِحَا بَيْنَهُمَا صُلْحًا وَالصُّلْحُ خَيْرٌ ۗ وَأُحْضِرَتِ الْأَنفُسُ الشُّحَّ ۗ وَإِن تُحْسِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرًا

When these values are shared among the community, bases for reconciliation are built to prepare people to tend towards synergy rather than conflict as is mentioned in the next sections.

6.1.2 Practices

Culture is not only built by creating united values. Provision of a set of practices that help to achieve interdependency between individuals is another form. A good example for these practices lies in the S.N.T model (Ahmad, 2007). The “S” stands for a key principle in the Islamic religion which is ‘Shura’, or consultation, referring to consulting others before implementing any change. This is a valuable approach to minimize disagreement between individuals and gain loyalty by involving others. The second principle is ‘Naseeha’ (“N”) which means advice. Sincere advice and viewpoint exchange between parties foster common understanding of causes and consequences. Even advice in Islam follows certain practices in order to achieve its positive implication on others.

Advice should be by balancing consideration, respect and empathy (not sympathy) as a first step with courage to state the adopted opinion as the second step, without leaning towards whims. This is clear in God’s speech to his messengers as in Surat Aal-Imran:159 and Surat Taha:44

“So by mercy from Allah , [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you.....”

(ولو كنت فظا غليظ القلب لانفضوا من حولك)

God also directed the messenger Mousa, and his brother to worn Feron gently in Surat Taha: 44:

(وقولا له قولاً ليناً)

“And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].”

The last element ‘Ta’awun’, denoted by “T”, indicates cooperation which is essential to achieve the required synergy, to promote healthy communication, reduce change to opponents, and eliminate the hostile workplace environment (Ahmed, 2007).

6.2 Second stage: conflict occurs

The unity of culture and practicing guidelines provided by the Quran can minimize the potential of conflict. But practices are not always well applied, sometimes sincere intentions are not fully formed, sometimes even when the community shares values and interests some people may drift away with their special agendas and their own values and interests, and sometimes clashes of different opinions happen due to the empty space left without clear guidelines for the sake of flexibility and innovation, so ultimately some conflicts will arise here and there.

The Quran provides several remedies in order to minimize the negative impacts of conflict and to recover the best possible results as follows:

1. Provision of a unified perception towards conflict and conciliation as previously mentioned. These shared perceptions (conflict is the cause of failure and conciliation is the best option) motivate the desire for cooperation and collaboration as a first step in order to form habits of continuously seeking reconciliation to reach synergy rather than conflict.
2. Specification of main references. This means that when a conflict occurs, resolution is not taken for the favor of any party even if one party has a potential place or authority in the community. Instead it refers to first to the Quran (Word of God) and Sunna, as stated in Surat al-Nisa: 59, Surat al-Shu‘ara: 10 and al-Nisa: 83, as follows:

“..... And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger,”

..... فَإِنْ تَنَازَعْتُمْ فِي شَيْءٍ فَرُدُّوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ.....

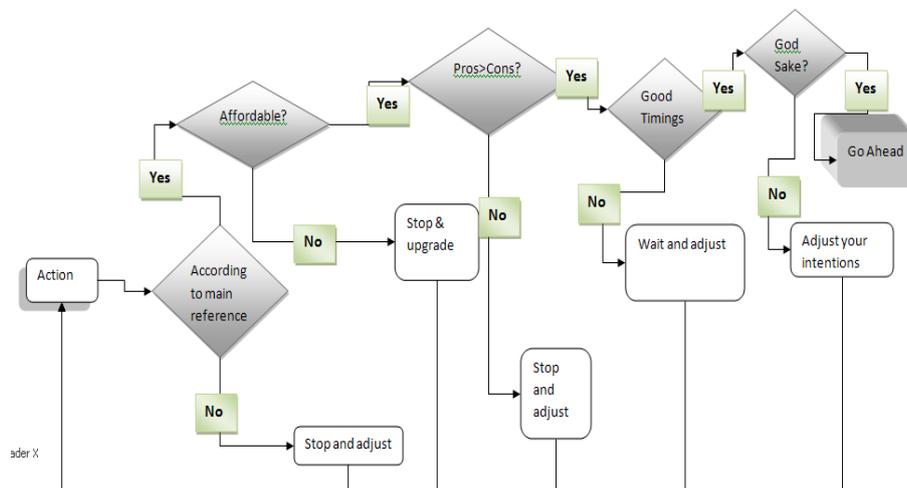
“And in anything over which you disagree - its ruling is [to be referred] to Allah . [Say],”

وَمَا اخْتَلَفْتُمْ فِيهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَحُكِّمُوهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ ۗ.....

“..... But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it.”

.....وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَىٰ أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ

3. “To err is human.” All humans are sinners, and the best sinners are there penitents as Prophet Muhammed says. This is a natural issue, so it is human for an individual to make decisions or perform actions which he/she regrets. In particular, when negative emotions are high at conflict moments, cognition may not be fully available. When feelings are cool, individuals usually reevaluate the situation to readjust their actions. Islam is aware of this complex psychology of individuals, and the different factors that affect their decisions and behaviors. Islam provides a clear and consistent roadmap to help them get back to the track.



The author adopts the Islamic evaluation system provided by Alakila(2013) as in Figure 3.

4. Surat al-Hojrat: 9 gives a clear and detailed description for the conflict treatment as follows:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ ۖ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلِحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ.

“And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it returns to the ordinance of Allah. And if it returns,

then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”

This verse explains that if previous personal remedies do not work, conflict may escalate and lead to the worst results. This is when intervention from external parties must take place in order to stop the situation from escalating. The interference works gradually by starting firstly a reconciliation process using referential or charismatic power to smooth the situation between the conflicted parties, then to relieve the congestion and motivate for better communication until reconciliation might be achieved. Earlier shared perceptions surely contribute to the calming process and push towards reconciliation.

We should keep in mind that any oppressive reconciliation is not accepted in Islam, as the same verse indicates: “make settlement between them in justice and act justly.” Reconciliation that does not refer to the main Islamic bases is also not accepted.

If intervention does not work, and one party is unfairly overwhelmed by the other, the aggressive party must be forced coercively to retreat from their aggression. Forcing the aggressive party to retreat is not the final step because hard feelings, emotional scars and negative attitudes may be buried, and may come again in the future in worse forms. This is why the Quran directs us to attach this stage to another reconciliation stage in order to spread understanding and to emphasize the results which might be reached.

The intervention stage is very important and has a powerful impact. It keeps feelings of trust, safety and justice in the community. These feelings support the whole system's existence.

7.0 Conclusion

Although the modern view tends to encourage a certain level of conflict, based on Islamic concepts the author sees that this modern view is drifting away from the right course of action. This paper agrees more with the traditional view that considers conflict as an undesirable behavior.

It is indeed true that eventually some conflicts may arise, but conversely it is essential to build a culture which rejects it rather than encouraging it in order to push towards a fair reconciliation.

This model needs to be studied in some Islamic organizations which apply these Islamic principles: this way it might be proven experimentally.

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حل وإدارة المنازعات من منظور إسلامي

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كلية تكنولوجيا المعلومات

يبحث هذا البحث الأفكار الرئيسية المتوفرة في الكتابات السابقة حول حل وإدارة النزاعات. ثم يحاول البحث نقل منظور القارئ إلى بعد جديد باستخدام الأفكار الإسلامية والتعاليم القرآنية. هذا البعد يحدد التنوع كمصدر رئيسي للاختلافات وهو أساس نموذج النزاعات الذي يقدمه البحث، حيث إن التنوع يمكن ان يدار بشكل جيد فيوئد التعاون، وإلا فإنه سيقود للنزاعات التي تعتبر المنتج السلبي للتنوع، والذي نبذه القرآن واعتبره مصدر الفشل (لا تنازعوا فتفشلوا.....)

وأخيراً يقدم البحث نموذج جديد لعملية إدارة النزاعات من وجهة نظر إسلامية.