Unity of the Muslim Ummah in the Light of Islamic Teachings: Contemporary Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

The unity of the Muslim Ummah is one of the central objectives of Islam, emphasized in the Qur'an, Hadith, and the legacy of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Islam enjoins Muslims to live together in solidarity, mutual compassion, and brotherhood. However, in contemporary times, the Ummah is beset with grave challenges such as sectarianism, extremism, political fragmentation, and ideological polarization. These divisions weaken the strength of Muslims globally and obstruct the realization of peace, justice, and development. This paper examines the concept of unity (*Wahdah*) and *Ummah* in Islamic teachings, explores its spiritual, social, and institutional foundations, and contextualizes them against modern-day challenges including sectarianism, nationalism, ethnic rivalries, political manipulation of religion, and Islamophobia. The study further analyzes how global politics has influenced neighboring Muslim states such as Egypt, Syria, and Gulf countries to neglect their responsibility toward Palestinian liberation, despite Qur'anic and Prophetic injunctions of solidarity. The paper concludes by proposing Qur'anic and Prophetic solutions such as moderation (*wasatiyyah*), dialogue, forgiveness, and adherence to *tawhid* as remedies to reinvigorate the bonds of the Ummah. Ultimately, it argues that only by returning to the essence of Islamic teachings can Muslims overcome disunity and fulfill their collective responsibility as *khayra ummah* (the best community).

Keywords: Unity, Muslim Ummah, Islamic Teachings, Sectarianism, Global Politics

Introduction

Unity is one of the most emphasized principles in Islam, as it forms the basis of peace, strength, and stability of the Muslim Ummah. The Qur'an instructs Muslims: *"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided"* (Qur'an, 3:103). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also warned that division leads to destruction, while unity leads to divine mercy: "*Do not envy one another, do not hate one another, do not turn away from each other, but rather be servants of Allah as brothers*" (Muslim, 6219).

Despite these clear injunctions, contemporary Muslims are plagued by divisions manifested in sectarian violence, ethnic conflicts, political rivalries, and ideological extremism. The emergence

of militant groups, misuse of religion for political gain, and increasing intolerance in religious discourse have tarnished the universal message of Islam (Khalidi, 98).

Beyond these internal crises, global politics has profoundly affected Muslim unity, especially in relation to Palestine. Regional powers such as Egypt, Syria, and Gulf states have often placed national or geopolitical interests above Qur'anic obligations of solidarity, resulting in the forsaking of Palestinian liberation in the face of Zionist occupation (Makdisi, 74). This paper revisits the concept of unity in light of the Qur'an and Sunnah, explores its historical and theological roots, and applies them to contemporary challenges, particularly the fragmentation of Muslim states regarding the Palestinian cause.

This study adopts a qualitative, textual-analytical methodology. It draws primarily from Qur'anic injunctions, Hadith traditions, and classical Islamic exegesis (*Tafsir*) as foundational sources. It also incorporates historical case studies (Egypt, Syria, Gulf States) to demonstrate how contemporary political realities interact with Islamic ideals. Secondary sources such as works of modern historians, political analysts, and Islamic scholars are employed to contextualize Qur'anic and Prophetic principles in today's global order. This hermeneutical and historical comparative method allows for a synthesis between scriptural directives and practical challenges. Thus, the paper combines scriptural exegesis, historical analysis, and contemporary case studies to explore the tension between the divine command of unity and the political disunity of the modern Ummah.

Linguistically, unity (*wahdah*) signifies oneness, indivisibility, and singularity. Imam Raghib al-*Isfahani* (d. 502 AH) defines it as *al-infarād*, the distinctiveness of something that admits no division or multiplicity (*al-Isfahani,* 112). In the theological sense, unity is reflected in *tawḥīd,* the absolute oneness of Allah in His essence, attributes, and lordship. This is the bedrock of Islamic creed, and just as Allah is One, the Qur'an demands that the Ummah embody this principle by maintaining solidarity and avoiding division. The Qur'an explicitly links divine oneness with communal unity: *"Indeed this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"* (Qur'an, 21:92). Here, the universality of worship and servitude to Allah forms the essential bond of unity. Ibn Kathir explains this verse by noting that the religion of all prophets was one in essence, rooted in the worship of Allah alone and the rejection of division (Ibn Kathir, 3:103). Thus, unity in Islam is not merely political or social but originates in shared faith and spiritual orientation.

The term *Ummah* itself derives from *umm* (mother, origin, source), symbolizing a group tied together by shared origins and purposes. According to al-*Isfahani*, the *Ummah* can be bound by belief, place, time, lineage, or a common cause (*al-Isfahani,* 210). In the Islamic context, however, the *Ummah* Muḥammadiyyah refers specifically to the global community of Muslims united by their testimony of faith (*shahādah*) in Allah and His Messenger, regardless of race, language, or culture. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) emphasized this universality when he declared in his Farewell Sermon: *"All mankind is from Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black over a white except by piety and good action"* (al-Bukhari, Book 56, Hadith 122).

Literature Review

The unity of the Muslim *Ummah* has been a recurring concern in classical Islamic scholarship, historical accounts, and modern political analyses. The concept is rooted in Qur'anic and Prophetic teachings, which emphasize solidarity, mutual compassion, and the transcendence of tribal or ethnic boundaries (Qur'an, 3:103; Qur'an, 21:92). Early exegetes such as Ibn Kathir and al-Tabari elaborated upon these themes, warning that disunity was a cause of divine displeasure and worldly weakness. Ibn Kathir, for instance, interprets the Qur'anic injunction to "hold fast to the rope of Allah" as an unambiguous call to adhere to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the sole foundations of unity (Tafsir al-Qur'an al-'Azim, 1:367). Similarly, al-Tabari argued that sectarian fragmentation among earlier communities served as a cautionary precedent for Muslims (Jamiʿ al-Bayan, 6:233).

Al-Raghib al-Isfahani provides a linguistic and theological basis for unity through his exposition of *wahdah* as indivisibility and *ummah* as a collective tied by faith, purpose, or shared values (Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an, 112, 210). His insights demonstrate that the Qur'an demands communal solidarity as a reflection of divine oneness (*tawḥīd*). This idea is reinforced by Prophetic traditions emphasizing fraternity, such as the Hadith likening believers to "a single body" in their compassion for one another (Muslim, 2586). The classical framework thus establishes that unity in Islam is both spiritual and institutional, rooted in divine command and manifest in practices like congregational worship, *shūrā* (consultation), and the Charter of Brotherhood in Medina (al-Bukhari, Book 46, Hadith, 219).

Historical accounts reveal how deviations from this model of unity resulted in political fragmentation and vulnerability. Ibn Kathir's *al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya* documents the internal strife following the assassination of Caliph ʿUthman and the subsequent civil wars, which paved the way for external exploitation by the Byzantines (7:111). Later, the Mongol sack of Baghdad in 1258 demonstrated the destructive consequences of rivalries among Muslim rulers, who prioritized dynastic interests over communal solidarity (Makdisi, Palestine Inside Out, 117). Colonial domination further entrenched division, with European powers applying strategies of "divide and rule" to dismantle Muslim political unity (Khalidi, The Iron Cage, 45).

Modern scholarship underscores the enduring political and theological relevance of these lessons. Rashid Khalidi argues that U.S. intervention in Middle Eastern affairs has exacerbated disunity by supporting regimes that prioritize national survival over collective solidarity (Brokers of Deceit, 98). He identifies Egypt's peace treaty with Israel in 1978 as a turning point, when Cairo shifted from leading Arab resistance to prioritizing state security and U.S. aid, thereby isolating Palestinians (Brokers of Deceit, 67, 98). Saree Makdisi expands this critique, showing how normalization policies in the Gulf culminating in the Abraham Accords reflect a "culture of denial" that systematically undermines Palestinian liberation (Tolerance Is a Wasteland, 88). Both Khalidi and Makdisi highlight how political expediency has supplanted Qur'anic imperatives of brotherhood and resistance to oppression.

At the same time, Islamic scholars and reformists stress that theological resources for restoring unity remain intact. Imam Malik's *al-Muwatta* records the Prophet's injunction to hold fast to the Qur'an and Sunnah, affirming that adherence to these sources safeguards the community against misguidance (Book 46, Hadith 3). The Qur'an repeatedly calls for moderation (*wasatiyyah*) as a safeguard against extremism (Qur'an, 2:143), while the principle of *shūrā* (Qur'an, 42:38) provides a mechanism for collective decision-making. Contemporary reformist discourses emphasize these concepts as practical tools for reconciling sectarian rifts, promoting dialogue, and reasserting global Muslim solidarity.

The literature, therefore demonstrates a consistent tension between the divine imperative of unity and the political realities of disunity. Classical sources such as Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari, and al-Isfahani establish the theological and linguistic foundations of *wahdah*, while historical accounts highlight the catastrophic consequences of fragmentation. Modern political scholarship by Khalidi and Makdisi illustrates how global and regional politics perpetuate disunity, particularly in the Palestinian context. Together, these works underscore that unity is not merely an abstract theological concept but an urgent practical necessity for the survival and relevance of the Muslim *Ummah* in the contemporary world.

Unity in Islam thus operates on multiple dimensions:

1. **Spiritual Unity through Tawḥīd:** The central Islamic creed eliminates divisions of polytheism and establishes one God as the unifying axis of life. The Qur'an commands: "*And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided*" (Qur'an, 3:103). The "rope of Allah," interpreted by scholars as the Qur'an and Sunnah, is the common foundation that binds Muslims together (Ibn Kathir, 1:367).

2. **Doctrinal and Moral Unity:** Beyond creed, Muslims are bound by a shared system of values such as justice, mercy, and compassion. The Prophet (PBUH) declared: "*The believers, in their*

mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy, are just like one body. When one part suffers, the whole body responds with wakefulness and fever" (Muslim, 2586). This Hadith illustrates that unity transcends ritual practice, extending into moral solidarity.

3. **Institutional and Communal Unity:** Islamic worship is designed to practically manifest unity. Congregational prayers, Friday sermons (Jumuʿah), the annual gatherings of Eid, and the pilgrimage (Hajj) are structured as communal acts to instill fraternity. The Qur'an emphasizes this when describing believers: *"Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in rows as though they are a single structure joined firmly"* (Qur'an 61:4). These collective practices nurture a shared consciousness that dissolves divisions of class, ethnicity, or geography.

4. **Historical Model of Brotherhood:** The Prophet's unification of the *Muhājirūn* (migrants) and *Anṣār* (helpers) in Medina through the Charter of Brotherhood demonstrates a practical framework for unity. He paired individuals from different tribes as brothers in faith, abolishing pre-Islamic rivalries (al-Bukhari, Book 46, Hadith 219). This model shows that Islamic unity is both theological and socio-political, designed to overcome historical grievances. Thus, unity in Islam (*wahdah*) is holistic: rooted in divine oneness (tawḥīd), actualized in communal solidarity (*ukhuwwah*), and reinforced by collective worship and institutions. Its neglect, as the Qur'an warns, is a cause of divine displeasure: *"Do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them; for them is a great punishment"* (Qur'an, 3:105). Rediscovering and embodying this comprehensive notion of unity is therefore essential for addressing contemporary challenges facing the Muslim Ummah.

Qur'anic Injunctions on the Unity of Ummah

The Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes that the Muslim Ummah constitutes a single, indivisible community bound by faith in Allah and servitude to Him. The most oft-cited verse in this regard is: *"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided"* (Qur'an, 3:103). The "rope of Allah," according to Ibn Kathir, refers to the Qur'an and Sunnah the divine sources of guidance that serve as the unifying bond of the believers (Ibn Kathir, 1:367). This verse was revealed in the context of tribal rivalries in Medina, reminding Muslims that faith transcends lineage, ethnicity, or geography. Another foundational verse is: *"Surely this community of yours is one community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"* (Qur'an 21:92). Imam Raghib al-Isfahani explains that the term *ummah* denotes a community bound by shared purpose, here specifically in the worship of Allah (al-Isfahani, 210). Thus, divine oneness (*tawḥīd*) demands human solidarity; just as Allah is One, His community must reflect that indivisibility.

The Qur'an also warns against disunity: *"Do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them; for them is a great punishment"* (Qur'an, 3:105). Ibn Kathir interprets this as a caution against repeating the mistakes of previous religious communities whose fragmentation weakened their collective strength and incurred divine displeasure (Ibn Kathir, 1:370). Hasan al-Basri likewise stressed that Islam does not tolerate division in essential matters of creed and obedience. Beyond warnings, the Qur'an positively describes unity as a source of divine love: *"Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in rows as though they are a single structure joined firmly"* (Qur'an, 61:4). This imagery of believers as a solid structure (*Bunyan marsus*) highlights not only the spiritual bond but also the institutional solidarity Muslims are expected to maintain. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) echoed this imagery in Hadith: "The believers are like a building, each part strengthening the other" (al-Bukhari, Book 78, Hadith 468).

Unity is also tied to justice and equality. The Qur'an declares: *"O mankind, indeed We created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you"* (Qur'an, 49:13). This verse dismantles the hierarchies of race, tribe, and nationality, grounding human relations in piety rather than worldly distinctions. The Prophet confirmed this in his Farewell Sermon: *"An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor does a non-Arab have superiority over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black, nor a black over a white except by piety and good action"* (al-Bukhari, Book 56, Hadith 122).

The Qur'an does not merely exhort unity but explicitly condemns disunity as a source of weakness, humiliation, and divine displeasure. One of the clearest warnings appears in the verse: *"And do not dispute, lest you lose courage and your strength depart, and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient"* (Qur'an, 8:46). Ibn Kathir explains that this verse was revealed in the context of battle, reminding Muslims that victory lies not only in military strength but in spiritual cohesion; internal division leads to loss of morale and divine support (Ibn Kathir, 2:320).

Similarly, Allah warns: *"Do not be among those who divided their religion and became sects every faction rejoicing in what it has"* (Qur'an, 30:32). Al-Tabari interprets this as a critique of earlier religious communities, especially Jews and Christians, who fragmented into sects despite clear revelation. He adds that the verse equally applies to Muslims who fall into the same error by elevating partisan loyalties above divine command (al-Tabari, 6:233).

Another severe caution is given in: *"Indeed, those who have divided their religion and become sects—you have nothing to do with them. Their affair is only with Allah; then He will inform them about what they used to do"* (Qur'an, 6:159). This verse underscores that sectarianism is not merely a social misfortune but a deviation from Islam's essence. The Prophet himself warned: "The Jews split into seventy-one sects, the Christians split into seventy-two sects, and this Ummah will split into seventy-three sects, all of them in the Fire except one" (al-Tirmidhi, Hadith, 2641). Scholars explain that this "saved group" refers not to a sectarian label but to those who adhere to the Qur'an and Sunnah without distortion (Muslim, 4:145).

The early history of Islam provides sobering lessons on the destructive consequences of disunity. The assassination of Caliph ʿUthman ibn ʿAffan and the subsequent civil wars (*fitan*) weakened the Muslim polity, leading to the rise of rival factions such as the Khawarij and later dynastic struggles between the Umayyads and Abbasids. Ibn Kathir records that the fragmentation of leadership allowed external enemies, particularly the Byzantines, to exploit Muslim weakness (Al-Bidaya, 7:111). Later, the Mongol invasion of Baghdad in 1258 one of the darkest chapters in Islamic history was facilitated by deep political rivalries among Muslim rulers, who failed to present a united defense (Makdisi, 117). Similarly, colonial powers in the modern era often applied "divide and rule" strategies, exploiting sectarian and tribal differences to weaken Muslim solidarity (Khalidi, 45).

The Qur'anic condemnation of disunity resonates urgently today. The fragmentation of the Muslim world into rival blocs whether in the sectarian conflict of Syria, the Shia–Sunni tensions in Iraq, or the political rift among Gulf states mirrors the warnings of the Qur'an. The verse *"Indeed, those who disbelieve are allies of one another. If you do not do the same, there will be fitnah (trial) on earth and great corruption"* (Qur'an, 8:73). highlights that Muslim disunity opens the door for external domination. Modern geopolitics demonstrates that a divided Ummah is vulnerable to manipulation by global powers, as seen in the continued fragmentation of Palestine or the destabilization of Iraq after 2003 (Khalidi, 102). Thus, the Qur'an not only calls for unity but portrays disunity as an existential threat to the Ummah. It weakens military strength, undermines faith, and exposes the community to exploitation. History repeatedly validates this divine warning from the early *fitan* to colonial subjugation and today's crises in the Middle East. The Qur'an's condemnation of division, coupled with prophetic exhortations, leaves no ambiguity: unity is not optional but a divine command tied to the survival and flourishing of the Ummah.

Contemporary Challenges to the Unity of the Ummah and Global Politics and the Forsaking of Palestine

Perhaps the most striking failure of Muslim unity in contemporary times is evident in the case of Palestine. The Palestinian cause has long been regarded as the central moral and political struggle of the Muslim world, yet regional rivalries, sectarian divisions, and international alliances have consistently undermined collective solidarity. Despite clear Qur'anic injunctions of mutual support *"And if they seek help of you in religion, then you must help"* (Qur'an, 8:72) neighboring Muslim states have frequently prioritized national interests and political survival over the Qur'anic obligation of brotherhood. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also warned against such

betrayal: *"The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not oppress him, nor does he hand him over to an enemy"* (Muslim, 6219).

Egypt: From Resistance to Compromise

Egypt has historically played a central role in the Palestinian struggle. Under Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s, Cairo positioned itself as a leader of Arab nationalism, framing Palestinian liberation as both a pan-Arab and Islamic duty (Khalidi, 67). However, Egypt's trajectory shifted dramatically after the Camp David Accords of 1978, when President Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel. This move effectively normalized relations and marked the first major Arab state to formally recognize Israel. Rashid Khalidi argues that this decision "isolated the Palestinians and institutionalized their abandonment" (Khalidi, 98).

From an Islamic perspective, this shift represented a profound violation of the Qur'anic call to solidarity: *"The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers"* (Qur'an, 49:10). Instead of prioritizing the collective struggle, Egypt subordinated the Qur'anic principle of unity to state security and U.S. financial aid. Sadat himself, in his 1977 speech to the Knesset, emphasized "Egypt's interests above all else," a stance that, while pragmatic politically, fractured the notion of an indivisible Ummah.

Syria: Ideological Rhetoric and Sectarian Constraints

Syria has long claimed rhetorical support for Palestine, particularly under Hafez al-Assad and later Bashar al-Assad, who framed their regime as defenders of Palestinian resistance. Yet in practice, Syria's involvement was often instrumental, using the Palestinian cause as leverage in its broader rivalry with Israel and regional competitors (Makdisi, 74). For instance, during Lebanon's civil war (1975-1990), Syrian intervention often undermined Palestinian factions, prioritizing regime stability over genuine liberation (Khalidi, 104).

The outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011 further weakened its credibility. Sectarian dimensions of the conflict pitting the Alawite-led regime against predominantly Sunni opposition exposed deep fractures within the Muslim world. Ibn Kathir's warning that "division is the path to weakness and humiliation" (Ibn Kathir, 2:320) was tragically fulfilled, as Syria's internal disunity left it incapable of effective leadership on Palestine. Instead of embodying the Prophetic command to support oppressed Muslims, Syria became itself a site of oppression, displacement, and foreign intervention.

Gulf States: Wealth, Alliances, and the Abraham Accords

The Gulf monarchies present another paradox. Endowed with immense wealth and global influence, states such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Bahrain possessed the means to champion Palestinian liberation. Yet their alliances with Western powers and prioritization of economic and security interests have consistently diluted their commitment. Saree Makdisi observes that the Gulf rulers increasingly embraced a "politics of normalization," culminating in the Abraham Accords of 2020, where the UAE and Bahrain openly recognized Israel in exchange for security and economic benefits (Makdisi, 88).

The Qur'an explicitly warns against abandoning oppressed Muslims: *"And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?'"* (Qur'an, 4:75). By prioritizing geopolitical gain over this command, the Gulf States undermined not only the Palestinian cause but also the Qur'anic conception of brotherhood.

Theological and Political Implications

The forsaking of Palestine by neighboring Muslim states illustrates how global politics has fragmented the Ummah. Instead of fulfilling the Qur'an's vision of a *"single structure joined firmly"* (Qur'an, 61:4), Muslim states have pursued divergent paths dictated by national interests,

sectarian calculations, and Western alliances. The result has been what Khalidi calls "a systemic betrayal of Palestine" (Khalidi, 102). From a theological perspective, such disunity reflects the Qur'anic condemnation of sectarianism: *"Do not be among those who divided their religion and became sects, each faction rejoicing in what it has"* (Qur'an, 30:32). Just as earlier communities lost divine favor through division, the contemporary Muslim world risks similar consequences. The Prophet's warning that disunity would lead to destruction is vividly demonstrated in the Palestinian case, where global powers exploit Muslim fragmentation to entrench occupation and injustice. Thus, the Palestinian struggle is not merely a political question but a theological litmus test of Muslim unity. Egypt's compromise, Syria's rhetorical posturing, and the Gulf States' normalization reflect broader failures to embody the Qur'anic and Prophetic vision of solidarity. To forsake Palestine is to forsake the divine command of *ummah wahidah* (one community). Reclaiming unity, therefore, requires re-centering Palestine as a shared responsibility, guided not by statecraft alone but by Qur'anic injunctions of justice, brotherhood, and resistance against oppression.

Qur'anic and Prophetic Lens

The Qur'an presents unity not as a peripheral ideal but as an existential necessity for the Ummah. Allah declares: *"Indeed, this Ummah of yours is one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me"* (Qur'an, 21:92). Here, divine unity (*tawḥīd*) is directly connected with communal unity, as Ibn Kathir, notes, "Just as Allah is One, His community must be one, bound by shared servitude to Him" (Ibn Kathir, 1:367). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) reinforced this when he said: *"The Muslim is the brother of another Muslim. He does not oppress him, nor does he hand him over to an enemy"* (Muslim, 6219).

This Prophetic warning is profoundly relevant to Palestine. When Muslim states forsake the oppressed, they violate the Qur'anic principle: "*And if they seek help of you in religion, then you must help*" (Qur'an 8:72). Similarly, the Qur'an cautions against betrayal: *"And what is \[the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and for the oppressed among men, women, and children…?"* (Qur'an, 4:75). Sadat's 1977 Knesset speech, prioritizing Egypt's "interests above all else," epitomized the abandonment of this injunction (Sadat). Thus, both Qur'an and Sunnah establish solidarity with oppressed Muslims as a divine obligation, not a political option.

Sources of Unity in Islamic Teachings

Islamic teachings provide enduring sources of unity that transcend sectarian, ethnic, and political divides:

1. *Tawḥīd* **(Oneness of Allah):** Unity begins with faith in one God, which becomes the unifying axis of Muslim life. The Qur'an commands: "And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided" (Qur'an, 3:103). Al-Raghib al-Isfahani describes wahdah as indivisibility, teaching that just as Allah is unique and undivided, so too should the Ummah be indivisible in purpose (al-Isfahani, 112).

2. **The Qur'an and Sunnah:** These serve as the ultimate reference points of unity. Ibn Kathir interprets the "rope of Allah" in 3:103 as the Qur'an and Sunnah, cautioning that abandoning them leads to fragmentation (Ibn Kathir, 1:367). The Prophet emphasized the same when he said: "I leave behind two things: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah; if you hold fast to them, you will never go astray" (al-Muwatta, Book 46, Hadith 3).

3. **Congregational Worship:** Ritual practices institutionalize unity. The Qur'an praises believers who *"fight in His cause in rows as though they are a single structure joined firmly"* (Qur'an 61:4). Hajj, Jumuʿah, and the daily congregational prayers embody this principle, dissolving boundaries of race, wealth, or nationality in favor of a shared devotion.

4. **Prophetic Brotherhood (***Ukhuwwah***):** The Prophet established bonds between the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, pairing them as brothers (al-Bukhari, Book 46, Hadith 219). This model of social solidarity remains vital for overcoming sectarian rivalries today.

5. **Justice and Equality:** Unity is not merely symbolic but grounded in justice. The Qur'an states: *"O mankind, indeed We created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous*

of you" (Qur'an, 49:13). The Prophet reiterated this in his Farewell Sermon, rejecting superiority based on race or ethnicity (al-Bukhari, Book 56, Hadith 122).

Steps towards Restoring Unity

Restoring unity in the modern Ummah requires a holistic approach rooted in Qur'anic and Prophetic guidance but responsive to contemporary realities:

1. **Promoting Wasatiyyah (Moderation):** Extremism has fractured the Ummah. The Qur'an identifies Muslims as *"a middle nation"* (Qur'an, 2:143). Scholars emphasize that moderation (wasatiyyah) provides a framework for balance, preventing sectarian absolutism.

2. **Inter-Sectarian Dialogue:** The Prophet urged reconciliation: *"The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers"* (Qur'an, 49:10). Establishing forums for Sunni–Shia dialogue can mitigate historical grievances and rebuild trust.

3. **Strengthening Islamic Institutions:** Revival of collective *ijtihād* through councils of scholars can address contemporary issues (terrorism, bioethics, and economics) with unified guidance. This reflects the Qur'an's principle of *shūrā* (consultation): *"And those who have responded to their master and established prayer, and their affairs are [determined] by consultation among them"* (Qur'an, 42:38).

4. **Education and Awareness:** Curricula must prioritize tolerance and common identity. The Prophet declared: "The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body: when any part of it aches, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever" (Muslim, 2586). Educational reforms should emphasize this metaphor to foster solidarity.

5. **Rejecting Racism and Nationalism:** Qur'an, 49:13 and the Farewell Sermon directly condemn superiority based on lineage or nationality (al-Bukhari, Book 56, Hadith 122). Reviving this ethos can counter narrow nationalist agendas that weaken global Muslim cooperation.

6. **Practical Cooperation in Worldly Affairs:** Joint initiatives in science, economics, humanitarian aid, and defense can solidify unity beyond rhetoric. The Qur'an promises: *"Help one another in righteousness and piety, and do not help one another in sin and aggression"* (Qur'an, 5:2). The Abraham Accords demonstrate the dangers of "helping in aggression" by normalizing occupation (Makdisi, 88). True cooperation must be grounded in righteousness and justice.

Conclusion

The unity of the Muslim Ummah stands in Islamic thought as both a theological imperative and a socio-political necessity. Rooted in *tawḥīd* and reinforced by the Qur'an and Sunnah, solidarity among believers is repeatedly emphasized as a safeguard against weakness and humiliation. The Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) establishment of the Medinan brotherhood, his warnings against divisive loyalties of *jāhiliyyah*, and his Farewell Sermon collectively affirm that unity is the foundation upon which justice, mercy, and strength are built. History demonstrates the grave consequences of neglecting this divine command. Colonial reordering of Muslim lands and contemporary divisions over Palestine where competing national interests have often outweighed religious solidarity show how disunity leaves the Ummah vulnerable to exploitation and oppression. These failures underscore the urgent need to revive Qur'anic principles of brotherhood and mutual support.

Yet the call to unity extends far beyond Palestine. In today's globalized world, Islamophobia marginalizes Muslim communities in Western societies, refugee crises in Syria, Yemen, and Myanmar expose the failures of collective Muslim action, and widening economic inequalities weaken the Ummah's capacity to respond to modern challenges. Islamic teachings on *wasatiyyah* (moderation), *shūrā* (consultation), and cooperation in righteousness provide a timeless framework for addressing these crises and reasserting moral leadership. Ultimately, the Qur'anic command to "hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not be divided" (Qur'an, 3:103) remains the key to renewal. If Muslims embody this principle, they can transcend sectarian loyalties, reclaim their dignity, and fulfill their divinely entrusted mission as *khayra ummah* a community raised to enjoin good, forbid evil, and serve as a force for global justice and peace. Unity, therefore, is not simply an

aspiration but the precondition for the Ummah's moral authority and political relevance in the twenty-first century.

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