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Prophetic Ethics of Inclusion and Conflict Resolution: A Neo-Traditionalist Interpretation of the Sirah

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Abstract: In an era marked by escalating religious intolerance and social fragmentation, the ethical legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (Sirah) offers a compelling yet underexplored framework for promoting peaceful coexistence. Despite its rich content, contemporary discourse often marginalises the inclusive and reconciliatory dimensions of the Prophet's life. This study aims to examine how neo-traditionalist Muslim scholars—particularly from the West and the Indian subcontinent—interpret the Sirah to address issues of social inclusiveness and conflict resolution. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research integrates content analysis, thematic exploration, and comparative interpretation. It focuses on key historical events such as Hilf al-Fudul, the Constitution of Medina, the migration to Abyssinia, the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, and the Conquest of Makkah. The findings show that neo-traditionalist scholars present a contextual and ethical reading of the Sirah that aligns classical Islamic values with modern challenges. This study contributes to the growing field of peace studies in Islam by reviving the Prophet's ethical model as a viable framework for interfaith harmony, minority rights, and conflict transformation in pluralistic societies.

Keywords: Prophetic Sirah; Neo-traditionalist Approach; Social Inclusiveness; Conflict Resolution; Interreligious Harmony

1. Introduction

In the intellectual tradition of Islam, the Qur'an and the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad (saw) occupy a central position as the main source of reference for Muslims(Aslam & Ur Rehman, 2022a). The Qur'an, along with the Sirah or biography of the Prophet, is often referred to as the "Twin Beacons of Guidance" that have an unshakable and undeniable authority(Azmi, 2019; Kidwai, 2019; Parray, 2024a). The history of the development of Islamic science shows that Sirah has always received great scientific attention in every era, both classical, medieval, and contemporary(Parray, 2024). As a narrative legacy about the life of the Prophet, Sirah has become the main means for Muslims to understand and emulate the teachings of Islam in an applicable manner. Sertkaya (2023) emphasised that Sirah is a "vital source and inspiration for Muslims" that always provides direction in facing the challenges of the times. Muslims throughout their history have referred to the Qur'an

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and the example of the Prophet to find solutions to various socio-political, ethical, and legal problems. Moreover, the approach to Sirah continues to evolve with the birth of competing literature, reflecting the wider diversity of interpretations in this study(Sertkaya, 2023, p. 2).

The development of Sirah as a branch of Islamic scholarship shows continuity with the opening of space for new approaches. One of the methodological approaches that stands out in contemporary studies is the "neo-traditionalist" approach(Quisay, 2023). This approach emphasises an emphasis on events and traditions in the Prophet's life that reflect justice, compassion, and openness in interacting with non-Muslims. Several contemporary Muslim scholars have adopted this approach, both from the West, such as Adil Salahi(Salahi, 2014), Hamza Yusuf, Tariq Ramadan(Ramadan, 2007), Yasir Qadhi, and Abdal Hakim Murad, as well as from the Indian subcontinent, such as Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi(Siddiqi, 2016), Wahiduddin Khan(W. Khan, 1999), Jalaluddin Umari, and Khalid Saifullah Rehmani(Khalid Saifullah Rehmani, 2008). They highlight the universal values in the life of the Prophet, both in the Makkiyah and Madaniyah periods, and relate them to the needs of today's Muslims in the face of diverse socio-political contexts. Their focus on the principles of inclusivity, coexistence, and moral integrity in Sirah provides an applicable framework for building social harmony and resolving conflicts.

In this context, Haris Sadik Kirazli (2024) emphasised that the Sunnah of the Prophet is a rich source of wisdom, especially in handling conflicts ethically(Kirazli, 2024). The traditions and practices of the Prophet provide a real example in responding to conflicts with justice, empathy, and peaceful resolution. Through the Sirah, Muslims can understand the dynamics of conflicts, the causes of them, and the Prophet's approach to resolving them. This makes Sirah not just a historical narrative, but a source of deep understanding of the Prophet's strategy in building peace. Therefore, Sirah's study in a neo-traditionalist approach not only explores spiritual values but also emphasises their relevance in the context of social interaction and the plurality of today's society. Figures who adopt this approach use Sirah to present the model of conflict resolution and social harmony needed by Muslims as a majority and minority community in various parts of the world.

Based on this background, this paper aims to analyse the views of several contemporary Muslim scholars from the West and India—such as Adil Salahi, Tariq Ramadan, Yasir Qadhi, Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, Wahiduddin Khan, Jalaluddin Umari, and Khalid Saifullah Rehmani—towards Sirah through a neo-traditional approach. The focus of the analysis is directed at the theme of social inclusivity and conflict resolution as formulated by Abdullah Saeed (2020), especially in his works such as *Inclusivism and Exclusivism among Muslims Today between Theological and Social Dimensions*(A. Saeed, 2022) and *The Qur'an and Social Inclusivism*(Akbar & Saeed, n.d.). In his study, Saeed distinguishes between "theological inclusivism" and "social inclusivism", emphasising that the latter approach is a pragmatic solution to fostering harmonious interreligious relations. The main argument of this study is that the neo-traditional approach to Sirah offers an applicable strategy that is not only in harmony with Islamic principles but also responds to the needs of the times in creating a just, peaceful, and inclusive society(A. Saeed, 2022)..

2. Literature Review

2.1. Thematic Shifts in Contemporary Sirah Studies: Emphasis on Pluralism and Conflict Resolution

In the contemporary development of Sirah studies, there has been a paradigm shift from a narrative-chronological approach to a thematic and philosophical approach, which is often referred to as *Fiqh al-Sirah* or the philosophy of Sirah(Aslam & Ur Rehman, 2022b; Supriadi & Islamy, 2023). This approach seeks to explore universal values in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), particularly as they relate to modern social issues such as inclusivity, social justice, tolerance, and conflict resolution. Several non-Muslim Western scholars, such as John A. Morrow, Juan Cole, and Craig Considine, began to engage in the writing of Sirah with a perspective that emphasised interreligious dialogue, pluralism, and Muslim-Christian relations(Wagay, 2022). This emphasis on the principles of pluralism shows that the Quran is not only a spiritual source of Muslims but also a relevant moral reference in the context of a multicultural society(Sertkaya, 2022). They interpret the story of the Prophet's life as an ethical response to complex and diverse socio-political dynamics. This marked a significant shift in modern Sirah studies, with openness to interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches.

This category of study includes an examination of specific events in the Prophet's life that are considered to reflect his commitment to the values of social inclusivity and conflict resolution. For example, *the Hilf al-Fudul*—an inter-tribal agreement to uphold justice in Mecca—is often cited as an early example of cross-tribal social solidarity(Saeidi, 2022). Similarly, *the Constitution of Medina (Mithaq al-Madina)* shows how the Prophet established a socio-political structure that valued religious and cultural diversity among Muslims, Jews, and other groups(Rose, 2011). *The Hudaibiyyah Agreement* is also considered an important case study of diplomacy and conflict resolution that prioritises peace over military confrontation(Tasgheer, 2022). The study of these events not only highlights the Prophet's role as a spiritual leader but also as a designer of a social order that prioritises the principle of coexistence. These studies, both from Muslim and non-Muslim circles, reinforce the argument that Sirah has an ethical-social dimension that is highly relevant in building a just and peaceful pluralistic society.

2.2. Neo-traditionalist Approach: Bridging Classical Heritage and Modern Realities

The neo-traditionalist approach is a methodological response to the urgent need to connect the classical intellectual heritage of Islam with contemporary socio-political realities(Halilović, 2012). In the context of the study of Sirah, this approach prioritises the principle of traditional continuity with the renewal of discourse to respond to modern challenges such as polarisation, interreligious conflicts, and social fragmentation(Fennane, 2003). Conceptually, this approach asserts that the values in the Prophet's life—particularly those recorded in the Sirah—are not only normative historical but also contain universal ethics that can be transformed in the modern context. This approach also maintains the authority of classical texts while opening up space for new interpretations that are contextual, making them relevant to Muslims as both a majority and a minority. Thus, neo-traditionalism in Sirah is not only a method, but also an ethical paradigm that blends authenticity with relevance.

Categorisation in this approach includes three main elements: (1) the recontextualization of classical values in contemporary reality, (2) the use of traditional sources (Qur'an, Hadith, classical Sirah) as foundations, and (3) a focus on ethical-practical solutions to modern social problems. A concrete example of the application of this approach is the way scholars and intellectuals such as Hamza Yusuf, Tariq Ramadan, and Yasir Qadhi interpret the Sirah event as a guideline for conflict resolution, social harmony, and interreligious interaction(Bensaid & Machouche, 2019; Edaibat, 2018). They emphasised values such as grace, justice, and tolerance as the core of the Prophet's teachings that must be contextualised. Through writings, lectures, and public dialogue, these scholars show how the classical legacy of Islam can be used as a moral guide in the face of challenges such as Islamophobia, marginalisation, and community division. Therefore, the neo-traditionalist approach in the study of Sirah becomes a methodological bridge between tradition and contemporary challenges.

2.3. Contemporary Neo-traditionalist Contributions to Social Inclusiveness and Conflict Resolution

This study highlights the concrete contributions of contemporary scholars, both from the West and the Indian subcontinent, who adopted a neo-traditionalist approach to the study of Sirah. Figures such as Adil Salahi, Tariq Ramadan, and Yasir Qadhi in the West, as well as Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, Wahiduddin Khan, Jalaluddin Umari, and Khalid Saifullah Rehmani in India, show how Sirah can be used as a learning resource to develop inclusive societies and resolve conflicts ethically(Sertkaya, 2022). They raised themes such as interfaith tolerance, community conflict resolution, and social justice, which were traced from specific events in the Prophet's life. They also show that classical Islamic values evoked from the Sirah remain contextual to modern realities. This enriches Sirah literature with a more normative-applicative, rather than just historical-narrative approach.

Their studies often refer to events such as *Hilf al-Fudul*, the rebuilding of the Kaaba involving cross-tribal cooperation, the migration to Habasyah, which showed solidarity between religions, *Mithaq-i-Madina,* which became the forerunner of the pluralistic social contract, *the Hudaibiyyah* Agreement as a symbol of strategic peace, and the Conquest of Makkah, which represented the culmination of moral reconciliation(Hamid, 2016). Each of these events serves as a case study that confirms the prophetic mission of the Prophet to establish a just and peaceful society. These scholars interpret these events through the lens of Islamic universal values such as empathy, justice, and forgiveness. Therefore, their works contribute to the revitalisation of Sirah as a source of contemporary solutions to social polarisation and conflict. This approach makes Sirah not only a memory of Islamic history but also a source of life for an inclusive and solution-oriented social order.

3. Methods

3.1 Material Object

This research makes the scholarly works of contemporary Muslim scholars from India and the West a material object (unit of analysis). The main focus lies in their interpretation of the Sirah of the Prophet Muhammad (saw), particularly in the context of two central themes: *social inclusiveness* and

conflict resolution. These two themes were chosen because of their high relevance in both academic studies and global socio-political discourse, especially related to Muslim and non-Muslim relations.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. Three main methods are used in an integrated manner: *content analysis*, *thematic analysis*, and *comparative analysis*. This design enables the mapping of the narrative and scholars' interpretations of the ethical values in the Sirah, as well as a comparison of scholarly approaches between Indian and Western Muslim scholars in understanding key events in the life of the Prophet Muhammad (saw).

3.3 Data Sources

The main data sources come from scientific works in the form of books, academic articles, lecture transcripts, and other publications from scholars who are known to be active in the discourse of Sirah. Figures such as Tariq Ramadan, Yasir Qadhi, and Adil Salahi represent the West, while Muhammad Yasin Mazhar Siddiqi, Wahiduddin Khan, and Khalid Saifullah Rehmani are from India. The selection criteria are based on their contribution to the themes of social inclusivity and conflict resolution within the Sirah.

3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out through an in-depth literature study, including tracing primary and secondary Sirah texts, including documentation of lectures and public studies. Five important events in the Sirah were selected as case studies: *Hilf al-Fudul*, *Rebuilding of the Ka'bah*, *Constitution of Medina*, *Treaty of Hudaybiyyah*, and *Conquest of Makkah*. This event is considered to contain the dimensions of justice, coexistence, and reconciliation that are the focus of the analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out with a thematic approach to identify the social and ethical principles of the five Siraj events. A comparative approach is used to assess the similarities and differences in interpretation between Indian and Western scholars. One of the key findings is the shared tendency to use *neo-traditionalist* approaches in linking classical sources of Islam to contemporary challenges. This method allows for a rich understanding of Sirah as an ethical guide for the modern world..

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Neo-traditional Approach to the Sirah and Evidences of Social Inclusivism

Several scholars, including the above-mentioned ones, have emphasised themes like *Hilf al-Fudul*, Muslim emigration to Abyssinia, and *Mithaq-i-Madina*—the events that took place in the pre- and post-prophetic eras of the Prophet's life—to illustrate the Prophet's promotion of social inclusiveness. Below are presented these events as examples of social inclusiveness in the light of interpretations and explanations provided by the above-mentioned selected contemporary Muslim scholars of the West and India.

4.1.1 Building Bridges: *Hilf al-Fudul* and the Prophet's Vision for Social Harmony

Established in 590 C.E., *Hilf al-Fudul* (the Pact of the Virtuous) was an important pre-Islamic pact in Makkah which sought to promote social justice and safeguard the rights of the oppressed. It can be regarded, in the estimation of Salahi, as an early effort to address social inequities, as the prolonged conflicts and oppression of the underprivileged had created an urgent need to restore peace and ensure justice in the region(Salahi, 2014).

The Prophet (pbuh) attended this alliance during his youth and is reported to have expressed unwavering support for its principles even after his prophethood, when he stated: "I attended the forging of a covenant in 'Abdullah ibn Jud'an's house, and I would not exchange it for any material gain. Even now, after Islam, I would still honour it if called upon" (Reported in Al-Bayhaqi's *Sunan Al-Kubra*, Hadith no. 12859)(Salahi, 2014). In Rehmani's estimation, this statement highlights how Islam upholds and endorses any effort or agreement made to establish justice and fairness for all(M. H. Saeed, 2023).

Scholars like Ramadan and Siddiqi draw significant lessons of social inclusiveness from this pact, emphasising its enduring relevance for justice and unity. Ramadan, in his *In the Footsteps of the Prophet,* for example, identifies three key principles and lessons from this alliance, which "placed respect for the principles of justice and support of the oppressed above all other considerations of kinship and power"(Ramadan, 2007, p. 21), approving social inclusiveness:

- Islam accepts values derived from human conscience, even if they originate outside Islamic tradition. The Prophet (pbuh) affirmed this pact before receiving revelation, demonstrating the compatibility of universal ethics with Islamic principles.
- The pact highlights that non-Muslims can uphold justice and protect the oppressed, a virtue Islam recognises and appreciates.
- Rather than fostering allegiance to an exclusive community, Islam emphasises commitment to universal values. The message of Islam aligns with and complements other ethical systems, showcasing its openness and inclusivity(Ramadan, 2007, pp. 21–22).

Similarly, in his *The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh): A Role Model for Muslim Minorities,* Siddiqi draws important lessons for Muslim minorities from the spirit of the *Hilf al-Fudul*(Siddiqi, 2016, pp. 184–185). He suggests that Muslim minorities today can benefit from forming alliances and by forging "a coalition with secular and patriotic groups and political organisations(Siddiqi, 2016, pp. 184–185)." However, he cautions against aligning too closely with a single political party, particularly if it lacks strength, as this could lead to vulnerabilities. Instead, he advises forming alliances and establishing "association with two or three [leading and strong-holding] political parties" to maintain balance and avoid overextending their influence(Siddiqi, 2016, pp. 184–185). He highlights that many minority communities show indifference or disillusionment toward politics, which is a "dangerous trend". Such apathy diminishes their significance in national politics and compromises their security. To counter this, Siddiqi urges Muslim leaders and communities to actively engage with social and political organisations, fostering mutual understanding with non-Muslims and enhancing their safety and representation(Siddiqi, 2016, p. 184).

Rehmani argues that from this incident, it becomes clear that removing oppression and injustice from society, supporting the oppressed, and ensuring justice for the weak were part of the Prophet's practice and are the duty of every believer. So, it is not sufficient for Muslims to merely safeguard themselves while remaining silent spectators to the injustices and excesses suffered by other sections of society. He raises the question that in India—a 'secular democratic' country which is home to several religious and linguistic communities, including Muslims—there are certain groups that face discrimination and class inequality, "but have we ever tried to solve their problems and free them from oppression and injustice? If only we had established something like *Hilf al-Fudul* in this country to assist such oppressed individuals!(Jaffrelot & A., 2023)"

The incident of *Hilf al-Fudul*, thus, indicates that the Prophet (pbuh) was actively involved in resolving social issues of his time, even though the society was not a religious (Muslim) society. And the issues he tried to resolve were not purely religious, but as it involved justice, truth, and helping the oppressed, the Prophet (pbuh) pleasantly participated in addressing and resolving such issues. Concerning this alliance, Tunisian academic-politician Rachid Ghannouchi (b. 1941) in his "Participation [of Muslims] in non-Muslim Government", cites the Prophetic narrations reported in *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, in which he states that

> The Prophet [pbuh] did witness the signing of the alliance [*Hilf al-Fudul*] before his prophethood [in 610 CE], and said afterwards that if he were to be invited to a similar alliance in Islam, he would have accepted without reservation. He further stressed that any good and noble contract made in *jahiliya* [the pre-Islamic era] is automatically endorsed by Islam(Kurzman, 1998, pp. 89–95).

Ghannouchi draws the following conclusion, for current times, from these incidents: "It is thus concluded that the community of believers may participate in an alliance aimed at preventing injustice and oppression, at serving the interests of mankind, [and] at protecting human rights"(Kurzman, 1998, pp. 89–95). This incident is clear evidence that getting involved in public causes and in finding ways for their betterment is a part of being a good Muslim. And this, for Qadhi, is a big issue in our time, in that, as an *Ummah*, some of us think we should only get involved in purely Islamic causes—and so they don't get involved in eradicating social menaces like racism, oppression, poverty, child abuse, etc. Qadhi further maintains that the Prophet's involvement as an active member of his society, who supported justice regardless of religion, can be assessed that Muslims need to do the same in the present times, especially as Muslims living in a non-Muslim land. He was involved with the problems of his society and solving them — then when he became a prophet, he was known, he was loved, he was respected, his "message" then became acceptable; and none of the Quraysh could come and say, "Where were you when we needed you?", "Who are you to preach to us?" The bottom line, for Qadhi, is that there are common human values: justice, security, etc. — and the Muslim needs to be at the forefront of these issues. When we support justice and have the proper theology, it will come as a total package, he emphasises(Al-Khaiat & Kadir, 2019).

All these scholars underline the importance of Muslims adopting an inclusive approach to non-Muslims, especially in areas of social justice and the protection of oppressed and marginalised groups. Ramadan presents this idea in a universal framework, addressing Muslims worldwide,

irrespective of whether they live in minority or majority contexts. Siddiqi and Rehmani, on the other hand, place their perspective within the framework of Indian minorities, advocating for Muslims to actively participate in their countries' political and social systems rather than staying indifferent to governmental power. Such a strategy, Siddiqi argues, can help Muslims secure their identity and pave the way for a prosperous life.

4.1.2 The Muslim Migration to Abyssinia: A Lesson for Tolerance and Inclusivity

The migration to Abyssinia (615 and 616 CE) is another significant event in the Makkan phase of the Prophet's (pbuh) life, which serves as a model for social inclusiveness. As Siddiqi mentions on the authority of the classical biographers of the Prophet (pbuh) and standard sources,

> Muslims migrated to Abyssinia twice; the first being in 615 CE or the fifth year of the Prophet's mission, when fourteen Muslims left Makkah for Abyssinia. After a year, around eighty men, women and children migrated there, taking the figure of Muslims in Abyssinia to around one hundred(Elsayed Said Ahmed, 2022a; Siddiqi, 2016).

As the message of monotheism spread in Makkah, the persecution of the Prophet's (pbuh) companions intensified, making life in Makkah increasingly unbearable for the early Muslims. As their suffering worsened, the Prophet (pbuh) sought a solution to protect his companions. He identified Abyssinia, a Christian kingdom ruled by a just king (Negus or Najashi), as a safe place. The decision to migrate demonstrated the Prophet's (pbuh) keen understanding of global affairs and his ability to strategically choose a place where his followers could live freely and practice their faith without fear of persecution(Schmalkuche, 2011).

Numerous contemporary Muslim scholars writing on *Sirah*, including those under study, derive the lessons of social inclusivity from this event. For example, Siddiqi highlights the universal dimensions of migration to Abyssinia, accentuating its significance in demonstrating that Islam transcends regional and racial boundaries: "In Abyssinia, the universal dimension of the Muslim community came into light. The entire growth owed only to the preaching of Islam(Siddiqi, 2016)." In his analysis, this migration was a practical manifestation of Islam's openness to non-Arabs and its rejection of nationalistic or racial prejudices. Islam embraces all humans equally and regards the entire earth as its domain, free from limitations of region or ethnicity. This act also reinforced the idea that Muslims could seek protection under non-Muslim rulers when circumstances demanded it, as demonstrated by the Prophet's (pbuh) choice of Abyssinia, a land governed by a fair and principled Christian ruler(Siddiqi, 2016).

Umari points out that Abyssinia, despite being a Christian kingdom, served as a sanctuary (*Dar al-Aman*) for the Muslim emigrants. They enjoyed religious freedom and opportunities for *dawah* (preaching and propagation of Islam) there. This event, for him, sets a precedent for Muslims, demonstrating that if practising Islam becomes impossible in one country, it is permissible to migrate to a non-Muslim land where religious freedom is upheld(Elsayed Said Ahmed, 2022b).

Ramadan reflects on the encounter between Ja'far ibn Abi Talib and King Negus during the migration. Ja'far eloquently presented the shared values between Islam and Christianity, reciting a few Qur'anic verses of *Surah Maryam* (19: 16-21) that highlighted commonalities. While the Quraysh

emissaries sought to sow discord, Ja'far firmly articulated the unique aspects of Islamic beliefs while respecting the Christian faith. This approach conveyed an important message to Christians: that Muslims recognised their values of justice and principle, which were aligned with Islamic teachings despite theological differences(Ramadan, 2007, p. 62).

In addition to this, Qadhi offers a broader perspective by noting that the migration to Abyssinia demonstrates that all non-Muslim lands are not the same: while some provide peace and security, others may oppress their inhabitants. Abyssinia became a model for Muslims living as minorities in non-Muslim lands. The Muslims in Abyssinia adhered to local laws, lived peacefully, and focused on practising their faith without attempting to overthrow the government. This instance refutes extremist views that label it impermissible to live in non-Muslim countries, as long as religious freedom is maintained(Abbink, 2020).

Qadhi also highlights the Prophet's (pbuh) description of King Negus as a "just" ruler, who upheld freedom of worship and refrained from persecuting his subjects. This principle is significant for understanding Islamic governance, which historically guaranteed religious freedom to non-Muslims. Even when Muslims conquered Persia, they respected the Zoroastrians, treating them at par with the 'People of the Book' (*Ahl al-Kitab*). This inclusivity aligns with the *Shariah's* emphasis on justice and mutual respect, countering the misconceptions held by both non-Muslims and some overzealous Muslims about Islamic governance(Abbink, 2020).

The migration to Abyssinia offers profound lessons in tolerance, inclusivity, and coexistence. It underscores the importance of justice, religious freedom, and mutual respect as universal principles upheld by Islam. Moreover, it serves as a timeless model for Muslim minorities living in diverse societies, promoting peaceful coexistence and adherence to shared human values. Siddiqi highlights the need for Muslim minorities to engage constructively with ruling authorities by working alongside state officials and political bodies to protect their community's welfare. He argues that such collaboration should aim to ensure fair political representation reflective of their population size. Importantly, Siddiqi clarifies that this engagement "does not amount to joining hands with *Taghut* [oppressive systems]" but rather constitutes an effort to clip the wings of *Taghut* and a strategic effort to limit their negative impact while upholding the rights and dignity of Muslims(Siddiqi, 2016). To reinforce his argument, he references historical instances where respected Muslim figures in pre-Islamic Makkah cooperated with the ruling elites for the collective good—an approach that was later approved by the Prophet (pbuh). This measured and active method, in Siddiqi's estimation and analysis, offers a practical framework for addressing modern political issues faced by Muslim minorities(Siddiqi, 2016).

These scholars highlight the idea of *Dar al-Aman* (Abode of Peace) by reflecting on the governance of Najashi, the Christian ruler of Abyssinia. Qadhi notes that even though the Muslims could have returned to Madinah after the establishment of the Islamic state, they opted to stay in Abyssinia. Furthermore, they assisted Najashi in safeguarding his throne from uprisings, demonstrating their commitment to peace and loyalty towards their host. He further contends that while migration is permissible, it is not a requirement for Muslims to leave a place where they live as a minority, especially if they are granted safety, security and rights. These scholars assert that Muslims who live as minorities in non-Muslim countries are, in effect, living in a *Dar al-Aman*, where they are entitled to rights similar to those of others (residing there). They argue that Muslims ought

to follow the laws of their host countries, make positive contributions to society, and establish themselves as law-abiding citizens dedicated to the well-being of the state. Moreover, all these scholars highlight the importance of building harmonious relationships with non-Muslims, especially between Muslims and Christians, by identifying common ground and shared values.

4.1.3 Constitution of Madinah: Foundation for Peace, Pluralism, and Social Inclusivity

Drafted in 623 CE, the Constitution (or Charter) of Madinah(Serjeant, 1964) represents a pioneering example of social inclusivity and pluralism. It effectively cultivated social harmony among the various communities of Madinah, including Muslims (*Muhajirun* and *Ansar*), Jews, and pagans, by bringing them together on a common platform while honouring their religious independence. Based on the principles of justice, equality, and collective security, this charter not only facilitated peaceful coexistence but also protected the rights of all groups. Its enduring principles provide modern societies with a valuable framework for embracing diversity and promoting enduring social peace(Hamidullah, 1975; Sofi & Parray, 2016). It is (re)interpreted by various modern scholars as a key precedent for constitutionalism, the rule of law, collective leadership, and democratizing reform(Sofi & Parray, 2016)."

Scholars generally agree that this Charter is the "first written constitution in the world", an "epoch-making innovation"(Hamidullah, 1975), and a pioneering framework for inclusive governance, where the Prophet (pbuh) established a society based on justice, compassion, and shared responsibility among diverse religious and ethnic communities. The Iraqi scholar Abass Tawfiq emphasises that the Charter gave the Jewish community a great deal of autonomy while maintaining the Prophet's (pbuh) authority to settle conflicts. It also protected the rights and guaranteed equitable treatment of all citizens, including non-Muslims(Abu Bakar & Qureshi, 2020). Qadhi emphasises the mutual support clause, which required Muslims and Jews to work together in defending the state and guaranteed the protection of Jewish individuals who embraced Islam, preserving their safety and citizenship(Aslmi & Muhammad Irfan Ahmad, 2023).

B. Salem Foud, a UK-based Muslim scholar, emphasizes balance between rights and obligations in the Charter, pointing out that non-Muslims were obliged to respect peace accords and refrain from forming alliances with adversaries, but they were also granted freedom of religion, property protection, and participation in state matters, including contributions to defense efforts(Anello, 2021).

Concerning the established political institutions, Wahiduddin Khan—a staunch advocate of positive status-quoism—argues that the political nature of any society shall not be changed through force or pressure. Since the Prophet (pbuh) did not alter the pluralistic nature of Madinan society, which comprised Muslims (*Ansar* and *Muhajirun*), idolaters, and Jews, Muslims shall likely change the nomenclature of any society in modern times. In his estimation, every inhabitant (irrespective of religion and other criteria) shall be guaranteed equal rights and freedom about religion and other aspects of life in a Muslim majority state. He reiterates that the Prophet was successful in carrying out his peaceful da'wah mission both inside and outside of Arabian Peninsula because the Medinan society accepted the status quo(Khān, 2002, pp. 211–212).

When the Prophet (pbuh) migrated to Madinah in 622 CE, after thirteen years of his prophetic career, the existing society of Madinah was composed of three groups: Muslims (who later came to

be known as *Ansar*), idolaters, and Jews. Accepting the existing social structure, the Prophet established a system of a pluralistic nature. Under this arrangement, the Prophet served as the head of state, and Madinah had the status of a city-state. Within this framework, other social groups were granted the right to live their lives within their traditions and faiths. This set-up, thus, provided another example of status quoism.

It was by accepting the prevailing situation that the Prophet began his peaceful da'wah mission, which yielded miraculous results. The multi-cultural society of the first phase was gradually transformed into a uni-cultural society in the second phase. As a result of this wise policy, Arab unity remained intact and the furtherance of the Islamic mission continued unhampered, even after the demise of the Prophet. Thus, positive status quoism is an unchangeable Islamic policy in social concerns. By choosing this course of action, the Prophet and his companions created the magnificent history of Islam, which ushered in a new era in all the religious and secular fields of human civilisation(Khān, 2002).

According to Rehmani, one of the most vital things the Prophet (pbuh) did in the early days of his migration to Madinah was to negotiate a peace treaty amongst all of the local tribes, including Muslims, Jews, and a few polytheists. Two key tenets served as the foundation for this agreement: (i) Mutual defence; and (ii) Respect for the status and religious freedom of each community. The following were the conditions of this agreement:

> The Jews shall be considered a community alongside the Muslims. If anyone fights against them, the Muslims will support the Jews in their defence. The relationship between Muslims and Jews shall be based on goodwill, mutual benefit, and righteousness. The Jewish allies shall also be included in this agreement. The oppressed shall always be assisted(Elman & Shams, 2022).

Accordingly, it may be argued that this Charter—which established the principles of peace, pluralism and tolerance for various communities—was a pioneering example of inclusive governance.

4.2 Conflict Resolution in Modern Islamic Scholarship

The topic of conflict resolution has drawn significant attention in recent Islamic scholarship as scholars use Islamic principles and practices to address issues and challenges such as societal discord, violence, and polarisation(Abu-Nimer, 2003; Cole, 2018; Dogan, 2014; Huda, 2010; Said et al., 2001; Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020; Wani, 2023). Neo-traditionalist scholars focus on the life of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), emphasizing his role as a model for peace in the face of conflict by highlighting particular incidents and themes. Despite living in a time where war was prevalent, the Prophet consistently tried to avoid conflict whenever possible.

However, there is still a widespread misrepresentation of the Prophet's life that places undue emphasis on its military aspects. This portrayal, rooted in the heroic or warrior culture (*Ayyam al-'Arab*) of pre-Islamic Arabia, has shaped a perception of the Prophet (pbuh) as someone perpetually engaged in warfare. In that era, "heroism" was a dominant value, driving inter-tribal conflicts and serving as a standard of superiority. Victors glorified their battles in poetry and rhetoric, using them

as symbols of distinction. Even when contemporary examples of heroism were unavailable, they would boast of ancestral exploits, perpetuating a conflict/ battle narrative(Dogan, 2014).

This one-dimensional portrayal has been perpetuated by Orientalist scholarship as well. As Sertkaya notes, non-Muslim scholarship on the Prophet (pbuh) dates back to the ninth century or earlier. The medieval period until the 19th century, Western narratives frequently depicted the Prophet with many negative and pejorative labels, including "warmonger"(Kidwai, 2019; Parray, 2019; Tolan, 2019). In the last two centuries, while some Western scholars have attempted a make a more nuanced perspective, many remain influenced by medieval biases and prejudices. Thus, a recurring theme and common motif in these works is the portrayal of the Prophet, particularly when discussing his Medinan period, as a "Prophet of the sword"(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

This trend and tendency have been demonstrated in several works by well-known Orientalists, including Gustav Weil, Aloys Sprenger, William Muir, David S. Margoliouth, and Theodor Nöldeke(Massad, 1997). Among them, Muir's *The Life of Mohammed from Original Sources* (1858) stands out for its use of original Arabic sources and its relative departure from medieval polemics. Though it was regarded as more objective than earlier works, Muir's analysis nonetheless remained deeply flawed(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

In contrast to Christianity, which he regarded as the ideal faith, Muir depicted Islam as a religion of violence. In his account, the Prophet (pbuh) is depicted as a devout, God-protected individual during the Makkan era—honest and dedicated to opposing pagan practices. However, Muir's depiction shifts dramatically during the Medinan era, portraying the Prophet (pbuh) as a scheming and violent figure. In the estimation of Sertkaya and Keskin, Jabal M. Buaben (an African Muslim scholar) criticises this glaring duality, noting that even Muir's seemingly genuine effort to understand the Prophet (pbuh) is tainted by Christian-centric prejudices and an innate depiction of Islam as inferior to Christianity(Buaben, 2002, pp. 35–42; Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

These misrepresentations by Orientalists have had a long-lasting impact on modern *Sirah* literature. While modern scholars, both Muslim and non-Muslim, have made strides in presenting a more balanced understanding of the Prophet's life, the enduring legacy of earlier biases underscores the need for ongoing efforts to reclaim the comprehensive narrative of his life as a model of peace and conflict resolution(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

Muslims, especially Neo-traditionalists, often draw inspiration from the life of the Prophet to advocate for peace, emphasising his role as a mercy and benefactor to humankind (Qur'an, 21: 107). Traditions such as Sufism, which prioritise love, compassion, and peace, derive significantly from the teachings and example of the Prophet. He is regarded as a model for fostering pluralistic societies where differences are not only accepted but also respected(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

Sertkaya and Keskin observe that classical and contemporary *Sirah* literature frequently focuses on major events from the Medinan period, particularly battles and conflicts and confrontations with other communities. While these events are prominently highlighted, other critical incidents that reflect non-violent resolutions and ethical leadership are often overlooked. The events of the latter category demonstrate the Prophet's ability to refrain from using violence even when societal norms and social convictions could have called for it(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

It is important to recognise the differences between the Medinan and Makkan environments. Due to their lack of authority, Muslims in Makkah experienced extreme tyranny and hardship. On the other hand, the Prophet's leadership was criticised for allegedly using force in Medina, where the balance of power was more favourable(Sertkaya & Keskin, 2020).

Though critics frequently point to his acts during this time as examples of violence, the Neo-traditionalist scholars stress alternative narratives that emphasise his commitment to peace and reconciliation. These scholars often underline significant episodes from the Prophet's life, such as the rebuilding of the Kaaba, the resolution of disputes between the Aws and Khazraj tribes, the treaty of Hudaybiyyah, and the conquest of Makkah. These incidents demonstrate his attempts to establish unity, maintain harmony, and uphold justice, reflecting a broader vision of peace and coexistence.

4.2.1 Rebuilding of Ka'bah

The Prophet's participation in the rebuilding of the Ka'bah around 585 CE(Al-Mubarakpuri, 1995, p. 63), at a young age, he showcased his ability to prevent conflict and promote peace.

Commenting on this event, Rehmani emphasises the Prophet's approach to managing societal differences with wisdom, respect, honesty, and moderation. This approach, for Rehmani, is particularly applicable to complex sociopolitical contexts, such as India and other pluralistic societies, where communities with diverse beliefs and ideologies coexist(Rehmani, 2008).

Wahiduddin Khan underscores the importance of addressing contentious issues with a wise and inclusive strategy. He suggests that disputes often stem from a strong sense of personal or collective honour. By respecting people's dignity and involving all parties in the resolution process, conflicts can be addressed more effectively and peacefully(W. Khan, 1999, p. 77).

On a similar pattern, Ramadan provides a deeper philosophical reflection, noting that the Prophet's pursuit of peace involved guiding people to rise above pride and arrogance. By aligning reason with compassion, the Prophet offered heart-soothing solutions that calmed emotions and fostered harmony. Ramadan highlights the Prophet's ability to remain composed and reasonable in all circumstances, a quality that stemmed from his unique blend of emotional depth and intellectual sharpness(Ramadan, 2007).

These perspectives collectively illustrate the enduring relevance of the Prophet Muhammad's model for conflict resolution. His wisdom, fairness, and respect for all parties in disputes offer timeless lessons for navigating challenges in diverse and multifaceted societies.

4.2.2 The Treaty of Hudaybiyya: A Turning Point in Islamic History

Signed in 628 CE, the Treaty of Hudaybiyya was a "turning point in Islamic history", and is a prominent example of non-violent conflict resolution, fostering stability and facilitating peaceful interactions. Due to its significance, it is often referred to as "*Umm al-Mu'ahadat al-Salam*" ("the mother of [all] peace treaties")(Farman & Yucel, 2023; Ghasemi Shub et al., 2020). An important event in the Prophet's Madinan era, this Treaty "teaches intellectual, behavioural, and verbal instructions for peace negotiations".

Rehmani emphasises that this Treaty offers a profound lesson: reason should always triumph over emotions. While traits like courage, perseverance, and bravery are crucial for safeguarding a

nation's dignity, there are moments when emotional responses must be tempered by rational thought. During the treaty negotiations, despite repeated provocations by the Makkan, the Muslims refrained from retaliation, demonstrating remarkable restraint. Similarly, some terms of the treaty appeared unfavourable to the Muslims. For instance, after travelling a significant distance in a state of ihram to perform Umrah, they were compelled to return without fulfilling their pilgrimage—a deeply emotional setback, as no valid customary reason justified this denial. Nonetheless, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) accepted these terms, understanding their long-term strategic wisdom(Khalid Saifullah Rehmani, 2008, p. 154).

Qadhi views this Treaty as a pivotal moment in Islamic history, marking the first peaceful interaction between Muslims and non-Muslims. It enabled coexistence, trade, and social exchange, which in turn facilitated the spread of Islam through peaceful means—what Qadhi terms a "jihad of peace." The treaty also highlights Islam's flexibility in political agreements, as terms may vary depending on context. For Muslims in the West, holding a visa or passport implies a commitment to abide by local laws and respect the host country's security. Qadhi emphasises the importance of honouring treaties, even when difficult, as seen in the cases of Abu Basir and Abu Jandal.

Wahiduddin Khan, in his *The Prophet of Peace(M. W. Khan, 2009)*, argues that "the key to the Prophet's success lies in his advocacy for peace and pursuit of a peaceful policy"(Sertkaya, 2023). Khan views peace as central to the Prophet's mission and presents this Treaty as an illustration of the Prophet's aim to achieve peaceful outcomes, even amid hostility(M. W. Khan, 2009):

> The Hudaybiyya Treaty is, in fact, a peace treaty which was concluded not by receiving justice, but rather by leaving out justice from its ambit. … The treaty of Hudaybiyya was indeed a peace treaty, but the peace it ensured was accompanied by justice; rather, it was bereft of justice(M. W. Khan, 2009).

Khan also cites this Treaty as a "historical example" of negotiation for establishing peace and justice and resolving contemporary issues(M. W. Khan, 2009). This approach, in the analysis of Sertkaya, ultimately led to the peaceful conquest of the Makkah (discussed below), showcasing the Prophet's steadfast dedication to nonviolence and wisdom(Sertkaya, 2023).

These arguments support the claim that upholding peace in the face of imminent violence can be a key component for the success of the Islamic call. Furthermore, by putting diplomacy, patience, and strategic insight ahead of conflict, people and society can adopt this method to accomplish their intended goals.

4.2.3 Conquest of Makkah

The conquest of Makkah, which took place in 630 C.E., has been interpreted by scholars as a profound example of conflict resolution rooted in peace, nonviolence, mercy, and reconciliation. Despite years of persecution, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) chose forgiveness over revenge by granting a general amnesty to the Makkans, setting a timeless model for resolving conflicts. According to Qadhi, the Quraysh's breach of the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah was a major betrayal, yet the Prophet instructed his army not to fight, making the peaceful takeover unprecedented in history. His entry

into Makkah was marked by exceptional humility, with his head bowed in gratitude to Allah—a level of humility unmatched by any conqueror before or after.

Salahi mentions that the way the Prophet (pbuh) treated the Quraysh after the conquest of Makkah serves as a powerful illustration of how he handled the defeated. Despite the Quraysh being his people, they were the ones who opposed him from the beginning of his mission. He had extended kindness and affection to them, but they had consistently reacted negatively, with hostility, forcing him and his followers to flee their homeland. They waged war against him and his followers after he established the Muslim state in Madinah, repeatedly sending armies to attack and allying with other powerful tribes such as the Ghatafan and the Jews. When the Muslims entered into a peace agreement with the Quraysh, they violated it and treacherously killed the Prophet's allies. By doing so, they had forfeited any claim to kindness or generosity. They had betrayed the trust, and thus, what kind of retribution did the Prophet exact?(Salahi, 2014)

From the outset, it was clear that the Prophet sought to avoid bloodshed. As the Muslim army prepared to march, he prayed to Allah for the element of surprise in the Quraysh's land. This was not to initiate a sudden attack that would result in mass casualties for the Quraysh and minimal losses for the Muslims. Rather, the Prophet aimed to present a situation where the Quraysh would realise they were powerless to resist, leading them to surrender without a fight, ensuring a victory for the Muslims without any bloodshed.

This was evident when Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraysh, was brought before the Prophet. Had the Prophet (pbuh) been a typical commander or leader of a victorious nation, Abu Sufyan would have been made to pay dearly for his hostility toward Islam, which had led to the deaths of many Muslims and several military campaigns. Instead, the Prophet pardoned Abu Sufyan, honoured him and sent him back to his people. He even made Abu Sufyan's house a place of sanctuary, offering safety to anyone who sought refuge there(Salahi, 2014).

When the Prophet (pbuh) learned that Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah, one of his commanders, was adamant on taking revenge from the Quraysh, he was swiftly replaced, instructing all his commanders and soldiers that they should only fight if they were attacked. The people whose lives the Prophet was keen to spare were the very ones who had driven him and his followers out of Makkah and had consistently plotted against his life. They had opposed his message, dismissing it and even accusing him of being a liar, a sorcerer, and a madman. They had formed alliances in order to resist his peaceful call with force and hostility. Yet, when the Prophet gained complete victory, he chose mercy over retribution. His priority remained to win them over to Islam, and the best way to do this was through a general pardon, which he granted generously. Anyone who wished to be safe had to do nothing more than stay at home(Salahi, 2010).

Even those guilty of severe crimes were shown mercy by the Prophet if they expressed sincere regret. A notable example is Fudalah ibn 'Umayr, who once intended to kill the Prophet during tawaf but was gently confronted. The Prophet's calm response and compassionate touch transformed Fudalah's heart, leading him to embrace Islam and abandon his hostile intentions(Salahi, 2010).

This incident highlights the Prophet's approach of offering complete and unconditional pardon, even to those who had once been his enemies. Through this remarkable generosity, he won over the hearts of the Quraysh, and many of them soon declared their acceptance of Islam. The Qur'anic principle behind this approach is well captured in 34th verse of *Surah al-Fussilat* (Q. 41) which

emphasizes the importance of responding to bad behaviour with good, promoting kindness, and fostering relationships: "*A good deed and a bad one can never be alike. Repel the latter with the one which is best and you will find that the person with whom you have a long hostility behaving to you as an intimate friend".* The Prophet's forgiving nature broke down the barriers of hostility, leading to the complete conquest of the Quraysh's hearts(Salahi, 2010).

The most profound lesson from the Conquest of Makkah, as Rehmani asserts, is the example of forgiveness and mercy displayed by the Prophet (pbuh). Despite having complete power over his enemies, the Prophet chose to forgive them and did not force them to embrace Islam. Such an act of kindness and mercy towards the defeated is rare. Typically, success and victory often lead to arrogance, boasting, and a sense of superiority, but the Prophet's conduct was the opposite. Throughout the entire conquest, he remained humble, with his head bowed so low that his forehead touched the hump of his camel. In his address to the defeated Quraysh, there was no mention of his triumph, only praise and glorification of Allah. This humility and focus on God are qualities every believer should adopt in moments of joy and success. In addition, the Prophet demonstrated great wisdom in handling the situation with the *Muhajirun* (migrants). Although they had lost their homes when the disbelievers seized Makkah, the Prophet refrained from reclaiming the properties, which could have sparked a civil war and revived old hostilities. Instead, he allowed the current possessors to keep the properties, and the *Muhajirun* returned to Madinah. This decision reflects the Prophet's strategic understanding that, for the sake of faith and the peaceful propagation of Islam, Muslims may need to forgo their rights and make sacrifices(Khalid Saifullah Rehmani, 2008, p. 161).

Rehmani further argues that Abu Sufyan was the leading figure among the Quraysh, and when the Prophet entered Makkah, he declared that anyone who entered Abu Sufyan's house would be safe. To honour Abu Sufyan and prevent any potential resentment, the Prophet transferred the leadership flag from Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah, an Ansar leader, to his son. This decision highlights the Prophet's sensitivity to people's feelings and the importance of recognising their status, thereby maintaining unity and respect among the people. After the conquest, the Prophet visited the house of Hazrat Umm Hani, where he took a bath and prayed. Some scholars believe this prayer was the Ishraq prayer, while others view it as a prayer of gratitude. Regardless, the prayer exemplifies the practice of acknowledging God's grace in times of success and happiness. It teaches that moments of joy should not overshadow one's gratitude to Allah, reminding us that all achievements come from His grace, and future success will also be through His will(Rehmani, 2008, p. 162).

Qadhi, Salahi, and Rahmani emphasise that mercy is a central and defining aspect of the Prophet's life. They argue that this quality of mercy played a pivotal role in transforming the course of history, as even the staunchest enemies of Islam were drawn to its message and ultimately embraced it. Their perspectives highlight the profound impact of mercy in fostering reconciliation and emphasise how this principle can be effectively practised in contrast to revenge..

5. Conclusion

This study highlights the significant role of the Prophet Muhammad's Sirah as a foundational source for promoting social inclusiveness and peaceful conflict resolution. By analysing key historical events such as Hilf al-Fudul, the migration to Abyssinia, the Constitution of Medina, the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, and the Conquest of Makkah, the research demonstrates how the Prophet consistently

prioritised justice, compassion, and peaceful coexistence—even in the face of hostility and betrayal. Contemporary neo-traditionalist scholars from the West and the Indian subcontinent interpret these events through a contextual lens that bridges classical Islamic ethics with modern societal needs. Their interpretations emphasise the Prophet's moral leadership, his commitment to pluralism, and his strategic use of non-violence, which remains profoundly relevant for today's fractured world. The findings underscore that Sirah, when read through a neo-traditionalist approach, is not merely a historical narrative but a living guide for addressing current interreligious and social tensions.

This research contributes meaningfully to the growing body of scholarship on Islamic peace studies, interreligious relations, and ethical governance. It enriches the neo-traditionalist discourse by providing a comparative analysis between Western and Indian Muslim scholars, highlighting both the shared ethical emphasis and contextual adaptations. The study also strengthens the academic relevance of Sirah studies by moving beyond traditional biographical recounting and into ethical-practical applications for contemporary challenges such as Islamophobia, minority integration, and religious coexistence. By situating the Sirah within modern peacebuilding frameworks, the research offers an alternative to reductive and militant portrayals of the Prophet's life. It thus fosters a more comprehensive understanding of Islamic tradition as a source of peace, tolerance, and inclusive leadership. This interdisciplinary approach opens new avenues for applying Islamic teachings within modern sociopolitical settings and affirms the universal applicability of prophetic ethics.

Future studies could explore several key directions to expand the insights gained from this research. First, a deeper engagement with female scholars and perspectives on Sirah could enrich the discourse on inclusiveness, especially concerning gender dynamics and social justice. Second, comparative studies with other religious figures—such as Jesus or the Buddha—on peacebuilding and conflict resolution could provide valuable interfaith perspectives. Third, ethnographic research on how Muslim communities in minority contexts implement neo-traditionalist interpretations of Sirah in real-life conflict scenarios would offer a practical dimension to the theory. Additionally, there is room to investigate how these ethical frameworks can be integrated into formal education, policymaking, and interreligious dialogue platforms. Finally, further textual analysis of overlooked events in the Sirah may reveal additional ethical resources that can contribute to contemporary efforts at social harmony and global peace. These directions will ensure that the discourse remains dynamic, inclusive, and continually responsive to evolving societal challenges..

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