

An Islamic Perspective on Leadership: Qur'anic World View on the Qualities of Leaders

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Abstract: Leadership as a topic can be studied from many different viewpoints including political, military, social, religious or corporate. This paper aims to provide scholars with an analysis of a religious perspective on corporate and social leadership. The paper focuses on Qur'anic scripture in relation to the qualities of leaders from an Islamic viewpoint and the scripture's applicability to contemporary views on leadership. This work further examines leadership and its importance and growing role in the culturally diverse globalised economy. The intensification of debate between civilisations with divergent views on a plethora of issues has placed a spotlight on Islam and prompted a need for dialogue. This paper thus addresses the topic of leadership, with a view to continuing the discourse amongst scholars seeking to learn from the richness of Islamic history. This paper considers both cultural variance and the Islamic view of leadership and presents an evaluation on the qualities leaders in Islam and their applicability to contemporary society. The work draws on a variety of resources with a centralised focus on Qur'anic scripture to understand individuals mentioned therein relevant to Judeo-Christian and Islamic history.

Keywords: Islam, Leadership, Globalisation, Civilisation, Culture, Qualities

Introduction

IN ORDER TO fully appreciate Islamic perspectives on leadership, it is important and necessary to first understand the necessity for leadership and the qualities leaders need to demonstrate. Jabnoun (2005) states “*leadership is necessary for the success of any collective.*” The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) stated, as cited by Abū Dāwūd (Vol. 2, No. 2273), that if there are three embarking on a journey, one of them should be appointed as a leader (*Amīr*). An example of this can be seen when the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent the first migration to Abyssinia and placed Jā'far ibn Abū Ṭālib as the appointed leader of the group. He was famously the spokesperson for them in the court of Al-Najashi (The Negus) and his qualities in speech and communication became evident during that encounter (Khan, 1980).

It is therefore clear that leadership is an essential element of the organisation of the Islamic community as well as an important element in legislation. It is also understood that a centralised leadership must be in place, supported by a core group. Roles and responsibilities are then delegated to regional leadership as the nation grows and spreads. This is evident from the example of the migrants to Abyssinia, and further supported by mechanisms for organisation during the time of the caliphates, illustrated by the need for regional leadership in North Africa and Spain later in Islamic history (Hourani, 1991).

Existing literature in this field emphasises that leadership from an Islamic perspective is considered a responsibility and a trust, and cannot be sought. Proponents of this viewpoint often refer to the Hadith cited in Sahih Muslim (Vol. 3, No. 1013). It states, “*Do not ask for*

a position of authority, for if you are granted this position as a result of your asking for it, you will be left alone and if you are granted it without making any request for it, you will be helped.” The help referred to is from Allāh. The Hadith is also cited as a proof that people should not seek political office and that this should be by appointment, though other interpretations have also been given.

The research presented in this paper, which expands upon earlier work (Randeree, 2007), is a theoretical evaluation of the role of Islamic leadership and its applicability to contemporary society. By first examining leadership in a contemporary and corporate sense, the work goes on to investigate lessons that leaders can learn from Islamic doctrine. The research has thus highlighted and analysed, through example, numerous important qualities of a leader and given evidence of their importance highlighted by several Prophets of Allāh.

Leadership and Culture

Leadership can be considered within multi-cultural environments. In the last decade, the development of global markets has created numerous cross-cultural teams and the ensuing dialogue has formed the basis for transacting global business (Adler, 2002). Literature has contented that leadership behaviour is culturally determined and hence varies markedly from culture to culture (Aram and Piriano, 1978; Burger and Bass, 1979; Wright, 1981; Adler, 1991). Robbins (1993) suggests that national culture plays an important role in determining the effectiveness of leadership style. Similarly, Adler (1991), Badawy (1980) and Bass *et al.* (1979) have all argued that national boundaries make considerable differences in leadership style. Bass (1990) also concludes that culture does influence leadership.

In some cultures, leaders are respected when they take strong decisive action, whereas in other cultures consultative and participative decision making approaches are more valued. According to Den Hartog *et al.* (1999), in a culture where authoritarian leadership is valued it would be pointless acting in a way more characteristic of a participative or democratic leader. But in a culture that endorses a more nurturing and humanistic leadership style, being sensitive and considerate as a leader could be functional. Table 1 shows a four dimensional framework (Hofstede, 1983) in which national cultures vary and eventually affects the selection of leadership style in one way or another (McKenna, 2006).

Table 1: Four Dimensions on which National Cultures Vary (Hofstede, 1983)

Dimension	Low	High
Power distance dimension (POW)	(Australia, Israel, Denmark, Sweden) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less centralisation • Flatter organisation pyramids • Smaller wage differentials • Structure in which manual and clerical work are equal jobs 	(Philippines, Mexico, Venezuela, India, Brazil) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater centralisation • Tall organisation pyramids • More supervisory personnel • Structure in which white-collar jobs are valued more than blue-collar jobs

Masculinity-femininity dimension (MAS)	(Sweden, Denmark, Thailand, Finland, Yugoslavia) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex roles are minimised • Organisations do not interfere with people's private lives • More women in more qualified jobs • Soft, yielding, intuitive skills are rewarded • Social rewards are valued 	(Japan, Australia, Venezuela, Italy, Mexico) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sex roles are clearly differentiated • Organisations may interfere to protect their interests • Fewer women are in qualified jobs • Aggression, competition, and justice are rewarded • Work is valued as a central life interest
Individualism-collectivism dimension (IND)	(Venezuela, Columbia, Taiwan, Mexico, Greece) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation as 'family' • Organisation defends employee interests • Practices are based on loyalty, a sense of duty, and group participation 	(United States, Australia, Great Britain, Canada, The Netherlands) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisation is more impersonal • Employees defend their own self-interests • Practices encourage individual initiative
Uncertainty avoidance dimension (UNC)	(Denmark, Sweden, Great Britain, United States, India) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less structuring of activities • Fewer written rules • More generalists • Variability • Greater willingness to take risks • Less ritualistic behaviour 	(Greece, Portugal, Japan, Peru, France) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More structuring activities • More written rules • More specialists • Standardisation • Less willingness to take risks • More realistic behaviour

Most recent research in cross-cultural studies of management maintains that managers adopt different decision styles, depending on the pattern of organisation and their individual characteristics (Ali, 1989; Blyton, 1984; Tayeb, 1988). Furthermore, Ali (1989) finds that leadership decision style differs significantly by country. Al-Faleh (1987) points out that Arab culture has certain distinctive characteristics that dominate managerial thinking and behaviour. Evans *et al.* (1989) have argued that leadership style is a function of the level of industrialisation, but cultural characteristics play a significant role in tempering its effects. Campbell *et al.* (1993) note that leadership style itself and eventual task outcome had a strong impact on perceptions of appropriateness of leadership style, whereas gender and organisational

setting had no substantive impact. Buckham (1990) argues that the type of industry sector (private or public) and an organisation's size play important roles in the determination of the effectiveness of leadership style. Studies of leadership styles have revealed that there are not only differences in the styles preferred by followers in different cultures, but the specific behaviours which reflect these styles may vary from culture to culture (Smith and Peterson, 1988). Cultural differences may also limit the universality of new leadership paradigms, such as the theory of transactional and transformation leadership introduced by Bass (1985) and later revised by Bass and Avolio (1994). Bass (1996) stated that this theory has some degree of universality, as it holds up considerable universal potential.

The influence of culture in multinational companies working globally can be investigated at different levels. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) differentiated between three levels of culture. At the highest level is national or regional culture. The way in which attitudes are expressed within specific organisations is described as corporate or organisational culture (Randeree, 2008a). At a narrower level there is the professional culture where people with certain functions will tend to share certain professional and ethical orientations (Randeree and Malik, 2008; Randeree, 2008b).

National culture could be considered the culture which differentiates one society from another. Members of the same culture are more likely to interpret and evaluate situational events in a similar way than those from different cultures. The national culture could be considered from a social perspective, a historical perspective and an individual perspective. The social perspective considers culture from a social point of view. Culture here is a feature of social life. The historical perspective refers to the values, which are inherited in the population of a particular nation. The individual perspective takes a view of culture in which the values and norms of individuals are highlighted. Hofstede (1991) defined culture as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group from another.

A number of previous studies have examined leadership style in the Arab world. For example, Ali *et al.* (1995) investigated the decision-making styles of UAE national managers and Arab and foreign expatriates. The results suggest that the consultative style was predominant. Similarly, Ali (1993) examined the decision styles of Arab Gulf executives. The results also point to a strong preference for the consultative style. Furthermore, Ali (1989b); Al-Jafary and Hollingsworth (1983) and Muna (1980) examined the decision-making styles of Arab executives. They report that Arab executives are highly committed to the consultative style.

Dahhan (1988) studied the decision styles of Jordanian top managers. She found that Jordanian top managers follow an authoritative management style, a finding that is also reported by Badaway (1980) for Mideastern managers. However, Kaur (1993) reports that the autocratic style prevails among Indian managers.

The findings shows that employees in the investigated organisations are highly committed to their organisations, highly satisfied with their jobs, and their performance is high and indicates that these employees perceive their superiors as adopting consultative or participative leadership behaviour (Yousef, 2000). A number of studies have been carried out in the Arab world which suggest that the leadership in the Arab culture nurtures consultative and participative tendencies (e.g. Muna, 1980; Al-Jafary and Hollingsworth, 1983; Ali, 1993; Ali *et al.*, 1997). This preference demonstrates the influence of Islamic and tribalistic values and beliefs, since both Islamic and tribal law reinforce consultation in all aspects of life (Ali,

1989a). However, Islam is clear and distinct from national culture as it is a global religion which transcends national and cultural boundaries (Randeree and Chaudhry, 2007).

Leadership - An Islamic Perspective

As mentioned earlier, leadership in Islam is established by collective appointment. However, the Qur'ān does detail one exception, the Prophet Yūsuf (pbuh), who asked the king to give him a leadership position over the storehouses of Egypt. Commentators such as Fatoohi (2005) argue that the exception is made for three possible reasons. Firstly, the leadership qualities that Yūsuf (pbuh) possessed were not available in any other person. Yūsuf (pbuh), being a Prophet, recognised that the only possible safeguard against the impending drought that Egypt was facing, would be if he were in charge of the granaries. Secondly, Yūsuf's (pbuh) integrity was such that he would lead by example in how people should behave in the case of an imminent disaster. Finally, Yūsuf (pbuh) was receiving revelation directly from Allāh and, as such, was able to protect the wheat harvest through additional knowledge others would not have. In this case, he was inspired by Allāh to store the harvest in the ears and not as seed, which would increase the harvest's durability through resistance to decay.

[(Yūsuf] said: "For seven consecutive years, you shall sow as usual and that (the harvest) which you reap *you shall leave in ears*, (all) - except a little of it which you may eat. Then will come after that, seven hard (years), which will devour what you have laid by in advance for them, (all) except a little of that which you have guarded (stored)" (12:47-48).

This knowledge was not previously known, coming to Yūsuf (pbuh) by way of inspiration, and has been subsequently practiced to great success in parts of the developing world. Furthermore, it can be summarised that in contemporary society this can be considered exceptional, as, according to Islamic theology, no further prophets, inspired by Allāh will come to pass.

Further, the qualities leaders need to possess are also essential, since these qualities will form the basis of the vision, effectiveness, function, productivity, development, momentum and growth of a society. In all, fifteen qualities are highlighted. These are (1) leaders must possess fitness for purpose, (2) they must be trustworthy, (3) they must engage in lifelong learning, (4) they must know their followers, (5) they must be mindful of the need for the professional development of their followers, (6) they must possess and articulate a vision, (7) they must exercise responsibility, (8) they must provide training, (9) they must display good communication skills, (10) they must be patient, (11) they must be a good role model, (12) they must engage in consultation, (13) they must exercise correct judgement, (14) they must be good decision makers and (15) they must display an appreciation for diversity and multiculturalism.

The first two qualities a leader must possess are fitness for purpose and trustworthiness. These are expounded in the Qur'ān which essentially stipulates two criteria for employee selection, the first being strength (fitness for purpose) and the second, trustworthiness. The Qur'ān cites these in two places and in both cases in relation to the employment of Prophets. The first mentioned is the Prophet Yūsuf (pbuh) who was essentially appointed minister of finance, economy and planning, with a portfolio that extended over agricultural strategic development. The Qur'ān states:

[Yūsuf] said: "Set me over the storehouses of the land; I will indeed guard them with full knowledge" (12:55).

The second is the Prophet Mūsa (pbuh), who, through his kindness to watering the sheep of two women in the Madyan region of the Arabian Peninsula, was employed by their father, believed to be the Prophet Shu'āib (pbuh), to work for him.

And said one of them (the two women): "O my father! Hire him! Verily, the best of men for you to hire is the strong, the trustworthy y" (28:26).

Importantly, the reference for employment came from one of these two women, who had observed the qualities of the Prophet Mūsa (pbuh) at the well, which the Qur'ān highlights as being strength and trustworthiness. The commentary on this statement expounds this word "Al-Qawi" (strong), stating that it is not limited to physical strength, although that meaning is also valid, but rather fitness for purpose. Thus, leadership is assigned accordingly. This is made clear by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who indicated Abū Bakr as caliph as he possessed the best credentials for this role, having been the right hand man to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) since the beginning of his mission (Abū Bakr was later formally appointed by other prominent prophetic companions after the demise of the prophet). However, he (the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)) appointed Khālīd ibn Al-Waleed as the military leader for the Muslims, as he demonstrated skills in warfare management and Mus'āb ibn Umair as his viceroy to Yathrib, as he displayed qualities as a gifted preacher (Da'iyah), and, as previously mentioned, Jā'far ibn Abū Ṭālib as spokesman and Amīr for the migrants to Abyssinia, as he possessed the best communication skills. Thus, it is both necessary for leadership to be assigned to those most fit to carry out a given task and for leaders themselves to recognise the qualities of future leaders and develop them accordingly.

Another quality of leaders is that they must be lifelong learners, seekers of knowledge. Society is a dynamic, living entity and as such, leaders must be adaptive and changing to work most efficiently and productively. This is evident in numerous instances with the Prophets of Allāh (pbuh). This is applicable to both men and women (Randeree, 2006) as the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) emphasised the need for both men and women to be engaged in learning stating that seeking knowledge is an obligation on every Muslim man and Muslim woman.

Notably, by way of example, when the Prophet Mūsa (pbuh) was asked by one of the Children of Israel if he knew who the most knowledgeable person on earth, to which the Prophet Mūsa (pbuh) replied that he was, since, according to his knowledge, he was the most knowledgeable, being the Prophet and being imbued with knowledge from Allāh. However, in response to this claim by Mūsa, it was revealed to him by Allāh that there was another man more knowledgeable than Mūsa (Sahih Al-Bukhari, Vol. 8, No. 662). Interestingly, Mūsa's response gives a deep and profound lesson to contemporary leaders that the Qur'ān explains.

And (remember) when Mūsa said to his boy-servant: "I will not give up (travelling) until I reach the junction of the two seas or (until) I spend years and years in travelling" (18:60).

Mūsa (pbuh) thus embarked upon an arduous journey to find this more knowledgeable person so that he could learn from him. Having eventually found this man, whose name is given as Al-Khidr, he proceeds to receive instruction, through a series of profound events occurring

along a physical journey, about fairness, equity, justice and patience, expounded in detail in Surah Al-Kahf (Chapter of the Cave) of the Qur'ān. The lesson for leadership here is clearly evident. In order to succeed, it is imperative that continuous improvement and lifelong learning in an atmosphere of humility and recognition of one's inherent limitations be fundamental in running any organisation. Further evidence of the aspect of humility is further mentioned in the same story, where once Mūsa has found Al-Khidr, he says:

Mūsa said to him (Khidr) "May I follow you so that you teach me something of that knowledge (guidance and true path) which you have been taught (by Allah)?" (18:66).

The story of Mūsa (pbuh) here, gives an account of the importance of gaining knowledge from a teacher or scholar.

In addition to the knowledge a leader possesses, and developing that knowledge through a desire for continuous self-improvement, leaders must also have knowledge of those they lead. The Prophets amply demonstrate this. The Prophet Sulaimān (pbuh), for example, was a king and great military leader, whose leadership extended over a nation and a vast army, is highlighted in the Qur'ān as noticing the absence of a single bird, a hoopoe, from a military line-up.

He inspected the birds, and said: "What is the matter that I see not the hoopoe? Or is he among the absentees?" (27:20).

The illustration of a commander over a huge force noticing this absence is a significant lesson for leaders being well acquainted with those they lead. It is common, particularly in hierarchical organisation structures for the CEO (or equivalent) to be only familiar with the Board of Directors. This is indicative of a corporation that lacks compassion for the workforce, as highlighted by the example of Sulaimān. It is noteworthy that he indicated his awareness of those who had also apologised for their absence in the above verse ("Or is he among the absentees?") as this is synonymous to contemporary meetings, often with the first item on agendas being "apologies for absence". This serves to exemplify the leader's responsibility, accountability and conscientiousness towards his subordinates.

In addition to having a close knowledge of those you lead, even in a large corporation, Deming (1982) states, "*A good leader is one that makes many leaders.*" This emphasises that one of the qualities of leadership is to direct energies towards the development of those they lead. The age-old premise that the customer is always right does not hold in an holistic sense, as the good leader is the one who focuses on his employees. Consequently, a motivated workforce will have better customer relations (Hicks, 2004). This can be manifest in many forms, for example, concern for the professional development of your employees, showing your employees that you take an active interest in their activities, demonstrating that you have confidence in their abilities, or even assisting in their duties. From the Prophetic examples, we see many cases of this. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) assisted the Muslims in the building of the mosque in Madīna, by helping to carry bricks, illustrating his leadership quality of participating with his followers in their duties. Furthermore, he was always optimistic in the potential of his followers, stating, "*The best before Islam are the best after Islam if they learned*" (Bukhari Vol. 3, No. 3234), thus recognising the inherent capabilities of people irrespective of their past religious beliefs.

Any organisation must have a vision – a positive image of what it can become and an articulation of the path towards that goal (Landsberg, 2004). This was demonstrated in the Prophetic tradition. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), for example, at the lowest point of his mission, his expulsion from Makkah and migration to Madīna, still articulated a vision for the conquest of Islam over a large part of the known world. He said to Surāqah bin Mālik bin Ju'shām that the day will come when he (Surāqah) would be wearing the braces of the Emperor Kisro, the leader of the Persians, the superpower of that age. Surāqah was the man who tried to capture the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the migration, but was foiled by the repeated collapsing of his horse on approaching the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). The prophecy of the bracelets did happen during the caliphate of Ūmar ibn Al-Khattāb, when the Muslims were reigning over more than one third of the known world at that time. Furthermore, this vision must be achieved through goal-directed leadership. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, *“If the hour comes and one of you has a seedling, then he should plant it”* (Musnad Ahmed, Vol. 3, No. 183).

Another quality leaders possess is one of responsibility for those they lead. The greater the leader, the greater this responsibility extends. Covey (1989) expounds the concept of *“circle of concern”* and *“circle of influence”* indicating that a true leader is one who focuses upon his circle of influence, which consequently results in an expansion of his influence into areas of concern. Paradoxically, a leader who focuses upon his concern will see his influence diminish. This therefore argues that leaders are not *“complainers”* but rather proactive, positive and optimistic individuals. The great leader thus has a proactive sense of responsibility for those he leads. Ūmar ibn Al-Khattāb, for example, lived in Madīna during his caliphate and, though not a prophet, stated that he feared that a donkey that breaks its leg in Iraq is his responsibility if the road were not paved safely.

These qualities of leaders being seekers of knowledge, possessing wisdom and exercising responsibility must be facilitated through the right training and preparation from an early stage.

A leader must be a good communicator, an example being the communication skills of Jā'far ibn Abū Ṭālib, discussed earlier. Different leaders through history have possessed various communication tools. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), for example, communicated his message beyond Arabia by means of eight letters he had written and sent to eight leaders, including the empires neighboring Arabia, inviting them to Islam. The letters included one sent with Jā'far to Al-Najāshī, who embraced the new faith. Further, letters were sent to: Muqawqas, Vicegerent of Egypt, who reacted by politely rejecting the message it contained and sending gifts for the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh); Chosroes, Emperor of Persia, who reacted angrily and tore the letter to shreds; Hercules, King of the Byzantines, who famously ordered Abu Sufyān to inform him further about the man, Muhammad, who had sent the letter; Mundhir bin Sawā, Governor of Bahrain, who informed his subjects about the letter, informing them that if they wished to follow the message they may do so and if not, they should pay the Jizya tax; Haudha bin Ali, Governor of Yamāma, who accepted Islām, on condition he be given a position in the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) government, a request rejected by the latter; Hāritha bin Abi Shāmīr Al-Ghassāni, King of Damascus, who furiously rejected the message, and; Jaifer, King of Oman and his brother, Al-Jalandī, who both accepted the message (Al-Mubarakpuri, 1996). These letters give important leadership lessons, since their recipients were so diverse and had a variety of beliefs, attitudes and mindsets. Furthermore, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), in addressing different individuals, used a

variation in approach. For example, the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) letter to Al-Najāshi focused on the monotheism of Islam to counter Christian doctrine of the divinity of the Prophet Isā (pbuh). Thus, a leader needs to communicate orally and textually, in an appropriate manner with an understanding of the receiving audience.

A leader must be patient and forbearing. The Prophet Yūsuf (pbuh) is one of the best examples of this from the Islamic tradition. Uniquely, his story is given in a single chapter of the Qur'ān, which details his biography in a chronological approach, a reporting method not seen elsewhere in the Qur'ān. The question thus arises, why does Allāh go to the extent of giving his life story in such a detailed narrative, set out chronologically, but not for other Prophets? The answer lies in the lesson for leaders – a leader must be patient through adversity as Yūsuf (pbuh) was, so Allāh wants to give a comprehensive account of leadership qualities found in Yūsuf (pbuh) through the adversity he faced and how his approach led to ultimate success. Allāh states,

“And certainly, We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones” (2:155).

His patience extends through trials, which include attempted murder, being separated from his parents from a young age being sold into slavery, being wrongfully accused of a crime and imprisonment on false pretenses. However, his patience paid dividends, ultimately being absolved of his crimes and being put in a leadership role in Egypt, working closely with the king and saving Egypt from the terrible effects of a famine and eventually being reunited with his family.

Great leaders have the quality of being a role model to those they lead. For a Muslim, their greatest leader is also their greatest role model, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh). His characteristics as being a person worthy of being followed is articulated in the Qur'ān which states,

“Indeed in the Messenger of Allah [Muhammad] you have a good example to follow for him who hopes in (the Meeting with) Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah much” (33:21).

This verse not only indicates that he is a role model, but presents a reason for that, and that is that he sets an example worthy of being followed. Thus the personality and character of a leader is important, not his position within an organisation.

Another quality is consultation. Leaders must consult with those they lead in order to form a coherent opinion and have confidence in their decision-making. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) is instructed in the Qur'ān to consult those around him and deal with them gently,

“And by the Mercy of Allah, you dealt with them gently. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you; so pass over (their faults), and ask (Allah's) Forgiveness for them; and consult them in the affairs. Then when you have taken a decision, put your trust in Allah, certainly, Allah loves those who put their trust (in Him)” (3:159).

Thus, consultation requires a soft approach to nurture obedience, motivate, and inspire followers. In a corporate context, this is synonymous with empowering a stakeholder, where

participation is encouraged from all levels. This is evident in methodologies such as Total Quality Management (TQM), Change Management and Configuration Management, as well as Suggestion Systems, all of which are aimed at continuous improvement through consultation and employee participation and empowerment.

This quality is further connected to the importance of listening and, in particular, hearing both sides of an argument. An example is the Prophet Dāwūd (pbuh), to whom appeared two angels in the guise of men. One of them claimed he had one sheep and the other, who had significantly more sheep, had done him an injustice by talking him into giving his sheep to the other. Dāwūd (pbuh) answered by telling him to give the sheep back.

“And has the news of the litigants reached you? When they climbed over the wall into (his) private room. When they entered in upon Dawud, he was terrified of them, they said: “Fear not! (We are) two litigants, one of whom has wronged the other; therefore judge between us with truth, and treat us not with injustice, and guide us to the Right Way. Verily, this my brother (in religion) has ninety nine ewes, while I have (only) one ewe, and he says: “Hand it over to me, and he overpowered me in speech.” [Dawud] said (immediately without listening to the opponent): “He has wronged you in demanding your ewe in addition to his ewes. And, verily, many partners oppress one another, except those who believe and do righteous good deeds, and they are few.” And Dawud (David) guessed that We have tried him and he sought Forgiveness of his Lord, and he fell down prostrate and turned (to Allah) in repentance” (38:21-24).

Thus, what Dāwūd (pbuh) realised was that he had neglected to hear the other man’s side of the story before proclaiming his view. The element of surprise is also telling, as leaders often rush to judgment rather than considering issues in a more timely and thoughtful manner. In this case, it was not required of Dāwūd (pbuh) to respond and judge the case immediately. The Qur’ān articulates this event highlighting the error of Dāwūd (pbuh) and stating that Allāh corrected Dāwūd (pbuh) in his mistake. In this event is a lesson in leadership, since it highlights the importance of both hearing two sides of an argument and further expounds upon the quality of learning from ones mistakes and recognising that consciously evaluating our mistakes enhances our knowledge, wisdom and character.

Often, leaders are put into positions where decision-making is tested to the limit. In such circumstances, the consequences of a poor decision are likely to have repercussions in relation to the mission at hand. With regards to the Prophets, their mission of preaching a message of monotheism to nations largely steeped in ignorance and idolatry was all the more challenging. The example of Rukāna is interesting here. He was a famous undefeated wrestler from Makkah who loathed the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), so, in order to humiliate him, he challenged him to a wrestling bout, betting one hundred sheep to the winner. Here is a leadership decision-making dilemma. If the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) were to accept the challenge from a professional wrestler and lose, it would be of great embarrassment to the Muslims, who were small in number and a weak group at that time in the city of Makkah. However, if he were to refuse the challenge, he would be seen by all, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, as being a weak leader. Essentially, it seems as though Rukāna has put the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) into a no-win situation. To the astonishment of the crowd however, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), described as a man of average height and build, accepted the challenge of the giant Rukāna, and so they began to wrestle. After some time, the

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) managed to pick up Rukāna and slam his body on the ground. Phased by this, Rukāna came once more into the battle, attacking the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) with all his ferocity. Once again the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) picked him up above his head and threw him to the ground. Rukāna conceded that Muhammad is no ordinary man. No professional wrestler in Arabia had ever gotten the upper hand against Rukāna and, to his credit, Rukāna acknowledged the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a Messenger of Allāh, accepted Islam and paid the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) one hundred sheep as his winnings. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) graciously returned the sheep to him, though the bet had taken place prior to the abolition of gambling. The message to leaders is thus not to shy away from adversity or difficulty as your followers will respect you more for at least trying. Further, the leader who is unafraid (and steps into the proverbial ring) will find the strength to overcome adversity and, as such, may even win when the odds are stacked against him. However, this does not detract from making intelligent decisions. Mūsa (pbuh) was not gifted in speech, so did not try to overcome the Pharaoh without the aid of his brother, Hārūn (pbuh). Thus, a balance is needed in leadership between taking on challenging situations and exercising your inherent expertise whilst recognising your boundaries and limitations.

Contemporary leaders must possess knowledge of the growing diversity in the global business environment. This can be manifest in terms of cultural, ethnic, regional or gender diversity (Randeree, 2006), with a leader needing to exercise an inclusive approach to leadership. The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) demonstrated both knowledge of this and acted in a manner that clearly favored inclusion. One such example is the changing of his dialect to that of the regional Arabic dialect of whom he was speaking to, which he commonly did when addressing visitors to Madīna.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed leadership and culture and has outlined fifteen qualities of leaders from Islamic perspectives. The paper further suggests that more research is needed in both an understanding of contemporary views on leadership as well as greater depth in Islamic perspectives on leadership, in order to fully understand and appreciate the contribution made by the Islamic legacy in the area of leadership studies.

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Glossary of Terms

Dāwūd	The Prophet often translated as David
Īsā	The Prophet often translated as Jesus
Madīna	The city of migration and burial place of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), often transliterated as Medina. Full title is Madīna Al-Munawarra (City of the Enlightened Prophet)
Makkah	The birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) often transliterated as Mecca. Full title is Makkah Al-Mukarrama (City of the Generous Prophet)
Muhammad	The Prophet often transliterated as Mohammed
Mūsa	The Prophet often translated as Moses
Ninevah	A town in northern Iraq, known today as Mosul and believed to be the Biblical and Qur'anic hometown of Jonah, the Prophet Yūnus (pbuh)
Nūh	The Prophet often translated as Noah
pbuh	Peace be upon him
pbut	Peace be upon them
Shuaib	The Prophet of the Madyan region
Sulaimān	The Prophet often translated as Solomon
Yūnus ibn Mattah	The Prophet often translated as Jonah, son of Ammotai
Yūsuf	The Prophet often translated as Joseph

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