POLITICAL LANGUAGE OF TAFSIR
Redefining of "Ummah", a Religio-Communal Concept of the Qur'an: Past and Present

Assist. Prof. Dr. Necmettin GÖKKIR*

ABSTRACT

The term of "political" refers to all concepts dealing with government, its system, institutions and also to contemporary political concepts, theories, values, and models which belong to a certain time and hence are conjectural, contextual and historical. In this respect, "political interpretation" means to read the text in the light of reader's contemporary political concepts, theories, values and models. In this regard, this paper will study on this kind of reading, namely political interpretation of the Qur'an. How the Qur'an is explained by political concepts or in other words how the Qur'an is politicized is the main subject of the paper. The subject of the "redefinition of ummah..." is only taken as a case for the main purpose.

Key Words: Ummah, Muslim Community, Political Theories, Political Interpretation.

ÖZET

TEFSİR'İN SİYASİ DİLİ
Kur'an'da Dini-Toplumsal bir Kavram olan
"Ümmet"in Geçmişte ve Günümüzde Yeniden Tanımlanması

Çeşitli siyasi ve ideolojik teorilerden ve perspektiflerden Kur'an'ı yorumlamak şeklinde tarif edebileceğimiz "politik tefsir" bu çalışmanın bir konusu olacaktır. Politik kavramı içerisine tabii olarak devlet teşkilatlanması, yönetimi, kurumları girmekte ise de, bunlara ek olarak ayrıca güncel, belli bir döneme ait kavram ve değerleri de katmamız mümkündür. Bu nedenle Politik Tefsiri, "Kur'an'ı toplumun güncel siyasi ve ideolojik kavram ve teorileri ile uyumlu bir şekilde yorumlanması" şeklinde tanımlayabiliriz. Ancak bu çift taraflı bir eylemin sadece tek tarafını göstermek olacaktır. Politik tefsir her ne kadar Kur'an'ın çağdaş kavramlarla anlaşılması ve işlevsel olarak dinamikleştirilmesi olarak tanımlanırsa da diğer taraftan, bu çağdaş kavramların İslamlaştırılması ve meşrulaştırılması eylemi olarak da tanımlanabilir. Yani bu yolla, her türlü çağdaş değerlerin ve kavramların, "Kur'an'da varmış gibi" gösterilmesi ve dolayısıyla

içselleştirilmesine ve bunların dini temellendirilmesi sağlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle politik dil kullanılarak, Kur'an'ın her toplum için canlılığını ve dinamikliği sağlamak mümkün olduğu gibi, her çağın fikir ve düşünce yapısına uyumunu ve böylelikle işlevselliğine imkan verdiğini söylemek de mümkündür. Diğer bir deyişle, Politik Tefsir, Kur'an'ı her çağa, çağın kendi kavram ve değerleri ile hitap eden bir özelliğe sahip kılabilir. Tüm bunlar Kur'an'ın sabit ve durağan olmayan bilakis canlı ve dinamik bir kavramsal yapıya büründürülmesi ile mümkün olduğu görüşü üzerine bina edilebilir. Bu çalışmada politik tefsirin gerçekte ne olduğunu, nasıl bir okuma tarzına sahip olduğunu görmeye çalışacağız. Bu çerçevede "ümmet" kavramının çeşitli siyasi fikirler çerçevesinde ve tarihsel süreçte yeni siyasi paradigmalara göre nasıl yeniden tanımlandığı ele alınacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ümmet, Müslüman Toplum, Siyaset teorileri, Siyasi Tefsir.

1. Introduction

The study purposes to investigate the progressive way of understanding the Qur'an especially after the impact of western global values and the implementations of this encountering on modern Muslim's beliefs, practices, values, laws and ethics. This study, in fact, specifically, aims to make a modest contribution to research into Muslim readings of the Qur'an in the contemporary period. For this aim, the study explores to what extent the impact of globalization on the conceptual world of the modern Islam. Hence, I will only focus on one character of the Tafsir that is to emphasize the political reading.

At the first glance, the aims of the paper basically seem to reveal the process of interpretation in political context. By doing so, the objective of the study will seems to show the impact of social concerns on understanding the Qur'anic texts and to demonstrate the changes of theological attitude towards the issues in accordance with contemporary political values. In other words, the real purpose of the study is to show that the different political circumstances and conditions have effected the reception and the perception of the reader of the Qur'an. The subject of the "Redefining of Ummah, as a Religio-Communal Concept of the Qur'an: Past and Present" is taken as a case for the main purpose. Therefore, to be in favor of or to be against the political interpretation is not aim /objective of this study. On the contrary, it is only to show the dynamic and creative character of Tafsir/interpretation of the Qur'an at the

foremost objective. For this, the main part of the research now is devoted to the study on the reflections on religio-communal concepts of Islam, especially the *ummah* (community) in the past and present. Therefore, this paper very much hopes to stay with this line of inquiry and of this kind of questions: "What does the Qur'an mean today to those Muslims living under globalizing political values?" "How can they usefully make a link between changing configurations of politics and the Qur'anic discourses?" "How is the Qur'an explained by political concepts or in other words how is it politicized?"

We can, now, describe "political interpretation" as to understand the Qur'an in accordance with contemporary politics, political values, political theories and models using the political language. However, this is a double face process. It is a kind of creative reading the Qur'an on the one hand. That is to say that the political interpretation uses a kind of language which enables modern reader to understand historical text by contextualizing the meaning for them. On the other hand, political interpretation is described also as a "politicization of the Qur'an" through justify the contemporary political concepts and values with Islam as if they were originally Qur'anic and Islamic. Indeed, politically use of the Qur'an for ideological purposes is not new phenomena, but has been occurred since the beginning of Islam. Since its divine origin, the Qur'an acts as the main and par-excellence legitimacy source in both the earliest and more recent periods of Islamic history. The politicization of the Qur'an, from its beginning, centered upon its interpretation.[1]

2. The Religio-Communal Concepts in the Qur'an

Pre-Islamic Arabian tribes, indeed, did not have developed political concepts. The communal organization was not in a political unit, institution nor

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[1]   Paul L. Heck, "Politics and the Qur'an" in *Encyclopedia of the Qur'an*, v. IV, p. 133. And also see: İsmail Çalışkan, *Siyasal Tefsirin Oluşumu,* Ankara 2003

territory but in a collective body of tribes. They were defined as a kinship group which was held together by the blood-tie of descent in the male line. The tribe was a group of clans under a recognized chief and usually common ancestor.[2] And the members of the tribe were, usually, Bedouins who has a nomadic and independent life across the Arabian Peninsula. However, geographical, cultural, political and economic factors forced the tribes be settled and developed agricultural or mercantile towns and created large associated units, like Mecca and Medina. Grunebaum says:

The Urban Settlements of Mecca, Ta'if and Yathrib which in their several ways, enjoyed an independent political life, harbored but a small segment of the Arab population, and far from inspiring a sense of Arab identity as centered on themselves, they subscribed to a concept of the ideal Arab which set them somewhat apart as societies not entirely true to the Bedouin-patterned norm.[3]

These historical patterns of pre-Islamic community[4] are very helpful to understand the religio-communal concepts of the Qur'an. In this regard, the Qur'an uses some terms for indicating social, political and religious aspects and notions of the community e.g. *ummah, dîn, millah, shari'ah, qawm, sha'b, tâifah, shî'ah,* etc.[5] In the Qur'an all these term have been used both in their original and in their technical sense, but in post-Qur'anic sources, e.g. literatures of Tafsir, Islamic law, History etc. their technical senses have been precisely used. Throughout the Islamic history, these terms has gained new meanings or in other words technically developed in accordance with growth of political

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[2] For further information see: E. Giannakis, "The Concept of Ummah" *Graeco-Arabica*, v. 2 (1983), p. 100

[3] G. E. Von Grunebaum, "The Nature of Arab Unity before Islam" *Arabica*, v. 10 (1963), p. 6

[4] For further information about pre-Islamic communal situations see: G.E.Von Grunebaum, Ibid, p. 5-23

[5] For further information see: Orhan Atalay, "Kur'an'da Sosyal Grup İfade Eden Kavramlar" *Atatürk Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16 (2001), pp. 197-231. And also see: Manzooruddin Ahmed, *Islamic Political System in the Modern Age: Theory and Practice,* Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1991

thought of Muslim society. With following the historical, political and ideological stages, we can easily find the corresponded meanings of the terms.

3. Etymology of the Term *Ummah*

The term of *ummah* etymologically comes from Arabic roots أمم (*amama*), meaning 'to seek', 'to go intentionally forward', and 'to seek the right path'[6] or أم (*umm*) meaning 'mother'[7] and hence seems more likely to refer to 'people and community' who shares some commons.[8] These two roots may signify the existence of matrilineal system in early Arab society. Maysam al-Faruqi, in this regard, maintains that "it was through the mother (*umm*) that one identified with a 'tradition' (*umma*), namely the maternal tribe's ways and customs".[9] It also refers to a way of life comes from tradition. "That is why *umm* can be used as a synonym of *imam*. It is clearly, therefore, used in the sense of 'path', 'tradition', 'way' and 'goal' throughout pre-Islamic literature".[10] Hence, the word of *ummah*, in fact, refers to the group who is gathered together voluntarily in the tradition, law or religion, while the ethnic and tribal community who shares common race and language are expressed by the words of *jama'a, qawm, qabila, sha'b* etc. The ultimate meaning of the word with these roots, claimed, seems to signify that "'group' or 'people' is not a primary

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[6] See: Jamaluddin Muhammad b. Mukarram Ibn Manzur, *Lisan al-Arab*, Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah 1990, v. 1 p. 44-45

[7] R. Paret, "Umma", *First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913-1936*, (Reprinted) Leisen, New York Kobenhavn, Köln: E. J. Brill 1987, v. 8, p. 1015. And also see: F.M. Deny, "Umma" in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (Second Edition) Leiden: Brill 2000, v. 10, p. 859

[8] For further information see: F.M. Deny, Ibid, pp. 859-863; Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim: Re-imagining the Umma*, London and New York: Routledge 2001, pp. 69-81; Maysam J.al-Faruqi, "Umma: The Orientalist and the Qur'anic concept of Identity" *Journal of Islamic Studies* v. 16 (2005), pp. 22-34

[9] See: Maysam J. al-Faruqi, "Umma: The Orientalist and the Qur'anic Concept of Identity" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, v. 16 (2005), p. 23

[10] Ibid, p.23

meaning for umma but a derived one: only the group that follows a certain law is an umma, not any group."[11]Although the usage in the meaning of "community" is debatable, its importance for Muslim culture started with the Qur'an. Whereas W. M. Watt believes that "ummah was the sort of word that could be given a new shade of meaning and it was capable of further development subsequently"[12], some other western scholars[13] are on the opinion that the word was essentially tribal, it came eventually to assume a religious dimension.[14]

For most western scholars[15], the term of ummah in pre-Islamic Arabia refers to tribal communal system in the synonym of "*qawm*". This thesis clearly expressed by Watt. Watt generally maintains that the concept of religious community/ummah is a late invention that could not have occurred to the Prophet in a time and place where only a tribal structure not a religious communal system.[16] Based on this postulate, they have speculated that the word is borrowed from other sources in origin from Hebrew (*umma*)[17], Aramaic (*umm^etha*)[18] or from Akkad (*ummatu*) brought into Arabic language through Christian and Jewish usage.[19] They support with this argument that since ummah had only limited usage in pre-Islamic Arabia and is found in other Semitic sources where it refers to "tribe", it must then be barrowed and strictly

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[11]   Ibid, p.24
[12]   W.M. Watt, *Muhammed at Medina*, Oxford 1956, p. 240
[13]   For instance see: R. Paret, "Umma", p. 1015 and F.M. Deny, "Umma" p. 859
[14]   See: Maysam J. al-Faruqi, Ibid, p. 6
[15]   For the discussion see: Maysam, Ibid, pp. 1-34
[16]   See: W.M. Watt, *Islamic Political Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Pres, 1987, p. 9-14
[17]   R. Paret, Ibid, p. 1015
[18]   J. Horovitz, "Jewish Proper Names and derivatives in the Koran", *Hebrew Union College Annual*, v. 2 (1924) p. 190. And also see: R. Paret, Ibid, p. 1015.
[19]   Arthur Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, Baroda: Oriental Institute 1938, p. 69. For further information see: W.G. Lambert, "The Names of Umma" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, v. 49 (1990) pp. 75-80 and E. Giannakis, "The Concept of Ummah", pp. 99-100

means tribal system. But this common usage of the term may not imply a foreign origin. Moreover, the word, contended by Arabic linguists, was used in pre-Islamic Arabia in the meaning of *religion* (din) and *tradition* (tarikah). Ragib al-Isfahani, for instance, cited a poem from Nabigha al-Zubyani as saying:

وهل يأثمن ذو أمة وهو طائع   حلفت فلم أترك لنفسك ريبة

"*I witnessed but I did not suspect from you. And could a man who has religion err if he obeys it.*"[20]

The term أمي (*ummî*) which shares the same root with *ummah* also refers to a group of illiterate people and used precisely to Pre-Islam Arab community; to non-Jews (Gentiles) in the Qur'an as a kind of counterpart to *ahl-Kitab*.[21] The Qur'an says: ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا لَيْسَ عَلَيْنَا فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ: *That is because they say: We have no duty to the Gentiles.*"[22] And also the Qur'an uses the word for a group people within the Jew community who are ignorant of the Scripture: وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ: "*And some of them are ummiyyun who do not know the Book*".[23]

John Wansbrough,[24] hence, makes a link with the terms "*ummah*" and *ummiyyun*. He starts from the point that its Judeao-Christian usage, having a

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[20] Ragib al-Isfahani, *al-Mufradat*, (ed critic: Safvan Adnan Dawudî) Damascus: Dar al-Qalam 2002, p. 86

[21] Isaiah Goldfeld, "The Illiterate Prophet (Nabi Ummi)" *Der Islam,* v. 57 (1980) pp. 57-67. And also see: Norman Calder, "The Ummi in Early Islamic Juristic Literature" *Der Islam* v. 67 (1990) pp. 111-123; This may be approvable by Islamic interpretative sources. Tabari, for instance, confirms that it means in particular pagan Arab except at surah Bakara verse 78 where ummi refers to Jews who is ignorant of reading and writing the Torah. For further information see: Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan,*

[22] Surah 'Ali 'Imran: 75

[23] Surah al-Baqara: 78

[24] John Wansbrough has two eminent books: *Qur'anic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1977) and *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978). Wansbrough's methodology directly challenge the assumptions the predominant tradition in early Islamic history in two subjects: "Reconstruction of the canonization process

sense of diversity is a sectarian, denominating, partisan and exclusivist title. He says:

> The term appears always to designate the community in the sense of permanent congregation, even of sacred sodality, but unlike *jama'a* never in the sense of *ad hoc*... A direct link between umma and the sacral 'congregation' imagery of the Judeo-Christian tradition cannot be established and it seems not unreasonable to suppose that the earliest connotation of the term was secular. Functional designations of community abundantly attested in the sectarian vocabulary of Islam (e.g. Khawarij / Mu'tazila / Munafiqun / Ansar / Muhairun), survived the separation of 'orthodoxy' from 'heterodoxy' only in the form of Muslimun and Mu'minun. Selection of these, in every likelihood, also in origin sectarian or partisan epithets, may be attributed to that antonomastic process by which umm designates, from any and every vantage point, the entire community.[25]

Because of his acceptance[26] that the Qur'an is a product of a 'sectarian milieu', the usage of *ummah*, for him, suggests a sense of separation from environment dominated by sectarian organizations. In fact, Wansbrough is not alone in his decision. For western scholarship[27], Judeao-Christian usage of the term is signified by two words: *ummat ha-'olam* and *'am ha-reş in Hebrew* Rabbinic writings. Just as in the Qur'an, while the first is used for inner groups within the community, the second refers exclusively to non-Jews, to foreigners. Wansbrough takes a next step of this linguistic similarity and understands the

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of the Qur'an/Sirah/Arabic Language and history of Qur'anic Exegesis" and "Themes of the Qur'an and Salvation History". On the basis of his analysis of the Qur'anic text and its themes in a common with Judaeo-Christian traditions, Wansbrough has demonstrated that the text is both a product of a 'sectarian milieu' where Judaeo-Christian traditions are prominent and the text is not a product of the life of the Prophet in the seventh century Hijaz, on the contrary, more likely is a product of the ninth-century. For further information about his academic life see: Rippin, Andrew, "Literary Analysis of Qur'an, Tafsir and Sira: The Methodologies of John Wansbrough" *Approaches to Islam in Religious Studies* ed. by Richard C. Martin, Oxford: Oneworld 2001, pp. 151-163

[25]   John Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, p. 121-2
[26]   Wansbrough, Ibid, p. 123
[27]   For instance see: C. C. Torrcy, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York 1935, p. 38

references to the Jews in the Surah al-Baqara verse 78 (وَمِنْهُمْ أُمِّيُّونَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْكِتَابَ) in the sense of inner sectarian exclusion:

> To what extent its relation to 'ammei ha-aretz is symbolic or etymological or both need only be mentioned: the pariah concept of that locution may never have attained the status of a sectarian designation, but did none the less convey the fact of liturgical and social exclusion.[28]

The ultimate argument of him, indeed, is to see the word of *ummah* is produced in a political environment, in the sectarian sense not in religious or ethical articulation. By doing so, at the end, the term *ummah* became to refer exclusively to the main stream within the Muslim community.[29] However, the term of *ummiyyun* still refers to a religiously exclusive group either within or from outside the traditions of Ahl Kitab.

The etymology of the word *ummah* has been discussed also by classical Muslim interpreters of the Qur'an. They generally acknowledge the fundamentally religious nature of the word in the sense of "community of faith".[30]

4. Qur'anic Usage of the *Ummah*

The Qur'an uses the term sixty-four times; fifty-three in Meccan, eleven in Medinan surahs and the plural أُمَم (*umam*) form in thirteen cases. The term in the Qur'an primarily refers to a group of living beings having certain characteristics in common. The Qur'an says:

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَمٌ أَمْثَالُكُم مَّا فَرَّطْنَا فِي الْكِتَابِ مِن شَيْءٍ ثُمَّ إِلَى رَبِّهِمْ يُحْشَرُونَ

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[28] Wansbrough, Ibid, p. 123.

[29] See: Ibid, p. 123.

[30] For instance see: Abdullah b. Omar Baydawi, *Anwar al-Tanzil wa Asrar at-Ta'wil*, (Bayrut: Dar al-Marifah, 1972) v. 2, p. 213.

"There is not an animal in the earth, or a flying creature flying on two wings, but they are umam (groups) like you. We have neglected nothing in the Book (of our decrees). Then unto their Lord they will be gathered."[31] Each species is an ummah[32], originating from a common mother/source (umm). Therefore, from this point of view, the human being is also a single ummah, since it has a common origin, as the Qur'an says: وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إلاَّ أمَّة وَاحِدَةً "Mankind were but one community"[33] According to the Qur'an, the first ummah of human being whereas started as a single community, it was divided into various communities; The Qur'an says: وَلَوْ شَاء اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أمَّة وَاحِدَةً "Had Allah willed He could have made you (all) one ummah"[34], but he in fact created a number of umam (plural of ummah) with their own characteristic religious rituals.[35]

In the Qur'an, as a religio-communal term, *ummah* basically refers to a community sharing common religion. The Qur'an says: وَلِكُلِّ أمَّةٍ رَسُولٌ "*And for every ummah there is a messenger*".[36] It indicates also a generation of contemporaries sharing a common belief and value system as in this verse:

وَقَالُوا لَوْ شَاء الرَّحْمَنُ مَا عَبَدْنَاهُم مَّا لَهُم بِذَلِكَ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِنْ هُمْ إِلا يَخْرُصُونَ. أمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ كِتَابًا مِّن قَبْلِهِ فَهُم بِهِ مُسْتَمْسِكُونَ. بَلْ قَالُوا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا عَلَى أمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِم مُّهْتَدُونَ. وَكَذَلِكَ مَا أرْسَلْنَا مِن قَبْلِكَ فِي قَرْيَةٍ مِّن نَّذِيرٍ إِلا قَالَ مُتْرَفُوهَا إِنَّا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءنَا عَلَى أمَّةٍ وَإِنَّا عَلَى آثَارِهِم مُّقْتَدُونَ

"And they say: If the Beneficent One had (so) willed, we should not have worshipped them. They have no knowledge whatsoever of that. They do but guess. Or have We given them any Scripture before (this Qur'an) so that they

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[31]   Surah al-An 'am: 38
[32]   See Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan an Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, v. 11 p. 345; Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir al-Qur'an al-Azîm* (edition critics: Muhammad Ibrahim al-Banna et. all.) İstanbul: Kahraman 1985, v. 3 p. 238
[33]   Surah Yunus: 19. And surah al-Baqara: 213
[34]   Surah al-Nahl: 93. And also see: Surah al-Shura: 8
[35]   For instance see: Surah al-Hajj: 34.
[36]   Surah Yunus: 47

are holding fast thereto? No, for they say only: Lo! we found our fathers following a religion, and we are guided by their footprints. And even so We sent not a warner before you (Muhammad) into any township but its luxurious ones said: Lo! We found our fathers following a religion, and we are following their footprints."[37] In a similar way, the Prophet Abraham's model of righteousness is also described as ummah.[38] The term of ummah sometimes means in the Qur'an a particular time of period[39]; the life span of each community which is fixed by Allah and many passed away.

Above verses mostly belong to Meccan surahs and has meanings fit to its context. As a matter of fact, in Meccan surahs, the term has comprehensive meanings which are the community of beings, well-knit community, belief and value system, model of a community and the lifetime of a community.

In the Medinan verses, specifically the "Muslim community" in history and in the period of Muhammad is in agenda. The word firstly used in the context of Abraham's prayer for his offspring for being submissive (Muslim) community as saying: رَبَّنَا وَاجْعَلْنَا مُسْلِمَيْنِ لَكَ وَمِن ذُرِّيَّتِنَاأُمَّةً مُسْلِمَةً لَّكَ "*Our Lord! And make us submissive unto You and of our offspring a community submissive unto You*".[40] The verse explains what Muslims (مُسْلِمَيْنِ) means and who they are. The followers of previous messengers are frequently described by the expression of *Muslim* in the Qur'an, and their religion is named as *Islam*. Indeed, the term of *Islam*, the name of only religion of Allah, consists not only that of Prophet Muhammad but also of who are before him. Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and Jesus were all Muslim, according to the Qur'an, because they surrounded to the will of Allah and followed His guidance as their way of life. The Qur'an says about the discussion on Abraham's religion happens between Jews and Christians:

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[37]   Surah Zuhruf: 20-23
[38]   For instance see: Surah al-Nahl: 120
[39]   For instance see: Surah al-'Araf: 34 and also see Surah Yusuf: 45
[40]   Surah al-Baqara: 128

يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمَا أُنزِلَتِ التَّوْرَاةُ وَالإِنجِيلُ إِلاَّ مِن بَعْدِهِ أَفَلاَ تَعْقِلُونَ. هَاأَنتُمْ هَؤُلاء حَاجَجْتُمْ فِيمَا لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلِمَ تُحَاجُّونَ فِيمَا لَيْسَ لَكُم بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَاللّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنتُمْ لاَ تَعْلَمُونَ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلاَ نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِن كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُّسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

"O people of the Book! Why do you argue about Abraham, when neither Torah nor Gospel were revealed until after him! Have you no sense? Indeed, you are those who argue about that of which you have some knowledge; why then do you argue concerning that of which you have no knowledge? Allah knows, but you do not. Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but was an upright man who is a Muslim."[41] The disciples of Jesus are also concerned as Muslim.[42] Thereafter, the followers of Muhammad are charged with responsibility of the term as a final community and defined as a group of believers with a special role as follows: وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا "And thus We have appointed you to be a balanced community in the middle way."[43] And eventually the followers of Prophet Muhammad formed the best community (كُنتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ)[44] ever created by Allah. However, the chronological development of the meanings of ummah in the Qur'an both in Mecca and Medina period from the human being communities to a more focused reference to the Muslim community is explained by some orientalists[45] with the historical development of the prophetic message.[46]

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[41] Surah 'Ali 'Imran: 65-67
[42] Sec: Surah al-Maidah: 111
[43] Surah al-Baqara: 143
[44] Surah Ali 'Imran: 110
[45] For instance see: F.M. Denny, "The Meaning of Ummah in the Qur'an", *History of Religions*, v. 15 (1995), pp. 34-70. And also see: Idem, "Umma", p. 862
[46] For further information and explanation on the term of Umma used in the Qur'an see: Yoshiko Oda, "The Concept of the "Ummah" in the Qur'an: An Elucidation of the Basic Nature of the Islamic Holy Community" *Orient*, v. 20 (1984) pp. 93-108; Mustafa Öztürk, "Kur'an Çerçevesinde Ümmet Kavramı" *İslamiyat*, v. 8 (2005) pp. 11-25; Abdullah al-Ahsan, "The Qur'anic Concept of Ummah" *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, v. 7 (1986) pp. 607-610, Hasan Keskin, *Kur'an'da Ümmet Kavramı*, İstanbul: Rağbet 2003

5. Is Ahl Kitab Insider or Outsider?

The concept of *ummah*[47] in Islamic tradition is, Sir Hamilton Gibb argues[48], the key-word for seeking the historical development of Islam. As a matter of fact, the first *ummah* of Islam was established as a community with political authority and autonomy, as well as religious and socio-political characteristics that is described[49] originally as a sort of 'defense alliance pact' which united the city of Medina's clans in a pledge to protect the Prophet Muhammad and the first believers of Mecca people and codified in a document known as the "Constitution of Medina". This alliance system provided a sense of authority of Muhammad and a complete loyalty to him as the leader of Medinan communities including local clans.

It is disputable whether Jewish were considered inside or outside of this first *ummah*. W. M. Watt, think that they with their various tribes belonged to the Medinan *Ummah* of Muhammad.[50] Rudi Paret, in this regard, claims that they were in the alliance pact but later, because of political conditions they were declared a separate *ummah* with a separate religion:

The predominantly political character of this new ummah was, however, only a makeshift. As soon as Muhammad felt himself firmly established and had successfully attacked the pagan Meccans, he was able to exclude from his politico-religious community the madinese (especially the Jews) who had not yet adopted his religion. As time went on, his ummah came more and more to consist only of his proper followers, the Muslims. In contrast to the ahl kitab, with whom he had previously been in alliance, he now described the Muslims as

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[47] For specific information about the concept see: E. Giannakis, *Aspects of the Concept of Ummah in its Formative Period*, (Unpublished Dissertation) The University of Birmingham, 1981; idem, "The Concept of Ummah" *Graeco-Arabica*, v. 2 (1983) pp. 99-111

[48] Sir Hamilton A.R. Gibb, "The Community in Islamic History" in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, v. 108 (1963), p. 173

[49] For instance sec: Peter Mandaville, Ibid, p. 71

[50] W. M. Watt, *Political Thought*, p. 5

an ummah and laid stress on their religious and ethical qualities (Sura III, 100, 106).[51]

However, R.B. Serjant[52] and Frederick M. Deny[53] have denied that they were inside of the *ummah*. They think it was a kind of "tribal confederation" not a kind of religiously unity in the sense of Medinan verse. Indeed, preserved by Ibn Ishaq[54] in his Sira, "The Constitution of Medina" is a collection of documents issued on various occasions during Medinan period and is of very valuable historical evidence as a unique source of ideas underlying the Islamic community in its early formative period.[55] The term *ummah* occurs twice in the documents. The first usage is as like:

> 1. This is a writing from Muhammad the Prophet, Allah bless and honour him, between the Mu'minun and Muslimun of Quraysh and Yathrib and those who follow them and join with them and strive along with them.
>
> 2a. They are single confederation (ummah wahidah) set apart from the people.[56]

The second usage which is in a different version of pledge has most important statement on the first *ummah* of Islam:

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[51] R. Paret, "Umma", p. 1015

[52] R.B. Serjant, "The Constitution of Madinah", *Islamic Quarterly*, v. 8 (1964) p. 13

[53] Frederick M. Deny, "Ummah in the Constitution of Medina" *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, v. 36 (1977) p. 44

[54] Ibn Hisham cited from Ibn Ishaq in his *al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah, Kahirah*, (Dar al-Fikr (no date), p. 527-31). For English translation of Ibn Ishaq see: A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah with Introduction and notes*, Karachi, Oxford, New York Delhi: Oxford University Press 1967, pp. 231-5

[55] This statement dealing with the treaty with Jews in Medina was made in the fifth month of Hijra (For its dating see: al- Imam al-Shaykh Husayn b. Muhammad b. al-Husayn al-Diyarbakrî, *Târikh al-Khamîs fi Ahwâli Anfasi Nafîs*, Bayrut: Muessesetu Sha'bân, (no date but based on a manuscript published in 1283 of Hijra) v. 1, p. 353). R. B. Serjant has published its English translation with commentary: "The Sunnah Jami'ah, Pacts with Yathrib Jews, and the Tahrim of Yathrib: Analysis and Translation of the Documents comprised in the so-called 'Constitution of Medina' ", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, v. 41 (1978) pp. 1-42. This document is, Serjant admits, "unquestionably authentic" in his "The Constitution of Medina", *Islamic Quarterly*, v. 8 (1964), p. 3.

[56] Quoted from R.B. Serjant, "The Sunnah Jami'ah" p. 18

2a. The Jews of Banu 'Awf are a confederation (ummah) with the mu'minun, the Jews having their religion/law (din) and the Muslimun/Mu'minun having their religion/law (*din*) their clients (mawalī) and their person, excepting anyone who acts wrongly (*zalama*) and commits crime/acts treacherously/breaks an agreement, for he but slays himself and the people of his house.
2b. The Jews of Banu al-Najjar have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf.
2c. The Jews of Banu Harith have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf.
2d. The Jews of Banu Sa'idah have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf.
2e. The Jews of Banu Jusham have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf.
2f. The Jews of Banu'l Aws have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf.
2g. The Jews of Banu Tha'labah have the same as the Jews of Banu Awf. [57]

The paragraph reveals that Jewish community was considered within the first *ummah* of Islam in the political sense not in religious. They are recognized in some fashion the validity of their community. Still, the Muslim community remains the "best" and "balanced" community and is the true inheritor of Abrahamic line. Hence they are still invited to be the member of Muslim community:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاء بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلاَّ نَعْبُدَ إِلاَّ اللّهَ وَلاَ نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلاَ يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضاً أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللّهِ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

O People of the Book! Come to a word common between us and you, that we serve none but God, and that we associate not with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lords, apart from God. And if they turn their backs, say: Bear witness what we are Muslims."[58]

The Qur'an seems to call on Christian and Jews to recognize the mission of the Prophet on a religious basis, presenting it as a continuation of the earlier missions. Christians and Jews are referred to as inside of the *ummah*, defined by their religious beliefs.

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[57] Serjant, Ibid, p. 27
[58] Surah Ali 'Imran: 64

Historically, Jews and Christians were eventually considered as the protected people (*dhimmi*) of the Muslim territory (Dar Islam). And later the other communities like Sabaeans (Mandains) were added into the same status.[59] Over centuries the pattern of Islamic civilization, they paid tribute (*jizya*) to the government in exchange for the right of limited citizenship.[60]

6. The Formulation of the Concept *Ummah* in Political Thought of Islam

6.1. Medieval Period

The concept of *ummah*, Muslim community, as stated by Siegman[61], lies at the heart of Islamic political thought. The term firstly excludes all other religiously external communities in territorial division. It is expressed with the term of Dar. Medieval Muslim jurists made a distinction between the territory of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the territory of war (*dar al-harb*) based on the conceptual division of people into believers and non-believers. This criterion was not taken only for the membership of the ummah. All members believed in Allah and accept the *shari'a* rules too. On the other hand, the controversies by the civil wars of first centuries in the community triggered the establishment sectarian fractions (e.g. *Shia, Sunni, Khawarij*) and their subdivisions in a multiple political communal system. In spite of these divisions, the community/*ummah* identity in Islam has been taken account of the sense of solidarity among the groups in a way that brings Muslim together under the banner of Allah's unity/*tawhid*. Nonbelievers also divided on the basis of their relations to the *ummah* of believers, like *dhimmi, harbi* etc. To be a member of

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[59] For further information see: Şinasi Gündüz, "Ehli Kitabın Kimliği Sorunu ve Ebu Hanife ile Çağdaşlann "Kitab" Terimi Merkezli Yaklaşımları" *Islami Araştırmalar*, v. 15 (2002) pp. 241-5.

[60] See Roanald L. Nettler, "Dhimmi" *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, ed. john L. Esposito New York: Oxford University Press 1995, v. 1 p. 37

[61] H. Siegman, *The State and the Individual in Sunni Islam*,   p. 14

ummah is possible either with being born to Muslim family or freely conversion/reversion to Islam. Lambton points out:

> The internal organization of the umma was based on the profession of a common religion. Perpetual peace among its members, the general lifting of the blood feud and the union of the tribes in one great family was assumed. Its organization was secured and defined by a common acceptance of, and a common submission to, first the *shari'a* and secondly the temporal head of the community, the institution of whose office, the imamate or caliphate, was simply the symbol of the supremacy of the *shari'a.*[62]

Muslim scholars in formulating the structure of Muslim community have mostly emphasized the other religio-communal concepts together with *ummah* in accordance with their contemporary political system. The medieval scholars, in this regard, for preserving the historical and legal continuity of the *ummah* have used *shari'ah* and *khilafah* as the essential bases of the *ummah*. While *shari'ah* provided very useful integrating force in the *ummah*, the *khalifa* was posed a kind of political authority for this organization.[63] Al-Mawardi, for instance, emphasized the divine character of the *ummah* by maintaining that the institution of *khilafah* was a Qur'anic necessity for the unity of *ummah*.[64] *Ijma* is also required to make the contract binding between the ummah, based on a well-known Hadith: *"My Ummah will never agree upon an error"*. Like him,

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[62] Ann K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Oxford: University Press, 1985 p. 14

[63] See: Manzooruddin Ahmed, *Islamic Political System in the Modern Age. Theory and Practice*, Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1982 p. 72. And also see: Idem, "Umma: The Idea of a Universal Community" *Islamic Studies*, v. 14 (1975) p. 37

[64] For further information see: Abu Hasan al-Mawardi, *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyab 1985, p. 5-6

for all Sunni scholars[65], the communal unity of the *ummah* was ultimately dependent upon legal and political unity. In this regard, Gibb says:

> It is of the essence of Sunni doctrine that the *Umma*, the historic community, is based upon the *shari'a*, that its historical development is divinely guided and its continuity guaranteed by the infallible authority of *ijma*. This being so, it was one of the duties of the jurist, as keepers of the public conscience, to demonstrate afresh for each generation the legality of its political constitution.[66]

The necessity of political leadership for *ummah* is openly discussed by Ibn Khaldun.[67] Al-Ghazali went further and rationalized the position of *khiláfah* for the unity of *ummah*. However, with Ghazali, the term of *khalifah* was replaced by the term of *sultan* for the leader of the ummah in accordance with the political reality. Rosenthal regarding Ghazali's evaluation says:

> In examining his utterances on politics this means that we must take into consideration the time and circumstances no less than the purpose he had in mind when making them. Then, we are not surprised to find, in his *K. al-iqtisad fi-li'itiqad*, an exposition of the nature and purpose of the *imama* as orthodox and classical as that of al-Mawardi; yet his *K.* al-mustazhiri is generously tempered with political realism and preparedness to make concessions to expediency. Later, in his *Ihya al-'ulum*, he bows to the actual power of the Seljuq sultanate in his attempt to preserve the institution of the caliphate as the symbol of the unity of the Muslim community.[68]

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[65] For instance see: al-Qadi Abu Ya'la al-Ferra, *Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah*, Bayrut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah 1983, p. 19 and so on.

[66] Hamilton A.R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1982, p. 141

[67] See: Ibn Khaldun, Mukaddime (trans. by Süleyman Uludağ) İstanbul: Dergah Yay. 1982, v. 1 p. 541

[68] E.I.J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam an Introductory Outline*, Cambridge: University Press 1958, p. 38

6.2. Modern Period

The concept seems to be so much intertwined together within the framework of traditional Muslim political theory. However, as well-known, the political changes in the modern world, like separation of *caliphate* (religiously leadership) from sultanate (state authority) and finally abolition of Caliphate itself in 1923 in Turkey caused some political shock first and then a new political understanding of *ummah* without other political concepts. Rashid Rida in his, *al-Khilafah*[69] reconstructs the theory of *khilafah* in the modern context without emphasizing so much on the institution. Instead, he uses these concepts, *shura, ijma, bî'ah, ijtihad* etc. for reorganizing the concepts of political authority as the new essential bases of the *ummah*.

By the end of the nineteenth century, most of the Muslim lands had come under the colonial rule of the European powers. The colonial situation created completely new notion of the *ummah*. The rule of *shari'ah* was gradually substituted by European legal codes, and finally nation-states were emerged. Many Muslims under the citizenship of their nation-states felt culturally separated and free from the *ummah*. The first voice against the traditional theory of khilafah, in fact, belongs to Ali 'Abd al-Raziq. In his, *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm*[70], he argues that the institution of khilafah has no canonical nor rational basement in Islam.

Subsequently, the idea of communal unity was concerned within different terms. The concept of *Pan-Islamism*, as the foremost and influential one, was anti-national in sense. Muslims were asked, by this concept, to loyal not to their nation-state authority but to greater and more collective notion of community, *ummah*.[71] However, the contradictions between the traditional Muslim notion of

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[69] Reshid Rida, *al-Khilafah wa al-hnamah al-Uzmâ: Mabahis Shar'iyyah Siyasiyyah Ijtima,yyah Islahiyyah*, Egypt: Matbaa al-Manar 1341/1922

[70] Ali 'Abd al-Raziq. *al-Islam wa Usul al-Hukm, Bahs fi al-Khilafah wa al-hukumat fi'l-Islam*, Kahirah: Matbaa Misr 1344/1925

[71] For further information see: Manzooruddin Ahmed, Ibid, p. 80. And also see: Peter

ummah and its modern reading as "nation" intensified in this century. And finally the second term, *territorial nationalism* has came to the scene. The notions of *ummah* and *dar* (land) became two different concepts which have no any link each others. The territory of the community became limited for only political citizenship of certain nations not all community who has common belief or value but common state, language, race etc. The Muslims are linked to other Muslim community only with their faith not their status of citizenship any more. The idea of Muslim *ummah* has been gradually transformed into national *ummah*.[72] Each nation formed a specific system with its own internal coherence, a superstructure which was practically self-sufficient. Politics reshaped and reconsolidated the specific realities of the nations.

7. The Concept of Ummah in the Context of Globalization

The concept of *ummah* has been demarcated by religious, geographical and finally ethnic factors. And our time witnesses the world moving rapidly towards the era of one world civilization, one global community. As far as Muslim community is concerned, the developments of last centuries have led to a paradigm shift of the *ummah*. Although, the earliest, especially the classical Muslim jurist-theologians, broadly speaking, observed a distinction between *Dar al-Harb* (the land of war/=non-Muslim territory) and *Dar al-Islam* (the land of Islam/=Muslim territory) for describing the land for the *ummah*, they now accept that the classical Islamic political theories could no longer classify non-Muslim states as it was, instead the West is to be considered *Dar al-'Ahd* (the land of treaty)[73] because of society and politics of Muslims existing in a

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Mandavilla, Ibid, p. 76-77

[72] For further information see: Ahmad S. Dallal, "Ummah" *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* v. 4 (1995) p. 269

[73] For further information see: Ataullah Siddiqi, "Muslims in the Contemporary World: Dialogue in Perspective" *World Faith Encounter*, v. 20, (1998)

dynamic global context. The frontiers of the *ummah* are no longer defined according to geographical boundaries or national societies.

Because of the immigration to the West, indeed, Muslims now are the religious minority in Europe. The majority of Muslims in Europe now view "Europe" as their land, home and territory where was before classified as outside of the ummah land to live with others who were identified before as a non-believer, outside of *ummah* by classical thinkers. The development in mass education and popular culture has brought a dramatic change in social and individual structure of the Muslim society living in Europe. Consequently, the new generation of educated Muslims has direct knowledge and understanding of the global intellectual and cultural fashions. Under these circumstances, Muslim societies increasingly adapted new paradigms of Western norms and models in ethics, politics, law and education.

In accordance with increasingly these global societies and outlooks, European Muslims have tended to reinterpret many aspects of their religion and to question the existence or applicability of Islamic law. This means that contemporary Muslims often drop traditional interpretations of the Qur'an which they find too conservative, preferring instead readings which are more adaptable to modern society. Most Muslims reject derivation of Islamic laws from literal readings of single Qur'anic verses. They generally claim that a holistic view which takes into account the 7th century Arabian cultural context negates such literal interpretations. The reliability and applicability of Hadith and other traditional literatures are also deeply questioned by these modern-minded thinkers, as much of Islamic law derives from them. Most of them consequently do not believe in the authority of traditional scholars to issue a fatwa, favoring instead each individual's ability to interpret Islamic sacred texts on their own.

As the result of global impact on modern Islam, the notion of absolute equality of all humanity, human rights, women rights and their emancipations, the place of women in Islam, modern gender roles in Islam and Islamic

feminism became the major concerns for new interpretations of the Qur'an. Because of this influence, liberal Muslims are often critical of traditional Islamic law interpretations which allow polygamy for men, as well as the traditional Islamic law of inheritance under which daughters receive less than sons. It is also accepted by most liberal Muslims that a woman may lead the state, contrary to traditional argument. The idea of modern secular and liberal democracy, and thus oppose Islam as a political movement, eventually became another theme for new interpretations of the Qur'an. Liberal Muslims are generally open to interfaith dialogue and differences. Within the liberalist and pluralist point of view, for them, there is no single hermeneutical understanding and constitutional ordering that is rationally preferable to all others. There is no either a single account of how a given interpretation or constitution comes to be authoritative.

It is clear now that the global political liberalism and pluralism have impacted on Muslims who persistently encounter the western values. It is, therefore, of interest to see on the extent of this global concept with its values and ethics within European Muslim community. By doing so, we can better understand the political language of Tafsir in the context and cultural dynamics of the Globalization.

As we said, the global political liberalism and pluralism impact on Muslims who persistently encounter the western values. Liberalism is generally dealing with individual differences. That is to say that political liberalism allows individuals to define and pursue their own ambitions, desire, values, ethics and goals and it is considered to be neutral as it is not committed to the pursuit of any given purpose. These all dealing with the impact of global values on Modern Islam are very well known or at least can be easily observed. However, to legislate the implementations of liberal values in the life of European Muslim society is very problematic, since, in liberal system, laws are value-neutral and allow individuals to make their own choices eclipses the presence of cultural differences in society. However it is very problematic even for liberals to allow: *polygamy, sacrifices of animals, capital punishments, and so on.* On the other

hand, it is very problematic for the Muslim community to welcome: *adultery, lesbian and homosexual marriages etc.* If the state or religion does not legislate on these matters, it indicates that it does not consider them sufficiently important to the moral well-being of the community to require a collective, uniform and compulsory mode of behavior. If they legislate, they take a specific stand.[74] Nevertheless, Multicultural Laws and Ethics proceeded in the history Islam may enable to legitimate global values and ethics from the Islamic point of view.

Indeed, the current presence in the West is of a very new situation for Muslims. They have certainly experienced the fact of being a minority in the history. But in that time, as Tariq Ramazan says, this is a different kind which Muslims are witnessing.[75] Muslims are living in the Western civilization with its "machinery values" that make difficult for every Muslim to define what their social and individual identities are Muslim *Ummah* or European civilian. Whereas they are staying within the boundary of global Muslim community (*ummah*), in order to successfully immigrate and integrate them into Western society, they have underwent a kind of religious reformation which reconstructs a "theology" fit to their own situation as a European citizen.   Ramadan maintains:

> Before being a means of protection, however, Islam is an affirmative Faith which carries within itself a global understanding of creation, life, death, and humanity. This understanding is, or should be, the source of Islamic rules of thinking and behavior and, at the same time, it should be shaped by a specific type of worship which encompasses the sphere of worship (*'ibadât*) and more widely, the whole domain of social affairs (*mu'amalât*). One finds, expressed throughout the Qur'an, a perpetual movement, back and forth, between a global vision of the universe and humanity –which is given birth to by the very essence of Faith- and,

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[74] See: David Herbert, "Religious Tradition in the Public Sphere" in *Muslims in the Margin*, Netherlands 1996, pp. 66-79
[75] See: Tariq Ramadan, *To be a European Muslim*, Leicester: Islamic Foundation 1999, p. 2

consequently, its implications in practice with the five daily Prayers, the annual payment of zakat, the fast of Ramadan and the duty of permanent social involvement. The latter are all acts of worship and, in turn, they reinforce, strengthen and mould Faith itself.[76]

The Islamic communal identity, argued by him, can be remained by understanding the identity in this kind of global vision, universality. In this perspective, the Islamic essentials must be explained in the light of new context within European society.[77] The first essential, for instance, must be redefined is the concepts of *Dar al-Islam* and *Dar al-Harb* which in the past refer to the land for Muslim *ummah* to live. These two terms has lost their essentially bases. Instead, in the new context, the land has not any geographical restriction; the whole world (*al-'alam*) is presented for Muslim *ummah* to live.   Ramadan rationales this new interpretation as like:

> It was the *'ulama* who, during the first three centuries of Islam, by considering the state of the world –its geographical divisions, the powers in place through religious belonging and influence as well as the moving game of alliances- started to classify and define the different spaces in and around them. This process was necessary for at least two reasons: first, by making out the Islamic territories, the *'ulama* were able to point out what the essential conditions making a space or a nation Islamic were and what the rulings determining the political and strategic relations with other nations or empires were. Second, it allowed them to establish a clear distinction, as regard legal issues, between the situation of Muslims living inside the Islamic world and those living abroad or those who traveled often such as traders (and who thus required specific rulings). [78]

These two concepts have been appointed in the Islamic law. But, because of two reasons, they are not utterly appropriate and hence should be redefined

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[76]   Tariq Ramadan, Ibid, p. 3
[77]   See: Ibid, p. 117-8
[78]   Ibid, p. 123-4

by taking into consideration the new vision of world, global culture. Ramadan continues:

> Based on the idea of two virtual entities (*dar al-Islam* and *dar al-harb*) having to come to an agreement, it seems impossible to use such a concept without precaution in our contemporary world. These entities do not have real and defined existences and the treaties, because of intricate political influences and imbalanced power struggle cannot be considered as expressions of agreement between two or more independent ad free governments.[79]

This idea is commonly shared by other Muslims scholars[80], whereas some others[81] keen to go on the traditional understanding. However, this is the discussion on the territory of Muslim community. What about the identity of the community; does it also belong to European society with global characteristic values? Is the Muslim to be defined in the context of traditional Islamic notion *ummah* or simply a citizen of any European country? Is Muslim insider or outsider of the European society? Just for reminding, these questions were asked before in the terms of Ahl kitab. Now, the same question is for Muslim. Of course, the answer is very affirmative and eclectic. For seeking to be accepted by the European countries anyway, Muslims have determined to adapt Islam as a personnel ritualistic religion detached for the most part of daily life and to minimize any differences in their appearance, embracing a language fits to the liberal values. Therefore, on an individual basis, Muslims could or can successfully integrate themselves into Western society, or at least enable to live in a dialogue and empathy, on the condition that they contextualize the global western values. So, they will be European citizens and a member of Muslim

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[79] Ibid, p. 128.

[80] For instance see: Faysal Mawlavi, *ai-Usus al-Shar'iyyah li al-'Ilaqat, bayn al-Muslimin wa Gayr al-Muslimin*, Menilmontant 1987.

[81] For further information see: Ramadan, Ibid, p. 141-2

community/ *ummah* at the same time.[82]

8. Conclusion

We have traced the origins of the concept of the *ummah* in the light of the Qur'an, the tradition and finally modern perspectives. The notion of *ummah* was founded in belief-system in the Qur'an. The idea of the *ummah* and its historical existence has been central to Islamic communal system. Historically the concept of the *ummah* was concerned with other religio-communal and political concepts. As a matter of fact, the Islamic religio-communal conceptual system developed in accordance with the development and diversity of community in Muslim territory. In spite of the establishment of territorial and sectarian fractions (e.g. *Shia, Sunni, Khawarij*) and their subdivisions in a multiple political communal system, the community/*ummah* identity in Islam has been taken account of the sense of solidarity among the groups in a way that brings Muslim together under the banner of Allah's unity/*tawhid*.

All we have said, in this regard throughout the work about the term of *ummah,* is to indicate that the term of *ummah* underwent a meaning change from a relatively simple concept to a politically better-organized one. The term, indeed, underwent important developments immediately after Prophet Muhammad and became as a central normative concept which appealed for unity across the global Muslim community referring to relations of religion, territory, sectarian, ethnicity, and eventually diaspora and being minority.

Muslim scholars in elaborating Muslim community have mostly emphasized the other religio-communal concepts together with *ummah* in accordance with their contemporary political system. The medieval Jurists, for instance, for preserving the historical and legal continuity of the *ummah* have

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[82] These questions frequently are under discussions. For further information see: Ibid, pp. 153-211

used *shari'ah* and *khilafah* as the essential bases of the *ummah*. While *shari'ah* provided very useful integrating force in the *ummah*, the *khalifa* was posed a kind of political authority for this organization. In the traditional context, *dar al-Islam*, *shari'ah* and *khilafah* are very fit to authoritarian and territorial meaning of the concept. But later especially under the colonial rules and some global developments, the other terms, in accordance with the modern practice, used to reconstruct the communal system, like *shurah* and *bi'ah*.

As we have seen, in accordance with their increasingly modern societies and outlooks, Muslims have tended to reinterpret many concepts of their religion. As the result of western impact on the modern Islam, the modern notions and values became the major concerns for new interpretations of the Qur'an. Because of this influence, modern Muslims are often critical of traditional interpretations. In that period, Muslim, one hand, re-defined very Qur'anic/Islamic concepts in the light of modern political perspectives. On the other hand, new political values and ethics have been introduced and integrated in Islam. The foremost impacts of the West, in terms of liberal governmental concepts, the ideas of democracy, liberalism, ethnic diversity and pluralism, etc., followed in modern Qur'an Interpretation. Modern Muslims interpreters usually read the Qur'an in the light of today's necessities with today's categories. The necessities and the categories are composed of the totality of global values and political models. Thus, their interpretative efforts should be described as a kind of "political interpretation" which means to read the text in the light of reader's contemporary political concepts, theories, values and models using a political language.

Throughout this paper, I have discussed that the politics and the interpretation play mutual supportive roles in the life of Muslim intellectual tradition. The interpreters have corresponded the political values within the Qur'anic concepts. Indeed, the Qur'an is, concerned, applicable to all political values and therefore must admit of some flexibility. As a matter of fact, interpretation functions as a mechanism of legitimation for the transformation of the society. Hence it provides a system to deal with contemporary needs in

changing world and is actively involved in shaping the form of transition. In this regard, it can be said, the continuity of religious identity is maintained not necessarily through the efficient structure of religion but more so through the integrative function of interpretation. In this model, the Qur'an and transformation are not differentiated but rest with a single structure that is tradition. No distinction can be made between religion and its institutions. In this model, the interpretation and political language seem to be intertwined. How Muslims can deal with this challenge while staying within the boundary of the Islam? Indeed, they have reshaped the concepts after having reconstructed their understandings on the Qur'an and the revelation. They have always pronounced a kind of dialectical relationship between the Qur'an and the reality of the Muslim community.