

## THE CONCEPTUAL NEXUS BETWEEN ISLAMIC FORESIGHT, ISLAMIC THOUGHT AND THE SHARIAH

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### ABSTRACT

The current global Muslim community is facing new challenges amidst the remnants of historical colonisation, sectarianism, and current geopolitical, economic and social realities. Despite these challenges, Muslim communities in general have been consistent in preserving the religious precepts derived from the primary sources of Al-Quran and Al-Sunnah, which form the foundation of the Islamic identity. Although widely underemphasised, futures thinking is deeply ingrained in the precepts of Islamic thought since the time of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which unbeknownst to many, has indubitably shaped the transformation not only in Muslim communities, but has also influenced global shifts in civilisation from multifarious aspects, for example, science and technology, arts, governance and social justice. This paper seeks to illustrate the significance of Islamic futures thinking as a foundation for progress in Muslim communities, by applying the qualitative methods of content analysis and engagements in focus group discussions. To this end, the study analyses data obtained from the exploration of Islamic texts, traditions and literatures on the Islamic perspectives of futures thinking. This paper advances the proposition that futures thinking has a profound basis in Islam due to the universal nature of the Islamic concepts of knowledge, the methods of addressing gradual and imminent change, its constant inspirations towards excellence and a justly balanced society, as well as Islamic ethics in foresight. Findings of this study highlight the importance of futures thinking as a capacity that must be developed in the Muslim world as part of the process towards long term social transformation.

## Introduction

Muslim communities and countries have attracted global interest and attention in many ways. The misuse of the Islamic concept of jihad by extremist groups claiming to represent Islam and the international media propaganda linking Islam to global terrorism and Islamophobia are among the most pressing concerns in the early twenty-first century (Bromwich, 2015; Kutty, 2018). Other issues that many Muslim communities face are ongoing conflicts, low literacy, increase of refugee population, lack of freshwater availability and issues in governance (National Geographic Society, 2018; The World Bank, 2021; Transparency International, 2020). Despite these challenges, there are also opportunities within the Muslim communities that remain untapped such as age-group percentage advantages, and the increasing Muslim population of almost 1.9 billion, which is expected to grow to 2.2 billion by 2035 (Cooperman, O'Connell, & Stencel, 2011; Schleifer, 2012).

Futures literacy is potentially an instrumental capacity that could help Muslim communities in addressing the above challenges and opportunities. These are best handled structurally in the respective perspectives of Muslim communities in order to establish a more participatory society. It is especially imperative to look into futures thinking features within Islam, and to encourage the application of Islamic insights when extrapolating the future. The study of futures from the Islamic perspective is termed in this paper as 'Islamic Foresight' to connect the defined contour of the thinking framework in Islam with the changes and challenges that occur through the passage of time.

## Islamic Foresight: Literature and Literacy

The contribution of Muslims with traits of foresight thinking qualities can be traced in many individuals throughout history, whether as reformers, intellectuals or leaders (Iqbal, 2013). Ibnu Khaldun, in particular, has been frequently referenced in the field through his book, *Al-Muqaddimah*, which described the inner dynamics of the change and events in the rise and decline of civilisations. His work also placed the realities of social life in perspective (Ibn Khaldun, 1958; Shinwari & Tajik, 1986). He treated the study of history as a science, and described the future as akin to that of water saying: 'the future resembles the past like water'. In the context of modern futures studies, Ibnu Khaldun is regarded as an iconic social thinker (Inayatullah, 2013).

Efforts to link futures in the context of Muslim communities can be seen in many writings where Muslim intellectuals have been calling for transformation and change for centuries. They have propagated the need to reevaluate the current practices for a new mindset to arise (AbuSulayman, 2004). The reform of Muslim thought, particularly with regards to leadership, is paramount in addressing the crisis within Muslim communities and to understand the root causes of its shortcomings. Muslim communities are encouraged to cultivate characteristics such as competitiveness and global awareness, unity, compassion and love of knowledge, and wisdom (Kamal, 2011).

It is important for Muslim communities to connect with societal needs and recognise the diversity of modern reality (Inayatullah & Boxwell, 2003; Ahmed, 2002). Equally important is the need of Muslims to contribute to the pool of contemporary knowledge and recognise the significance of the psychological will to transform that will later influence social life, economic and politics in the Islamic world. Muslims should contribute to knowledge and progress, by accepting progress as a means and not as an end in itself (Asad, 1999; Bennabi, 1994). The reforms needed by the Muslim communities must be holistic, ranging from education to leadership (Rahman, 2020).

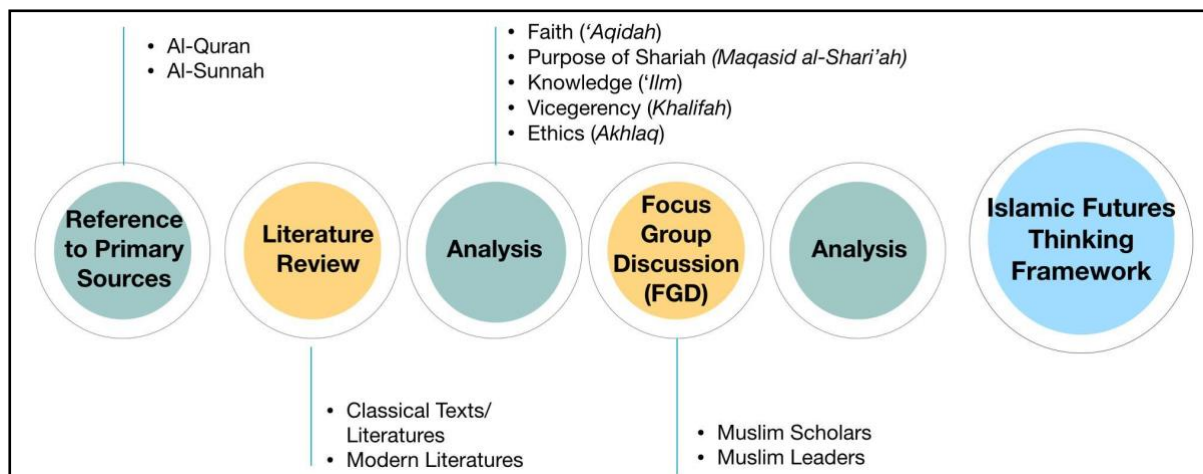
The lack of dynamic interpretation and application of Islamic ideas among Muslims of today, particularly in relation to the question of the future, has resulted in the degeneration of civilisational growth in Muslim communities over the years. It is erroneous to believe that humans cannot do anything other than to accept future upcoming events, and only submit their fate to pre-destination (*al-qada' wa al-qadr*) without any effort to improve their circumstances (Suleiman, 2022; Al-Qaradawi, 1996). The ignorance of the modern mind would result in Muslims being absolutely incapable of receiving any fresh inspiration from modern thought and experience (Iqbal, 2013). Further, stagnation of ideas and thoughts would have a malevolent effect on intellectual complexities, rigidity and improper understanding of Islamic wisdom and ideals (Abdul-Rauf, 1991).

Today, the actuality of literacy in futures thinking within Muslim communities has shown encouraging development (Muzykina & Aljanova, 2022). To this end, there are efforts worldwide such as works on the future of the Islamic world - The Islamic World Organization for Education, Science and Culture (ISESCO) Foresighting, various research endeavours under Prince Mohammad bin Fahd Centre for Futuristic Studies (PMFCFS) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, programmes and workshops by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), COMSAT University Islamabad (CUI) Institute of Information Technology (IIT) in Pakistan, the Moroccan Association of Futures Studies, and the Centre for Postnormal Policy and Futures Studies (CPPFS) and the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). In Malaysia, local endeavours are conducted by various institutions such as Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in performing their roles under the UNESCO Chair in Futures Studies. It is expected that more work along this line will be conducted for Muslim communities due to the growing interest, as well as encouraging response and participation in activities relating to futures.

## Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach in the form of content analysis of Islamic literatures which shed light on the interpretations and thoughts on Islamic philosophies related to foresight.

**Figure 1.** Qualitative Analysis of Primary Islamic Sources for Islamic Futures Thinking Framework



As shown in Figure 1, the research on Islamic foresight begins with references to Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, which are the primary sources of all tenets in Islam. These sources are unique in Islamic knowledge, and it provide consistency across fields (As-Siba'ee, 2008).

Elaborations and interpretations of the primary sources are found in both classical and modern texts and literature, which are detailed in various disciplines of Islamic studies such as Qur'anic exegesis (*'ilm al-Quran*), studies of Prophetic traditions (*'ilm al-hadith*), Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh wa usul al-fiqh*), studies on Islamic creed and Islamic theology (*'aqidah*), Prophetic biographical life journey (*sirah*) and ethics (*akhlaq*). These are crucial understandings, particularly in terms of comprehending how futures studies fit within the larger picture of the corpus of Islamic knowledge.

The analysis carried out from the preliminary exploration of the primary sources and literatures were formulated and articulated into main features of futures thinking from the perspective of Islam. Further input and verification were obtained from focus group discussions conducted at Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) and workshops on futures of the Muslim community over a period of six months, involving 30 individuals consisting of academicians, Muslim activists, community figures and experts in the field of Islamic studies. Important questions that were asked include:

- Whether foresight is an established concept in Islam?
- How do we derive foresight from the Islamic sources?
- Who are the Muslim classical and modern scholars in the area?
- Is there a limit to foresight?

- Are there methods of applying foresight in Islam?
- What are the existing/ possible misconceptions about foresight in the Muslim community?
- How do we respond/ link/ position the discussion of foresight in the context of pre-destination (*al-qada' wa al-qadr*) and the Prophetic descriptions about the end of time?
- How can the application of foresight transform the Muslim community to be better Muslims with a universal outlook?
- What are the visions of the Muslim community in Islam?
- How to develop foresight as a capacity for Muslims in general?

This paper highlights the essential elements in Islam that are related to futures thinking, which include understanding of change, learning from the past, and envisioning preferred futures.

In conducting the study, the researchers adopted the Quranic framework of thinking that acknowledges the observation of the physical world and reflection on the Islamic faith. This forms the basis of thought in Islamic foresight, that embraces both *al-naql* (revelation) and *al-'aql* (reason). The awareness of faith combined with the use of thinking creates a harmonious balance and peace to human minds (Al-Ghazali, 1977). The exercise of human intellect is promoted consistently in the Quran with the terms *aqala* (to use one's intelligence, to comprehend, to understand, to think), *tafakkara* (to reflect) (Al-Qur'an. Al-Ra'd 13:3) and *tazakkara* (to be reminded) (Al-Qur'an. Al-Zumar 39:21). Muslim scholar Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi highlighted the complementarity of reason towards the full understanding of the Quran that responds to the needs of modern times (Al-Qaradawi, 1996). The adherence to the use of human intellect forms a scientific mentality enabling humans to reject superstitions, blind-imitation and desire heeding elements (Kamal, 2011). Such an approach was taken by Ibnu Khaldun in understanding social changes (Dale, 2015).

### Islamic Foresight - The Conceptual Approach

Futures studies includes multi-disciplinarity in its discussions (Komp-Leukkunen, 2020). In this respect, the spiritual dimensions of understanding the future may be useful (Inayatullah, 1988). Consequently, it is submitted that this is where Islam can shed some light in understanding futures from its standpoint.

Islam promotes a universal character of knowledge (*'ilm*), that is not confined to worship and belief, but the conduct of man's life (*shariah*) (Al-Attas, 1996). This includes the worldview of how to understand life, including the past and the future from the viewpoint of a Muslim. Islamic foresight is part of the field of knowledge driven by Quranic inspirations, which is gathered through a holistic reading of the Quran and insights from the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) traditions. The Quran contains *i'jaz al-islahi* (restorative inimitability) capable of challenging all societies in purifying the individual, enlightening and prospering family institutions, directing society towards nation building and establishing relations between nations in the strongest foundation (Al-Qaradawi, 2013).

The Quranic approach, as proposed in this article, is the most suitable approach for Islamic foresight. The Quran suggests a consistent approach to reflecting and thinking, by providing examples and contemplating historical significance and lessons (*ibrah*) (Rahman, 1981). It also recognises continuity and change, and significantly repeats narratives to demonstrate that there are certain basic elements that will never change and some others that will change in human life and civilization.

The Prophetic role in shaping the mind and society is critical in Islamic foresight. The Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) traditions and practices are referred to as 'Al-Sunnah' which play a key role in understanding Quranic principles. Much can be learned from significant events in the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) life, such as the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) *hijrah* (migration to Madinah) and the formation of the Constitution of Madinah as the cornerstone of a newly established Islamic state.

To reiterate, both of these primary sources form the substratum of a future-oriented Islamic worldview. Islam should be seen not just as a religion that explains the relationship between oneself and God, but also as a guide to how we should treat one another, our interactions with nature, as well as navigating

politics, the economy and the public good. Al-Quran provides a broader perspective on the human journey and emphasises the importance of its guidance, which transcends time and space.

Visioning the future is an important characteristic of futures thinking in the Quran. Islam by nature, is contemplative in that it allows the imagination of a desired world with ideals such as of equality, peace and brotherhood. For example, in the context of a society, it sets that the Muslim ummah should be *ummatah wasata* (a justly balanced society) (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:143), *khayra ummah* (a good society) (Al-Qur'an. Ali Imran 3:110), and *shuhada' ala-al-nas* (an exemplary society) (Al-Qur'an. Al-Baqarah 2:143). Other contexts are found in examples of the marital relationship, where the preferred relationship is based on *mawaddah wa rahmah* (love and mercy) (Al-Qur'an. Al-Rum 30:21), and the concept of *zawjiyyah* (partnership or pairing), that puts all the responsibilities and rights based on the spousal relationship. In the context of transactions, the preferred state is transactions based on consent from all parties (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nisa' 4:29) and social justice (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nisa' 4:135).

Another important characteristic of futures thinking in the Quran is its emphasis on continuity and change. In the effort towards reaching the preferred destination, Islam molds an attitude that embraces change. The significance of the Quranic concept of change stems from its emphasis on individual and community decisions and their essential role in addressing societal realities. Change is a natural feature of the Muslim life, placing the believer in opposition to becoming indifferent or complacent in situations that might lead to stagnation. Islam addresses societal change by emphasising that such change must begin from the will and action of the individual and society itself. The Quran says:

Translation: Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves.

(Surah Al-Ra'd, 13:11)

There are many Quranic concepts in relation to change, among which are, the call to leave vice in favour of virtue, repentance, supplications and re-evaluating the past and current actions. At the societal level, the concept of *shura* (mutual consultation) is a practical methodology for the society to collectively reflect and make decisions for a better community. This concept is engrained in Islamic principles of governance, aligning it to the thought that appears in many of today's democratic systems, as it allows collective intelligence for a futures assessment of a society.

Islam also promotes transformation and evolution towards a virtuous well-being. The advent of Islam was, in itself, a revolution that brought change to the society it was revealed to. The revolution of thinking in that society included these rights of women and a new standard of equality that shifted the societal landscape of the pre-Islamic period. Because of this, Islam was able to play a significant role in implementing social change since its presence ushered Makkah out of its period of ignorance through its interaction with external cultures and civilizations throughout history (Fuller, 2010; Haddad & Esposito, 1997). The changes that took place followed the guidance of the Quran which was revealed in stages to allow for adaptation and reception. This includes the abrogation of certain verses to suit the contextual circumstances of the people and the gradual prohibition of socially detrimental practices such as usury and the consumption of liquor.

Change is paramount in a healthy society. The reality and need for renewal of wisdom and guidance is encapsulated in the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) saying:

Translation: At the beginning of every century God will send one who will renew its religion for this people.

(Sunan Abi Dawud, n.d., 39, Hadith 1)

Indisputably, change is never easy. The Quran frequently mentions the pagan Arabs' reluctance to change due to their forefathers' long-standing culture and practice. The Quran states:

Translation: When it is said to them, “Follow what Allah has revealed,” they reply, “No! We only follow what we found our forefathers practicing.” Would they still do so, even if their forefathers had absolutely no understanding or guidance?

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:170)

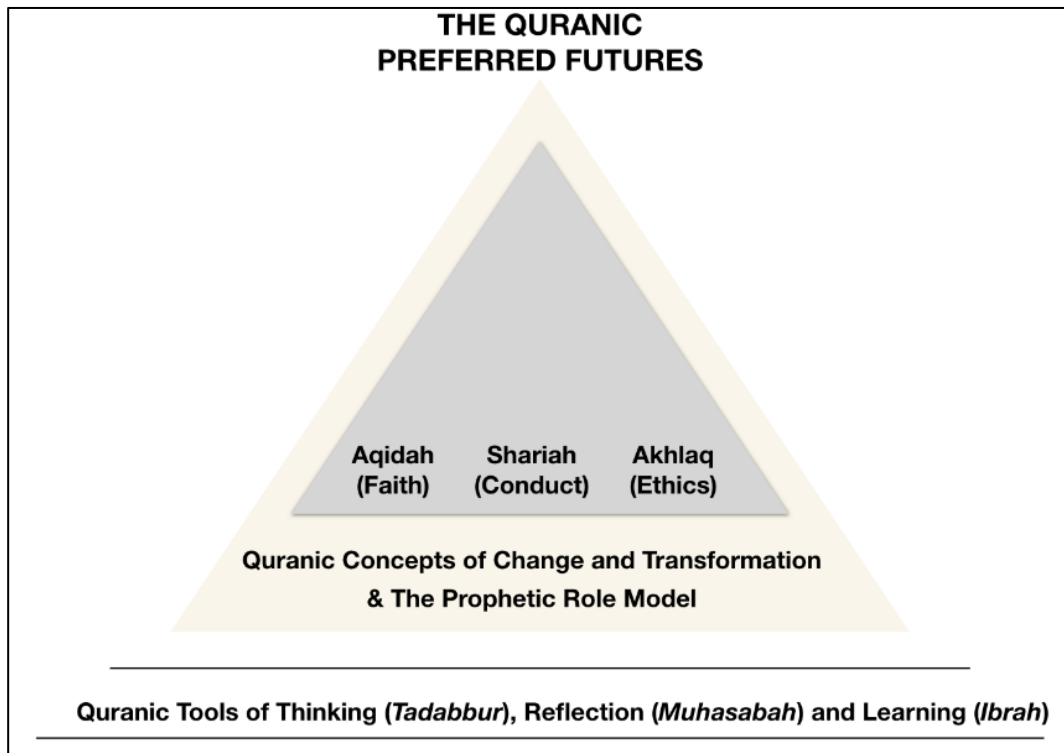
The Quran also encourages humans to reflect on historical patterns, including the social life of early communities, and to learn from them. This is similar to the futures methodology of studying macro-history to understand social changes, patterns, and behaviours, the same method employed by Ibn Khaldun in observing the rise and fall of civilisations (Ibn Khaldun, 1958).

The use of parables and metaphors is another feature of the Quran. It is regarded as one of the most important aspects of the Quran. The purpose of using parables is to clarify understanding and to allow for reflection. For example, in explaining the preferred vision of communication, Al Quran used the following parable:

Translation: Have you not seen how Allah has set forth a parable: A good word is like a good tree, having its root firm and its branches in the sky. It brings its fruits at all times with the will of its Lord. Allah sets forth the parables for the people, so that they may take lessons. And the parable of a bad word is like a bad tree, removed from the top of the soil, having no firm root.

(Surah Ibrahim, 14:24-26)

The Quran also describes the transcendence from ignorance to guidance as 'darkness to light' (Al-Qur'an. Ibrahim 14:1), and the deeds of the unbelievers as 'ashes blown away by the wind on a stormy day' (Al-Qur'an. Ibrahim 14:18).



**Figure 2.** Islamic Foresight Thinking Model

As shown in Figure 2, Islamic foresight embodies three important fundamentals ensconced in Al-Qur'an and Al-Sunnah, which are *aqidah* (faith in the oneness of God), *shari'ah* (the code of conduct) and *akhlaq* (morality and ethics). This generates a deliberate purposefulness for the future through the consciousness of mind, action, and character. The *aqidah* ensures foresighting exercises to be within the realm of God consciousness, and not to be misguided by the thought of being God, association to God, immortality or divinity. The *shari'ah* ensures foresighting exercises to be practical as a way of life and within the purview of the orders and injunctions of Al-Quran, while the *akhlaq* complements foresighting exercises with the ethics of thinking, understanding data, and how to conduct the changes inspired by the Prophetic approach.

### ***Aqidah (Creed)***

Faith in Islamic theology refers to a believer's belief in Islam's metaphysical features. Its most basic definition is the belief in the six articles of faith: belief in the existence of God, the Angels, the Books, the Messengers, the Day of Judgment and pre-destination. This constitutes the most basic foundation of belief that develops into the understanding of futures, which will primarily be explained in the following parts relating to the dimension of time, pre-destination and eschatology.

### ***The dimension of time***

The dimension of time in the Quran is unique. The Quran signals time in the change of night and day which follows one another and the revolving sun and moon, which forms the basis of human knowledge in calculating time (Al-Qur'an. Al-Nahl 16:12). The Quran also mentions other dimensions of time in which the heavens and the earth were created in six days, and the dimension of time in the hereafter which is kept unknown to mankind (Al-Qur'an. Al-A'raf 7:54; Al-Qur'an. Al-Hajj 22:47). Hence, in this context, the Quran notes the two dimensions of knowledge that are within God's divine knowledge, *al-ghayb* (the invisible world) and the *al-shahadah* (visible world that is known to humans). The term *al-gahyb wa al-shahadah* is mentioned in various verses in Al-Quran, one of which is in Surah Al-An'am, verse 73:

Translation: And His is the dominion [on] the Day the Horn is blown. [He is] Knower of the unseen and the witnessed (*al-gahyb wa al-shahadah*); and He is the Wise, the Aware.

(Surah Al-An'am, 6:73)

*Al-ghayb* refers to the realm, which is invisible, or beyond the perception of the senses or of the mind and therefore is unknown to man, except for what God reveals. The belief in the unseen (*al-ghaybiyyat*) creates a wider dimension of thinking for Muslims on the existence of God. The comprehension in the connection between the invisible and the visible world creates the understanding of parallelism between the worlds, and the perfection of integration between revelation and reason (Ghazzali & Al-Qasim, 1977).

Futures studies must not be mistaken with the studying of the unseen. The scope of futures studies involves the realm of time known to humans, in its limited past, present and future dimensions. The visible world refers to what can be observed physically and is specifically related to everyday observations, common sense, and measurement (Al-Jilani, 2007; el-Aswad, 2019). The understanding of futures studies is termed as *al-mustaqbaliyyah* (futures) or *al-istishraf* (futuring) in Arabic. If a matter is discovered through experimentation, it is not considered unseen, because what is meant by unseen are matters to which no human has access (Belka, 2016).

The Quran and the Sunnah describe matters of the unseen such as the hereafter, paradise, hellfire and matters of the soul to form human beings' cognisance of God consciousness. This trains the human mind to be conscious in the deeds he undertakes in this world to achieve the destination of paradise in the hereafter. In some verses, The Quran depicts how humans regret their deeds in this world (Al-Quran. Al-Naba' 78: 40) and wish to be resurrected to perform more good deeds. These visualisations of the Quran train the believers to acknowledge and comprehend that every action has its meanings, not only for worldly benefit, but as a sign of obedience to the Creator.

The prescriptions about matters of the unseen articulated in the Quran and the Sunnah are general in nature. The ethics in dealing with matters of the unseen is to strengthen belief in God, to be patient, righteous and focus on what can practically be done to improve oneself based on the given guidance and the reality of time.

Translation: And they ask you, [O Muḥammad], about the soul. Say, "The soul is of the affair [i.e., concern] of my Lord. And you [i.e., mankind] have not been given of knowledge except a little.

(Surah Al-Isra', 17:85)

Translation: That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muḥammad]. You knew it not, neither you nor your people, before this. So be patient; indeed, the [best] outcome is for the righteous.

(Surah Hud, 11:49)

Islam emphasises the sanctity of time as an element that is precious and valuable. The future is the outcome and harvest of how time is spent in the present and the past. Thus, time must be spent with valuable activities and deeds, as highlighted in the following verses in the Quran:

Translation: (I swear) by the Time, man is in a state of loss indeed, except those who believed and did righteous deeds, and exhorted each other to follow truth, and exhorted each other to observe patience.

(Surah Al-‘Asr, 103:1-3)

Translation: O you who believe, obey Allah, and write to the messenger, and do not make your deeds valueless!

(Surah Muhammad, 47:33)

The following is a well-known hadith which emphasises the strengths that come together with time. This hadith encourages human beings to take the opportunities that are offered in the present, and to be aware of the future realities and probabilities associated with time:

Translation: Take benefit of five before five: Your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you are preoccupied, and your life before your death.

(Riyad al-Saliheen, 1998, 3, Hadith 544)

The demarcation of futures studies from the unseen does not represent any contradiction, but instead forms part of the ethics of Islamic foresight, in which matters of the unseen are placed firmly in the belief of a Muslim, while he or she concomitantly works hard in planning, strategising and moving towards a more preferred future. This also falls under the wider concept of assertion and effort to strive for the better, which is highly encouraged in Islam.

#### *Al-Qada' wa Al-Qadr (Pre-Destination)*

Another important aspect of Islamic faith is the belief in *al-qada' wa al-qadr* (pre-destination). The Muslim faith is not complete unless he/she understands and acknowledges that everything that happens to him throughout his life is within the knowledge of God and subject to His decree and will. The word



*al-qada'* refers to an Arabic term that means placing and deciding a certain ruling. It also means to have judged, ordained, and executed perfectly. A more detailed connotation of the term is that it relates to something that has been decided whether in terms of its creation, destruction or changes. *Al-qadr* is taken from the root word *qa-da-ra*, which means known, predetermined, and planned perfectly. There are a number of Quranic verses which mention the element of *al-qada' wa al-qadr*, among others:

Translation: Indeed, We have created everything, perfectly preordained.

(Surah Al-Qamar, 54:59)

Translation: No calamity or blessing occurs on earth or in yourselves without being written in a Record before We bring it into being. This is certainly easy for Allah.”

(Surah Al-Hadid, 57:22)

Translation: Say, “Nothing will ever befall us except what Allah has destined for us. He is our Protector.” So, in Allah let the believers put their trust.

(Surah Al-Tawbah, 9:51)

Translation: With Him are the keys of the Unseen. No one knows them but He. He knows what is in the land and the sea. No leaf ever falls but that He knows about it, and there is no grain in the dark layers of the earth, or anything fresh or dry that is not recorded in a manifest book.

(Surah Al-An'am, 6:59)

Nevertheless, the fact that everything in life has been predestined does not mean that there is no room or chance to exert any effort in achieving one's goals or setting any targets in life. The future is kept in consecrated secrecy to ensure clear and unequivocal belief. There are potentialities or possibilities with which Allah created man and all things of nature, and human beings are given the freedom, choice and free will (*iradah*) in planning for the future. In fact, the Quran recognises the importance of human effort to improve his own fate.

Translation: Surely, Allah does not change the condition of a people unless they change themselves.

(Surah Al-Ra'd, 13:11)

Translation: That is so because Allah will never change a grace which He has bestowed on a people until they change what is in their own selves.

(Surah Al-Anfal, 8:53)

Translation: O you who have believed, fear Allah. And let every soul look to what it has put forth for tomorrow - and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Aware of what you do.

(Surah Al-Hashr, 59:18)

Similarly, the concept of *tawakkul* (placing reliance upon God) does not hinder progress or change as stated in Al-Quran and the following famous hadith reported by Anas ibn Malik:

Translation: And put your reliance and trust in Allah if you are true Believers.

(Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:23)

Translation: A man said, "O Messenger of Allah, should I tie my camel and trust in Allah, or should I leave her untied and trust in Allah?" The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Tie her and trust in Allah."

(Jami' al-Tirmidhī, 1970, Hadith 2517)

### *Al-Fitan/ Malahim (Eschatological Aspects on the End of Time)*

Another area that may invite misconceptions within the Muslim community in relation to futures is the use of information about the matters which have not yet happened, or images of the future contained in Islamic eschatological traditions.

There are many hadith that contain an extant compendium of eschatological traditions, relating to the end of time or apocalyptic prophecies. Scholars in the study of hadith have compiled these narrations in digests such as *Kitāb al-Fitan* (Book of Tests) by Nu'aim bin Hammād al-Marwazī (w. 228 H), *al-Sunan al-Wāridah fī al-Fitan wa Ghawāiluhā wa al-Sā'ah wa Ashrātuhā* by Abū 'Amr 'Usmān al-Dānī (w. 444 H) and *al-Nihāyah fī al-Fitan wa al-Malāḥim* by Ibn Kathir (d. 774 H) (Al-Dani, n.d.; Ibn Hammad, 2003; Ibn Kathir & Ibbiyah, 1968).

*Sunan Abu Dawud* for instance, provides the collection of hadith under the category of battles (*Kitāb al-Malahim*) on various matters, such as the signs of the battles, attacks on Muslims, Muslim stronghold during the time of the battles, the mention of Al-Basrah, the treasures of Euphrates and the appearance of the *Dajjal* (Anti-Christ) (Sunan Abi Dawud, n.d.).

While these hadith may be indicative of the future occurrences, futures studies is not about interpreting the future based on the hadith under the chapter of eschatology. The wisdom behind not revealing the details on the end of time, is for Muslims to not be overtly occupied in the unknown and forgo their actual responsibilities as vicegerents in this world. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) especially warned of this when he was asked about the day of resurrection. The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) replied judiciously:

Translation: A bedouin came to Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) and said to him, "When will be the Hour (i.e., the Day of Resurrection)?" He (the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him)) said, "What preparation have you made for it?" He said, "Only the love of Allah and His Messenger." Then Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "You will be with those whom you love."

(Sahih Muslim, 2008, 45, Hadith 210)

Thus, Islam promotes a balance that draws a line between the consciousness of the foretold prophecies and the actual responsibilities for the present, as well as the future of the present. Such concerns must not deter a Muslim's focus in planning the present in any circumstance, as seen in the following hadith:

Translation: Anas ibn Malik reported: The Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "If the Resurrection were established upon one of you while he has in his hand a sapling, then let him plant it.

(Al-Adab al-Mufrad, 2018, 27, Hadith 479)

## The Manifestation of Islamic Foresight in the Shariah

The Shariah is a potentially fertile ground for the implementation of legal rulings that are responsive to current issues relating to sustainability and social justice. In principle, the Shariah is profoundly framed by its characteristics of comprehensiveness, flexibility, and connectedness to reality (Durayni, 1987; Zahraa, 2000). Based on these features, the jurisprudential study of Shariah flourished during the height of the Islamic empire, enabling progress in various fields. It however experienced a period of stagnation in later years, which saw the need for a revitalisation of Islamic jurisprudence through *ijtihad* (juristic reasonings) to suit the current needs and new challenges. Due to the emergence of new and contemporary issues, Muslim scholars are called to provide room for interpretation and *ijtihad* in order to find legal answers (Alwazna, 2016). This is where the methodology of Islamic jurisprudence is developed to ensure the sanctity of legal ruling in Islam (Kamali, 2003). Collective scholastic efforts emerged such as those initiated by Muhammad Tahir 'Ashur, Muhammad al-Falil ibn 'Ashur, Ahmad Shakir and Mustafa al-Zarqa (Bsoul, 2016). This subsequently led to regional and world Fiqh Councils such as the *Majma' Al-Buhuth Al-Islamiyyah* in Al-Azhar (first conference in 1964), *Al-Majma' Al-Fiqhi Al-Islami* (first session in 1974) and the more recent European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) (inaugural meeting in 1997).

The introduction of the study of jurisprudence based on the objectives of Shariah (*maqasid al-Shariah*) is instrumental in redirecting the cause to the ultimate purpose of shari'ah (Al-Dani) (Ibn 'Asyur, 1984). All Islamic thoughts and reasonings by principle, must be 'objective-based' to derive solutions for contemporary problems. The objectives are, protection of faith or religion (*din*), protection of life (*nafs*), protection of lineage (*nasl*), protection of intellect (*'aql*) and protection of property (*mal*). Foresighting from this perspective avoids the scenario of Islamic jurisprudence being stagnant. The preferred direction of Islamic jurisprudence is described to be towards the restoration of purity, vitality, and effectiveness (Al-Raysuni, 2013).

The jurisprudence on *maqasid al-shariah* is largely contributed to by Al-Shatibi in his book *Muwafaqat*. Al-Shatibi emphasised on *maslahah* (public good) as a practical concept in real situations. The *maqasid al-shariah* sets out the parameters for measuring an action in terms of its effect on the relationship between human beings, human beings and God, and human beings and nature. It is a recognition of the flexibility of the Shariah to be responsive to the changes in realities. Al-Shatibi advocated for the application of *i'tibar al-ma'alat* (action consequences), in which those with the ability to conduct the *ijtihad* process examine the consequences of a ruling to see if it is intended to bring *maslahah* or to prevent *mafsadah* (harm), or if it has a different result than intended.

Futures thinking is applied to minimise risk, avoid negative futures, especially worst-case scenarios, and to creatively advance towards desired futures with optimistic visions (Masini, 1993). This is in line with the ideas of *Fiqh al-Ma'alat* which is an approach to connect the laws and reality (Ishak, 2018; Rachmadhani, Mochammad Sahid, & Mokhtar, 2022). This fiqh connotes a wider understanding and relates to the wider purpose of achieving goodness to truly reflect the Quranic urge to be people who understand (Al-Qaradawi, 2013).

In a world where everything is data-based and connected to one another, the Shariah design thinking merits further attention. The proposition requires the Muslim community to deploy alternatives and unlock innovative solutions to address problems faced by the community and its connection to worldly affairs (Bakar, 2019). Shariah design thinking is built upon *maqasid al-shariah* which is based on the empirical data of the divine texts. Combined with global pattern aggregation, they provide a more thorough understanding and detailed analysis of what kind of intervention the Muslim community can undertake from an Islamic foresight perspective. The Shariah design thinking requires Muslim scholars to reconsider the thinking methodology to which they have become accustomed in the past. *Maqasid al-shariah* is set in a universal and fluid fashion and serves to free Muslims to think beyond the past and old practices.

### Akhlaq (Ethics) in Islamic Foresight

The essence of ethics in contemplating the future is encapsulated in Al-Quran. Muslims are reminded to remember God every time they extrapolate about the future:

Translation: Except [when adding], “If Allah wills.” And remember your Lord when you forget [it] and say, “Perhaps my Lord will guide me to what is nearer than this to right conduct.

(Surah Al-Kahf, 18:24)

The common phrase of “In-shaa-Allah” (If God wills) prevalent in the daily speech of the Muslim community carries the profound belief that one cannot hope for his future plan to materialise unless God wills it and only what God wills will happen. Any deprivation of will or plan could be a blessing in disguise. The Al-Quran says:

Translation: Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do know.

(Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:216)

The highest ethical observation in Islamic foresight is God consciousness. It is the belief that there is a higher order (God) the Creator of the universe, that He is the provider of time (the hour) and knows what humans will earn in the future.

Translation: Surely, it is Allah with whom rests the knowledge of the Hour; and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. No one knows what he will earn tomorrow, and no one knows in which land he will die. Surely, Allah is All Knowing, All Aware.

(Surah Luqman, 31:34)

This ethical foundation is in line with Islam’s prohibition on fortune-telling, as fortune telling involves *al-shirk* (association to God) and encroaches matters of *al-ghaybiyyat* (the unseen). The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

Translation: The daily prayers of whoever approaches a fortune-teller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for forty days and nights.

(Sahih Muslim, 2008, 39, Hadith 173)

The above discussion lends credence to the precept of Islamic foresight that emphasizes virtue, moral and manners, and promotes futures that carries good values such as peace, justice, and sustainability.

Islamic foresight also teaches Muslims to appreciate the power of “now”. If change is needed in the present, it should be done at the present. Islam places importance on the preparations that can be done in the present when facing future scenarios, instead of obsessing on “when?” and the details thereof.

It is also within the ethics of Islamic foresight to be meticulous, truthful and responsible in handling information and developing knowledge. The ability to be *itqan* (meticulous) is an indispensable ethic in Islam and a symbol of God’s qualities. The Prophet (peace and blessing be upon him) said:

Translation: Allah loves to see one’s job done at the level of *itqan*.

(Al-Jami’ al-Saghir, 1900, Hadith 1855)

Embedded values of *itqan* encourages Muslims to ensure proper conduct in making decisions, taking actions, and resolving problems. In the context of foresighting, the ability to analyse the trends, patterns and counter-patterns demands delicate observation.

Being truthful in observation and giving opinions is an important exercise in this regard. In a world where truth can be obscured by unverified facts, good values are the social determinant.

Translation: I heard the Messenger of Allah S.A.W says: “All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock. An Imam is a shepherd and he is responsible for those in his care. A man is a shepherd in respect of his family and is responsible for those in his care. The woman is a shepherd in respect of her husband’s house and is responsible for those in her care. The servant is a shepherd in respect of his master’s property and is responsible for what is in his care. All of you are shepherds and each of you is responsible for his flock.

(Al-Adab al-Mufrad, 2018, 10, Hadith 1)

Consultation is part of the integrated Islamic framework. Consultation is not merely a process, but a tool for change (Al-Raysuni, 2013). A consultative mindset creates great leaders and opens the room to achieve the values of wisdom through togetherness in action, and the shared distribution of responsibility (Faris, 1989). The consultative approach to Islamic foresight is not only scientific in its approach, but also accommodative of the reality of the society. The emphasis on inclusivity also testifies the significance of collective decision and reference to experts from different fields of change, such as medicine, climate change and social behavior. The Quran values consultation as mentioned in one of its verses:

Translation: Those who answer their Lord, maintain the prayer, and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and they spend out of what We have provided them with.

(Surah Al-Shura, 42:38)

Another important ethical tradition in Islam is taking careful consideration in adopting change. The process of change is neither linear nor straightforward. In the history of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), the revelation of the Quran and the propagation of Islam (*da'wah*) were phased according to when the time was right for the society. Graduality is a method that can be adopted for societal change. Islam brought about change during the Prophet's (peace and blessings be upon him) time through education and instillation of values, which transformed the society and influenced the world, which continues until today.

## Conclusion

Any initiative aimed at social transformation for well-being must reflect the diversity of the society in order to have a practical and long-term impact. The Muslim community must be introduced to the basic principles of futures thinking as contained in Islamic teachings and be convinced that they do not contradict the principles of Islamic faith. The above-mentioned core components constitute the fundamental framework of Islamic foresight. The complementarity of *al-naql* and *al-'aql* in foresighting, with the aid of scientific methodologies to track seeds of change, emerging trends, and scenario building, would result in a comprehensive extrapolation of the future with the essence of natural and moral order. Active participation of Muslim communities has the potential to improve society at all levels. This capacity must be developed as part of the educational process towards long-term social transformation.

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