

## The Weakness of the Islamic Civilization: The Causes and its Solution

Berhanundin bin Abdullah, PhD

Zawawi bin Yusoff, PhD

Azli Fairuz bin Laki

Mohamad Zaidin bin Mat @ Mohamad, PhD

Faculty of Islamic Contemporary Studies, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Gong Badak  
Campus,

21300 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, Malaysia

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### Abstract

World history has portrayed the splendour of Muslims in controlling the world during the heyday of Islamic rule and the expansion of its empire. The Muslims have carved a remarkable point in history through the development of numerous fields of knowledge and skills, especially in education, medicine, physics or astronomy, social science, culture, economy, administration and governance. However, due to internal problems and oversight of Muslims themselves, the efforts to glorify the world's civilization was curtailed. In an era of information technology and other modern surroundings, the Muslims need to recover the splendour of the ummah amongst the world civilization. Meanwhile, pertaining to religious affairs, the Muslims must build a firm basis so that the world would respect and make Islamic civilization the pillar of world civilization. Even though it is an idealistic hope, it must be realised slowly and in stages according to the suitability of time, society and place. Hence, this article will try to identify the source of weakness in Muslims that hinders them from controlling world civilizations and put forth suggestions of how to reclaim the splendour of the ummah in order to stay at the pinnacle of world civilization.

**Keywords:** Weakness, Islamic, Civilization

### Introduction

Civilization is a process called madani (in Arabic), which means development, municipality and assimilation of genteel qualities. Civilization is frequently used when referring to actions and development that is achieved, especially worldly developments in areas such as culture, society, behaviour, thinking, science, technology, arts and literature (Esposito, 1995:11).

The emergence of Islamic governments after the time of the Prophet S.A.W and Caliphate Khulafa al-Rashidin, such as governments in Umaiyyah, Abbasiyyah, Seljuk (Turkey), Ottoman (Turkey), Moghul (India) and the Malacca Sultanate had been proven to introduce

numerous basic values of world civilizations. A remarkable centre of knowledge has created an Islamic and world civilization. Numerous scientists, philosophers and educationists have emerged from Islamic countries, especially during the golden era of Islam. During the 18th and 19th centuries, misfortune had befallen the Islamic world when many Islamic territories had fallen into the hands of European and American colonizers. After World War 1, the Turkish Ottoman Empire (the last Islamic empire) started to fall apart. Hence, the Muslims' expansion of knowledge and skills deteriorated and this caused the failure of Muslims to control the world's civilizations. The effort, life style, enculturation of knowledge and the emergence of western civilization had dashed the opportunity and made all the efforts of Muslims look like theirs.

### **The Reasons why Muslims Fail to Command the World's Civilizations**

The weaknesses of Muslims that hinder them from commanding the world's civilizations stem from internal (among the Muslims) and external factors (the enemies of Islam). For example:

1. Internal conflicts among Muslims emerged due to differences in thinking between Muslim sects. After the killing of Caliph Umar and Uthman, a drift appeared culminating in the emergence of different sects such as the Khawarij (those who branded the Companions as disbelievers), Sy'ah Rafidhah (supporters of Saidina Ali) and Sy'ah Nashibah (those who despised Saidina Ali). During the time of tabi'in there emerged a thinking style according to Qadariyah and Mu'tazilah in Basrah as well as Jahmiyyah and Mujassimah in Khurasan. During the third century, the wise and rational Caliph al-Makmun had introduced books on Greek philosophy and upon reading these books the sect became courageous enough to condemn the Companions (Buhairi, 1422:13017). Disunity became more evident due to a dispute about the al-Quran, Sunnah, Characteristics of Allah (Jali 1988:61-98, Shalahudin Maqbul t.th:51-65), questions about the Sunnah (al-Qifari 1994:125-399), heaven-hell and major sins (al-Mu'tiq, 1402:27-28). The focus on other fields of knowledge and skills were disrupted.

2. The Decadence of Morals and Attitudes of Muslims  
Decadence of moral values is caused by western influences introduced through activities such as entertainment, art and various negative western cultures that lull the mind but presumed by the younger generation and youths as development. The moral decadence is followed by the Muslim's attitude of complacency towards the global competition in knowledge development. This strategy was meticulously orchestrated and monitored by western powers in order to weaken Muslims (from the knowledge and religious aspects) (al-Qaradhawy 1999:35).

3. Christianization and the Crusade  
During the 17th century, the Roman Catholic Church, which ruled much of Europe, had established the Ministry of Religious Propaganda in the Vatican in order to expand Christianity throughout the world. The school of propaganda for foreign religions was established in Paris with funds from the ministry. Several institutions were set up in Germany, France and Bulgaria. New schools were set up to provide better training for Christian missionaries. The main basis for cooperation between the Christian missionary movement and the imperialist was the Crusade. The Crusade began in 1095 (489H) and lasted for almost two centuries (Jamil 1987:25-28) with an agenda to subdue the progress of Islam.

4. The Colonizers plan against Islamic policies

A famous Dutch orientalist named Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje suggested the technique of “BEFRIENDING” the religious scholars and “SEPARATION” of Islam as a religion and Islam as a political philosophy with an assumption that the further these two concepts are, the faster the process of destroying the Muslims (Nazri 1989:57). This was intended to make the Muslims forget their duty of expanding knowledge for the sake of human civilization.

5. Prohibitions of religious scholars and preachers (Syed Qutb 1971:44)

The West prohibited preachers and leaders because without religious scholars knowledge could not be disseminated. For example, the prison sentence and torture of Muhammad Kamaluddin al-Sananirriy and Dr Abdul Mun’im Abu al-Fatah in Egypt (Amin 1989:24) as well as the banishment of Haji Abdul Rahman Limbong to Mecca. al-Siba’ie (1972:80) stated that when the enemy felt hopeless in their efforts to destroy Islamic dakwah, they resorted to violence by killing the religious preachers. For example, the murder of Hassan al-Banna in 1948; ‘Abd Qadir ‘Audah in 1954; Syed Qutb in 1965; Nik Hassan (when he was about to perform ablution for morning prayers) and Mohd Abdul Latif from Petani, who was shot (when he was returning from religious preaching) (Amin 1989:26).

6. Failure in the administrative and management systems

Since the 11th century, the west had launched the secular movement and coerced people to accept and adopt the western secular system in their management and administrative systems. This movement intended to surrender these matters to a group of secularly educated bureaucrats. According to Yahaya (1998:199), this group was known as the group of bureaucrats who got secular English education to lead and administer the country. Hence, eventually the field of Islamic management and administration had become weakened.

7. The Policy of Separating National Administration and Religious Matters

The western policy that separates administrative matters from religious and customary matters through agreements signed between the English and Islamic rulers in the 19th century had a profound effect on dissemination of knowledge in the Islamic world (Rauf 1987:123).

8. Prohibiting the publishing of knowledge based scriptures

Among the controlling measures instituted by the colonizers were to create a law against writing. For example, the control on publishing in the Straits Settlements through the 1886 Legislation of 1886 pertaining to the Registration of Scriptures had made it mandatory to surrender published copies and other pertinent information to the government, such as the name and address of the owner. The Publishing and Book Enactment 1915 and The Seditious Publications (Prohibition) Enactment 1919 (as part of further action culminating from the Tok Janggut Rebellion in April–May 1915), which prohibited the Malays from voicing and cultivating political ambitions (Malaysian National Archives 1999:5). The actual truth was that these efforts were intended to inhibit the growth of Islamic knowledge.

9. The lack of economic growth

Presently, the Muslims are far behind in the economic sector due to the weak appreciation of Islamic knowledge. This backwardness had caused the non-Muslims to take advantage and use Islamic methods, such as the banking system.

10. Assimilation of the Secular Educational system

At the end of the 19th century the English colonizer's wish to further consolidate the influence in Islamic countries was successfully implemented through the education system by officially establishing English type schools (Cheesman 1955). The English had introduced western culture to the students. University of St. Joseph (1874) in Syria and the American University in Beirut (1866) had propagated Christianity, western culture, materialism, nationalism and liberalism. J.B. Gibb wrote in his book "Syria, Lebanon and Jordan" that "both these universities open the way for western thinking to infiltrate Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Meanwhile, the most important element of thinking that they propagated was nationalism".

11. To claim confidentiality and conceal the treasures of the Islamic civilization from the world's civilizations

The majority of literary treasures contributed by Muslim scholars were concealed and modified and instead presumed to be contributions of western scholars, as in the case of astronomy. Most of these literary works were kept as reference documents in western countries.

**Efforts to restore the splendour of the Ummah**

1. To avoid discord among Muslims

One important aspect needed to command knowledge and skills is to eradicate any sort of discord among Muslims because this action is internecine. Discord on matters pertaining to the various sects, their thinking and practices should be prolonged if it does not involve questions on aqidah. However, if it contradicts the aqidah, then it should be solved according to the main constitution, which is the al-Quran.

2. To enhance esteemed spiritual and moral values as well as changing the attitude

Only exemplary spiritual and moral elements can restore the dignity as well as the honour of Muslims. These efforts would make the Muslims capable of restoring the spirit needed to develop the discipline of knowledge and dominate the world's civilizations. This basis would create the desire towards developing intellectualism, high moral values and the yearning to work.

3. Rejecting the agenda of Christianization and the Crusade

The time has come for Muslims to unite against the agenda of Christianization and the Crusade through expanding the dakwah and the enhanced achievements in Islamic knowledge. In addition, the Muslims must eventually eradicate all elements that are disadvantageous and prohibit the development of knowledge culture.

4. Be cautious of the effects of the colonizer's plan on Islamic policies

Muslims must be free and not depend on the western world. All the colonizer's beliefs and influences that destroy the agenda of Islam's strengths need to be substituted with the actual values and culture of Islamic knowledge. .

5. Commendation for religious scholars and preachers

Religious scholars and preachers need to be courageous and rise to uphold the truth without bothering about the pressures from other parties in order to defend the superiority of an

Islamic-knowledge civilization. This preferred approach should be implemented via the involvement of all the disciplines of knowledge, information and sociology.

6. Commanding the field of management and administration

After the colonizers, the secular bureaucrats had headed the management and administrative sectors; therefore, the Muslims must endeavour to return power to the hands of Islamic leaders. This awareness should be re-cultivated so that efforts to rekindle the limelight of Islamic knowledge are widely propagated.

7. Religion as a basis for nationhood

A much desired drastic change is related to contributions towards the actual values of human compassion based on Islamic policies that do not separate national administration from religious obligations. Among the changes are to create a group of ummah, eradicate enmity, to return the dignity to humankind and to rekindle the spirit of concordance and principles in society.

8. An Islamic media that is free from the clutches of materialism, hedonism and western ideologies

Muslims must realize that all this while western values had been implanted in the Islamic world's mass media. Hence, everything that condones what is evil and forbidden must be replaced with a new outlook that raises the competitiveness to return the world's civilization to a civilization based on Islamic values.

9. Controlling the Economy

The Muslims cannot afford to be economically backward because it is the main factor that is needed for the progress and success of life. They need to control an Islamic-style management, which is presently implemented by other parties, such as the Islamic banking system. The control of resources is important so that Muslims do not depend on non-Muslims because most resources and materials should be halal, clean and permissible according to Syariat Islam.

10. Enhance the command of various disciplines of knowledge in the education field

Muslims must endeavour to reconstruct their efforts to rejuvenate the glorious era of the Islamic civilization. All the disciplines of knowledge, specifically those related with solving the current problems of humankind, must be explored by Muslims based on the sources of the al-Quran and al-Sunnah, such as the fields of medicine, information technology, astronomy, biotechnology, sociology and education.

11. Exposing the treasurers of Muslim scholars

Muslims should re-focus on new fields besides assuming the treasures left behind by previous scholars to be a bridge. This bridge is capable of invigorating the splendour of the Islamic world's discipline of knowledge and consequently lead the world's civilizations.

**Conclusion**

The splendour of the world's civilizations, which were headed by Muslims at one time, must be returned to the Muslims again for further expansion. The present civilization is ever more challenging and a certain portion of it has destroyed the truth about humanity and turned

humans into animals with a mind. The destruction must be arrested in order to return the dignity of humans as the most honourable beings on earth. The agenda of modern civilizations must be urgently replaced with a civilization that offers purity and well-being to humans.

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