WADAH KHANFAR

THE FIRST SPRING

POLITICAL & STRATEGIC PRAXIS OF THE PROPHET OF ISLAM (ﷺ)

TRANSLATED BY
ASLAM FAROUK-ALLI

dbabb

THE FIRST SPRING

Wadah Khanfar

The First Spring: Political and Strategic Praxis of the Prophet of Islam (ﷺ)

Originally published in Arabic as *al-Rabīʿ al-Awwal: Qirāʾah Siyāsīyyah wa Istarātījīyyah fī al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah*

Translated by: **Aslam Farouk-Alli**

United Kingdom
60 Blakes Quay
Gas Works Road
RG1 3EN
Reading
United Kingdom
info@dararab.co.uk
www.dararab.co.uk

First Edition 2024
ISBN 978-1-78871-103-6

Subjects: Prophetic Biography (Sīrah); Politics; History.

Text Edited: Na'eem Jeenah & Marcia Lynx Qualey
Text & Cover Design: Nasser Al Badri

WADAH KHANFAR

THE FIRST SPRING

POLITICAL & STRATEGIC PRAXIS OF
THE PROPHET OF ISLAM (ﷺ)

TRANSLATED BY ASLAM FAROUK-ALLI

daabo

I dedicate this work…

to all who dream of a just and merciful world.

Table of Contents

Prologue: The final act

Time: Morning of 13 Ramaḍān 8 AH / 4 December 629 CE.

Place: Makkah, in front of Dār al-Nadwah (the House of Assembly).

They come in sluggish droves on a cold morning, gathering before the leader of Quraysh and Kinānah, staring at the grim individual standing before them, their looks troubled.

Abū Sufyān is wrapped in a thick damascene mantle. A black dishevelled silk turban has been wound around his head in haste, and he leans on his staff, his back stooped. He is exhausted, staring at the ground, lost in contemplation.

The crowd finally gathered; people wait in anticipation. Abū Sufyān lifts his head and looks upon them with a nervous stare. He clears his throat and, with a trembling voice, proclaims:

"O people of Quraysh, here comes Muḥammad at the head of 10,000 armed men. He comes to you with a force never seen before, a force that you have no chance of overcoming."

Time freezes. Abū Sufyān's words sink in. Deep breaths are inhaled and passions flare, not because the crowd is unaware that the army that lies in wait at the gates of Makkah is Muḥammad's (ﷺ) army, but because they had hoped the Qurayshi delegation that had visited the Muslim encampment the previous night would have agreed on terms with him. They now realise that the delegation has failed to prevent the fall of Makkah and that their only option is to surrender.

The ominous silence is pierced by the shrieking voice of Hind, daughter of 'Utbah: "People of Makkah! Kill this useless glutton, a shame to our leaders."

Abū Sufyān responds to his wife's insult by addressing the people, raising his voice in a decisive tone: "Woe unto you! People of Quraysh, do not be swayed by this woman."

A mocking voice from the crowd cuts him short: "May Allah bring shame upon you, gatherer of this crowd!"

Abū Sufyān continues speaking, ignoring the heckler: "O People of Quraysh, woe unto you! I have seen what you have not; I have seen men and steeds and weapons that none of you can overpower. He has come with the likes of that which you have never seen before, and so whosoever enters the home of Abū Sufyān has amnesty."

An angry voice interrupts: "May Allah bring shame upon you. Of what use is your home to us?"

Abū Sufyān ignores the man and continues: "Whoever shuts his door has amnesty; whoever enters the mosque has amnesty; and whoever surrenders his weapons has amnesty."

He then withdraws, mumbling to himself and dragging his robes behind him. He passes through the crowd as he heads for his house, carefully avoiding meeting the eyes of the people.

An incoherent mix of words and mutterings rises from the gathering; people are divided between those affirming what was said and those rejecting it, between those utterly confused and those just astounded. Some try to be positive, while others break down, seized with fear. Between these two groups, there are some simply overcome by silence.

Confusion is widespread; emotions and tensions run high; voices intermingle. The people cannot wrest control of their senses. Suddenly, screams echo across Makkah: "Muḥammad's army has reached Dhi Ṭuwa!"

The crowd disperses more quickly than it had gathered. Most people enter their homes and shut the doors behind them. The city's nobility takes to the hills while others sit in front of the Kaʿbah. A small group gathers around Ṣafwān ibn Umayyah, ʿIkrimah ibn Abī Jahl, and Suhayl

ibn ‘Amr, vowing that Muḥammad (ﷺ) will not enter Makkah by force.

Hours pass…

The scene reaches its climax when the Prophet (ﷺ) emerges from the Ka‘bah door and stands before the crowd of people gathered in front of the sanctuary, on their knees, awaiting their fate, with only one question on every pair of lips: “What will he do to us?”

They listen in earnest as he speaks: “There is no deity except Allah, the One and Only, and He has no partner. He has fulfilled His promise and has made His servant victorious, and has defeated the confederates all by Himself.”

“Why does he insist on attributing everything to his Lord?

“And what will Muḥammad do to us? Will he treat us in the same way that we treated him? Will he exact his revenge? Will he confiscate our wealth just as we confiscated the wealth of his companions when they migrated with him to Madinah, or will he build his kingdom on the remains of our legacy and culture? Has the authority of the Quraysh finally come to an end after none was able to best it before? Will it become a vassal of a victorious king who will exercise full authority over Makkah for himself and his people, from providing water for the pilgrims to custodianship of the sanctuary around the Ka‘bah? What is to stop him from doing so?”

Muḥammad (ﷺ) continues to address them, and they listen intently: “Indeed, every glorious deed or claim on wealth or act of retribution lies under my two feet, except for the custodianship of the sanctuary and the provision of water for the pilgrims.”

The crowd lets out a sigh of relief.

“This is not the logic of a vanquishing king, so what does Muḥammad truly want? And what novelty will he offer us in exchange for our old ways?”

He continues: “O People of Quraysh. Allah has indeed stripped you

of the arrogance of the time of ignorance and of the veneration of your forefathers. All people are from Adam and Adam is from clay."

He then recites a verse of the Qur'ān (49:13): "O People! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Verily the most honourable of you by [the standards of] Allah is the one who is most conscious [of Allah]. And Allah has full knowledge and is well-acquainted [with all things]."

"People are from Adam and Adam is from clay!"

"People, all people, including us? We who expelled him and showed him only enmity?"

"Or will he exclude those who expelled him from the Holy Mosque and fought against him?"

Then came the question that the onlookers had anticipated: "O People of Quraysh, what do you think I will do to you?"

As soon as the question is posed, heads rise with dejected gazes, staring at the conqueror at the door of the Ka'bah, its handgrips in his firm grasp and, along with it, the fate of the Quraysh, the future of Makkah, and the future of the Arabs. They look on with hope and humility, wishing that he will show compassion. Some speak with trembling voices: "A gracious brother and the son of a gracious brother!"

They hold their breath as they search the expression on his face, hoping to detect their fate before his lips pronounce it. His face beams with satisfaction as the light of a new era in Makkah shines upon their faces and the glad tidings are pronounced: "I say what my brother [the Prophet] Yūsuf said before me: 'No blame is there upon you this day. Go forth, for you are free!'"

Preface to the Arabic edition

History is replete with the stories of exceptional individuals from different civilisations and ethnicities, people who redrew the global map and tipped the strategic balances of power. The list includes emperors, conquerors, leaders, and revolutionaries; they share similar traits but are differentiated by their aims and objectives. History has immortalised them because their actions led to the transformation of nations, and sometimes, of the world.

Such exceptional personalities necessarily occupy an important symbolic status in the lives of the nations they are a part of, occupying a position at the centre of the national identity and collective heritage of their people. Their biographies are invoked in political and cultural discourse, statues are erected in their honour, buildings are named after them, and their life stories are studied in national curricula. This is because every nation has a perennial need to know itself, and such symbols are often important means by which to entrench national identity.

Not too long ago, I was following the crisis between Greece and Macedonia, which emerged from a dispute over history and became a political tussle. Alexander the Great lay at the heart of this dispute. He is the pride of Greece and is regarded as the symbol of their national identity; they therefore reject any other country's claims of ownership over him.

According to the current national borders, Macedonia, from which Alexander hails, lies in northern Greece. The Republic of Macedonia, which declared its independence under this name after the collapse of Yugoslavia, was not the historical Macedonia, but only a portion of it. Greece thus regarded this latter name to be a violation of Greek history and patrimony, at the forefront of which lies the greatest Greek symbol of all: Alexander.

The Republic of Macedonia, for its part, also claimed Alexander as part of its heritage, and erected a huge statue of him in the centre of its capital city, Skopje. This provoked a strong reaction from Greece, and its parliament banned the recognition of Macedonian passports until the country changed its name. Greece also blocked Macedonia's accession to the European Union and NATO. The political crisis escalated until the two sides reached an agreement through international mediation; the Republic of Macedonia was renamed the Republic of North Macedonia.

Nations need extraordinary historical symbols to entrench their national identity, and they feel provoked when others lay claim to their historical right to a particular symbol. Many historical personalities are identified by their national affiliations: Darius is Persian, Alexander is Macedonian, Julius Caesar is Roman, Justinian is Byzantine, and so on.

Another common characteristic among these personalities is that many left their mark on history through military accomplishments. Some had great architectural, legislative, and economic accomplishments as well, but these were also a result of the military conquests that granted them legitimacy and the necessary wealth to entrench their authority and status. Most strategic historical transformations have resulted from contestations over authority and wealth. This is evident in the biographies of many exceptional historical figures.

Darius I, also known as Darius the Great, reigned from 521 BCE to 486 BCE, and was the greatest monarch of the Persian Achaemenid Empire. He made important architectural and administrative contributions, but his reign was distinguished by his military conquests and victories against Egypt, Athens, Macedonia, and Central Asia.

Ruling from 336 BCE to 323 BCE, Alexander the Macedonian, also known as Alexander the Great, established the greatest empire known to the ancient world before the age of thirty. This followed an illustrious military career marked by great victories over the Persians and by conquests in India, Central Asia, and Egypt.

Julius Caesar, who reigned from 49 BCE to 44 BCE, also left his mark on Roman history only after he had achieved numerous military victories in the Gaul region, expanding the territory of the Roman

Empire. This enabled him to forcefully argue his own terms before the Roman legislature and to impose himself as Dictator of the Republic. The result was the suspension of the republican era after Caesar's death, and the birth of the Roman Empire.

Similarly, Justinian I, or Justinian the Great, who reigned from 527 to 565, increased the domain of the Byzantine empire by a series of military confrontations. He regained control of Rome and most of the territory that the Western Roman Empire had lost to the Germanic tribes. He also successfully suppressed a popular rebellion in Constantinople in 532, in which 30,000 citizens were killed. He is credited with undertaking the most important legislative reforms in the Byzantine Empire.

What captures our attention when we ponder the achievements of these four extraordinary individuals is that they were able to redraw the strategic map of the world and to radically change the balance of power. In so doing, they employed a comprehensive approach, based on military action, which led to the strengthening of their authority and the growth of their wealth; yet they remained firmly attached to nation or empire.

From a strategic perspective, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) achieved a radical and speedy global coup, but he differed fundamentally from these other individuals. His strategic approach is not rooted in the centrality of power and a monopoly on wealth; he was neither driven by a nationalistic logic nor did he aspire to create an empire. One can grasp the uniqueness of the prophetic strategic praxis only from this perspective.

In this book, we will uncover the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategic and political methodology by examining his strategies, tactics, and the actions that led up to and included the conquest of Makkah. We will consider his various actions and pronouncements, which occurred in the context of interactions with authorities, tribes, and various individuals. These include engagements; correspondence; alliances; military expeditions, including both raids and battles; relations between Madinah and regional and global political powers; as well as attitudes toward various Arab tribes and alliances or disputes with them. It will

also consider the publicity campaigns launched by the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions. This includes pronouncements by the Prophet (ﷺ) himself, his messengers, his military leaders, and those who composed panegyric or defamatory poetry on Madinah's behalf, such as Ḥassān ibn Thābit, ʻAbdallah ibn Rawāḥah and Kaʻb ibn Mālik.

We will begin by tracing the strategic contours of Makkah, examining its geographic location, status, politics, and economy. We will examine its cross-border agreements and pacts, its tribal structure, and its internal tensions. After that, we will trace the strategic economic map of the world around Makkah, followed by a presentation of the regional and global balance of power just prior to the prophetic mission. This will be followed by an examination of the situation on the Arabian Peninsula at the close of the sixth century and an interrogation of its social and religious structures.

Thereafter, we will explore the emergence of the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategic methodology in the first years of his mission. We will examine his attempts to find a support base, a task that took him to Yathrib, and consider how that village, torn apart by internecine strife, was transformed into a city characterised by order and initiative, and driven by a brave strategic vision that was able, in only a few years, to establish a new social contract that challenged Makkah's obsolete one.

Our assessment will then proceed to examine—first theoretically, then practically—how the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategic method guided his military confrontations and political alliances, and how it established the psyche required for his future struggles. We will see how this strategy was characterised by clear priorities, comprehensive and systematic coordination, precise assessments of the balance of forces, and a highly developed capacity to plan for the future.

Through this process, we will realise that the Prophet's (ﷺ) message was at the heart of every move he made. It was, in fact, this message—through its engagement with the political and strategic realities that it encountered—that birthed a new approach, different from the methodologies common before that time. We will see clearly how this unique method was able to achieve stunning success in a

world characterised by turmoil, degradation, and loss of purpose. Muḥammad's (ﷺ) message offered an Islamic universalism that ushered in a new era for the liberation of human beings and shattered the shackles of oppression, domination, and monopolistic control.

Today, the world is again witnessing major transformations that touch on every aspect of life, with strategic and political changes at the forefront. While humanity tries to sketch the future that we desire, and while we seek an approach that might steer us to safety, I present this work, which is the culmination of intense reflection on the sīrah[1] of the Prophet (ﷺ) from political and strategic perspectives. This is a humble beginning, and it is my hope that this task will be taken up and continued by other researchers and people interested in learning the lessons from, and developing a paradigm based on, the life of the Prophet (ﷺ).

I thank all the friends who honoured me by reviewing earlier drafts of this book, and who enriched it with their opinions, comments, and corrections. I pay tribute to them and am truly grateful to them all.

All praise is due to Allah, firstly and ultimately, for He alone guides us along the straight path.

28 May 2019 / 23 Ramaḍān 1440 AH

Doha, Qatar

1. In the Islamic sciences, al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah, commonly abbreviated to sīrah, refers to the biography of the Prophet (ﷺ). From the root word which means to travel (sārah), it refers to the journey of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life. The sīrah is generally regarded by Muslims as not just a historical or biographical account but as normative and, therefore, a model for emulation.

Preface to the English Edition

Our world is experiencing what is perhaps the most complex transformation in recent memory. Profound, multifaceted, and all-encompassing changes are taking place simultaneously. A shift in the balance of forces is recalibrating the international order, and the consequent polarisation threatens to descend into a destructive global conflict. Fundamental changes have been effected by modern technology, starting with the information and communication technologies (ICT) revolution and culminating in the artificial intelligence (AI) revolution, with its seemingly unlimited applications. This has already had—and continues to have—an effect on patterns of consciousness and human behaviour, and it impacts our psychological makeup and social order. In addition, our world has begun to pay the price for the encroachment and insatiable greed of capitalism and its neoliberal manifestations, which have caused massive economic imbalances between nations and a widening gap between rich and poor. Capitalist predation has also led to the destruction of the environment and almost irreversible change in the climate, with all its devastating consequences.

In this era of unpredictability and rapid change, humanity is in dire need of a new philosophical vision and a fresh start. The western hegemony that has dominated the global stage for the past three centuries is rapidly eroding; it has reached a point of bankruptcy, where it can no longer offer creative solutions that might guarantee a secure future for humanity. In any case, the future is far too expansive to be dominated by a single civilisation. The world's civilisational and cultural heritage is rich and diverse, encompassing much wisdom and collective experience that has been accumulated over many millennia. Our present malaise demands that we study this enormous human capital and draw lessons from it so that we might devise solutions for the future that are inspired by a multiplicity of sources, including Islam.

Islamic history is replete with profound and rich experiences, the most important of which was arguably the greatest strategic upset in history. The period between 630 and 642 ushered in an era in which the entrenched but aging global bipolar order finally collapsed and was replaced by a

new power, the ascendance of which no one could have predicted. The Muslim Arabs, relatively unknown at the time, burst forth from the global periphery and advanced with lightning speed. They overran the entire Persian Empire and half of the Byzantine Empire. Their sphere of influence widened even further thereafter, reaching the borders of China in the east and the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in the west.

Unique in its approach, the programme of Islamic conquests carried a universal message. Its aim was not to centralise power and wealth in the hands of the conquerors or to make one people subjugate another. Nor did it seek to wipe out its enemies, as was the case with previous imperial expansionism. Rather, Islam was offered as a liberating force and gave its subjects the choice to maintain their religions and cultures, thereby constructing and establishing a global civilisation and economy whose builders were from a diversity of ethnicities and religions.

The roots of this major global transition lay in a small settlement in the western Arabian Peninsula that is hardly noticeable on the maps of the ancient world. The remote hamlet of Makkah, whose inhabitants were regarded as inconsequential to geopolitical conflicts of the time, did not attract the attention of regional and international powers. It was no more than a crossing point for caravans traversing the desert, carrying Chinese and Indian merchandise from the ports of Yemen to the Levant and Iraq. However, from the early seventh century onwards, the intense struggle between the two global powers, the Persians and the Byzantines, *was* of concern to Makkah's inhabitants. Their attention was drawn particularly to the impact of this enduring war on the safety of their trade routes and caravans.

Within this frantic and dangerous global crucible, the message of Islam emerged from the shadow of the Ancient Sanctuary in Makkah, which was venerated by the Arabs. In 611, Muḥammad ibn ʻAbdallah proclaimed that he was Allah's Messenger and that he had been sent for the guidance of all humanity. He invited others to the belief in one God and a return to the principles of the religion propagated by the Prophet Ibrāhīm (Abraham). He proclaimed that all people were equal and that there were no differences between them except in piety and good deeds; neither race, ethnicity, language, social class nor gender was relevant to God. In

their arrogance, however, the majority of his people rejected this message and, after thirteen years of his inviting them to Islam, he was forced to migrate with a small number of his companions to another, even more remote settlement, Yathrib. There, he was able to spread his message with greater freedom and to establish a new strategic and political centre. From Yathrib—which was renamed Madinah after his arrival—he brought about a radical change in people, society, and the Arab and regional political reality. He also mentored a unique generation of his companions, who carried his message to the world after his death in 632.

This book examines the political and strategic trajectory pursued by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) during a mission that spanned twenty-three years, and it carefully considers the regional and international contexts within which the Prophet's (ﷺ) life played out. From an examination of his biography, it seeks out the fundamentals and principles of the new methodology that resulted in the greatest-ever strategic upset and historic transformation of the international system. The Prophet's (ﷺ) biography is replete with lessons for individuals, communities, and nations. I have, however, chosen to focus on an under-studied area of his life: its political and strategic dimensions.

This book, originally published in Arabic, owes a great debt to a great many people. For this English edition, I would like, in particular, to thank my friends Aslam Farouk-Alli, who undertook the translation from the original Arabic with much care, and Na'eem Jeenah, who edited the translated text. The immense effort expended by Aslam and Na'eem resulted in the work as it now appears in its final form. Translation, especially to English, is not an easy task because language—any language—is a civilisational repository and an embodiment of a culture, having its own unique spirit. The translation of the Arabic text into English thus required a great deal of effort, for which I am grateful.

I hope that this book is the first step in an enduring dialogue on our history and our future. All praise is due to Allah, Lord of the worlds.

20 April 2023 / 29 Ramaḍān 1444

Doha, Qatar

Translator's Preface

This book is a culmination of the author's lengthy and intense reflection on the Sīrah, the life-story of the Prophet of Islam, Muḥammad ibn ʻAbdallah (ﷺ). Sīrah Studies is an established discipline in the Islamic sciences and, like numerous other works in this field of inquiry, *The First Spring* engages the Prophet's biography as a normative framework that provides devout Muslims with a model for praxis. However, the unique approach adopted by the author marks a clear departure from earlier studies and represents an important methodological turn in the genre. By breaking new ground, the book makes an important contribution to Sīrah Studies and deserves a wide, diverse, and critical audience. It therefore gives me great pleasure to present this work to an English readership.

Most recent English works of Sīrah published by Muslim scholars have sought to provide a faithful portrait of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) as captured in the primary Arabic sources. The now-classic studies by Muhammad Husayn Haykal[2] and Martin Lings (Abū Bakr Sirāj ad-Dīn)[3] enjoy great popularity, as does the more recent biography by Adil Salahi.[4]

For contemporary Sīrah works in Arabic, the question of the authenticity of the primary source material has been an abiding concern; these studies have been more attentive to filtering out spurious narrations prevalent in many pre-modern biographies. The Sudanese historian Mahdī Rizqallah made an important contribution with his account of the Prophet's (ﷺ) life;[5] it draws exclusively on source material that meets the exacting standards of authenticity established by Islamic scholarship.

2. Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *The Life of Muhammad*, trans. Isma'il Ragi A. al Faruqi (Oak Brook, USA: American Trust Publications, 1976).
3. Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1983).
4. Adil Salahi, *Muhammad: Man and Prophet* (Leicestershire: The Islamic Foundation, 2002).
5. Mahdī Rizqallah Aḥmad, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah fī Daw al-Maṣādir al-Aslīyyah: Dirāsah Taḥlīlīyah* (Riyadh: Markaz Malik Fayṣal li al-Buḥūth wa al-Dirāsāt al-Islāmīyyah, 1992).

While these works strive to present an authentic biographical narrative and to affirm the normative framework of the Sīrah, they do not explicitly aim to extrapolate lessons from the Prophet's (ﷺ) biography. This has been the primary focus of contemporary Islamic reformist scholars, as seen in the works of Muṣṭafa al-Sibā'ī,[6] Muḥammad al-Ghazālī,[7] and Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būtī,[8] which have attracted a large readership. They examine and interrogate events in the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) while also deliberately drawing lessons and extracting principles from them. These reformist scholars attempt to demonstrate that the Sīrah is an important source from which to learn about Islam, its doctrines, legal precepts, and ethical principles, all of which contribute to the development of the character of a Muslim. These studies do not, however, venture far from the Islamic context and are more akin to a dialogue within the tradition itself.

By contrast, *The First Spring* focuses not only on the nascent Muslim community in the Arabian Peninsula, but also on that of the world of the great powers around it. In this way, it draws the Sīrah into a conversation with its own context and with interlocutors beyond it. In pursuing this dialogue, the author does not limit himself to invoking classical Islamic and western historical sources; his methodological toolbox draws liberally from the contemporary social sciences, and he invokes the academic disciplines of Political Studies, International Relations, Security Studies, and Strategic Studies, among others.

While the book is clearly directed at a Muslim audience, its broad methodological scope is sure to attract the interest of a western academic audience as well. Unfortunately, Orientalist Sīrah scholarship has generally not been able to traverse its self-imposed boundaries of religious polemic and scepticism.[9] While earlier Orientalist scholarship focused on the theme of Muḥammad (ﷺ) as a false prophet,[10] recent

6. Muṣṭafa al-Sibā'ī, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah: Durūs wa 'Ibar* (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islāmī, 1985).
7. Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, *Fiqh al-Sīrah* (Cairo: Dār al-Shurūq, 2000).
8. Muḥammad Sa'īd Ramaḍān al-Būṭī, *Fiqh al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah* (Damascus: Dār al-Fikr, 1991).
9. For an overview of the Orientalist literature on the Sīrah, see Andreas Görke, "Prospects and limits in the study of the historical Muḥammad", in Nicolet Boekhoff van der Voort, Kees Versteegh, and Joas Wagemakers (eds.), *The Transmission and Dynamics of the Textual Sources of Islam: Essays in Honour of Harald Motzki* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).
10. Norman Daniel's classic study on the formation and development of Western attitudes about Islam from medieval times to the present gives a detailed account of anti-Islamic polemics in

scholarship is dominated by the question of Islamic origins and the veracity of Islamic sources and methodology. This sceptical trend was given traction by Crone and Cook in their 1977 book, *Hagarism*, where they argue that Islam was actually a late version of apocalyptical Judaism in which the Arabs of the Hejaz had rediscovered their Abrahamic roots and sought to retake the Holy Land of Palestine.[11] More recently, Fred Donner pursued a line of thought on the nascent Muslim community in which he argues that it was only later transformed into Islam by historical processes.[12] Reviewing the literature on Islamic origins, Jonathan Brown has concluded that perhaps the only novel contribution by the Revisionist approach is the sheer scale of its scepticism.[13]

In its most extreme manifestation, Orientalist scholarship has impudently questioned the very existence of the historical Muḥammad (ﷺ).[14] Nonetheless, the positive contributions on source methodology made especially in German Orientalist scholarship must be acknowledged; the notable contributions of Harald Motzki,[15] Gregor Schoeler,[16] and Andreas Görke[17] deserve study and reflection. In addition to these studies, Sean Anthony's book on the Sīrah is also worthy of mention.[18] While Anthony pays tribute to the work of

the West and its portrayal of Muḥammad as a false prophet; see: Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Oxford: Oneworld, 1993). John Tolan's more recent study is a necessary compliment to Daniel's work. See John Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

11. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

12. Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010).

13. Jonathan A. C. Brown, *Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2009), pp. 220-224.

14. In this regard, see: Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003).

15. See, for example, his edited volume: Harald Motzki (ed.), *The Biography of Muḥammad: The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

16. See: Gregor Schoeler, *The Biography of Muḥammad: Nature and Authenticity*, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl, ed. James E. Montgomery (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

17. In addition to several published works on the primary sources, Görke has engaged in fruitful collaborations with Gregor Schoeler and Harald Motzki in re-examining the primary sources and prevalent Orientalist scholarship on the topic. See, for example: Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, "Reconstructing the earliest *sīra* texts: The Hiğra in the corpus of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr", *Der Islam* (vol. 82, no. 2, 2005), 209-220; Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, "First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate", *Der Islam* (vol. 89, no. 2, 2012) 2-59.

18. Sean William Anthony, *Muhammad and the Empires of Faith: The Making of the Prophet of Islam* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2020). Anthony's translation of one of

Patricia Crone, who was one of his teachers, he does not shy away from challenging many of the claims of the early sceptics. It is however Görke and Schoeler who sound the death knell for Crone's 'Hagarism' thesis, in the revised and expanded English translation of their German-language study that focuses on the 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr Corpus and the earliest non-Muslim sources on the life of the Prophet (ﷺ).[19] In spite of their tremendous erudition and painstaking research, all of these works are still limited by an extremely narrow focus and offer little in terms of engaging in the kind of reading attempted in *The First Spring*. Thus, this book may well provide the impetus for broadening the parameters of the debate on the Prophet's (ﷺ) life within western academia as well as in Muslim confessional thought.

It has been a daunting task to render into English this multifaceted and multidisciplinary work, which resonates in both classical and contemporary Arabic registers by drawing on a considerable number of primary sources. As such, a few words on the technical aspects of the translation are merited. I opted to use a standard transliteration convention for Arabic names and places, with a few exceptions for commonplace names that enjoy wide usage in English. In translating Qur'anic verses, I consulted and utilised several excellent English renditions of the Holy Book, including those of Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Taqi al-Din Hilali, Marmaduke Pickthall, Muhammad Abdel-Haleem, and the Saheeh International translation by Emily Assami, Mary Kennedy, and Amatullah Bantley. I have on rare occasions modified these translations in a manner that I deemed more reflective of the original meaning. Translations of all prophetic sayings are my own, as are the lengthy passages from the primary Sīrah sources utilised by the author, namely, the works of Ibn Isḥāq and al-Wāqidī, which are available in English translation.[20]

---

the earliest works of Sīrah is also an important contribution to the field; see: Ma'mar ibn Rāshid, *The Expeditions: An Early Biography of Muḥammad*, edited and translated by Sean W. Anthony (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014).

19. See: Andreas Görke and Gregor Schoeler, *The Earliest Writings on the Life of Muhammad: The 'Urwa Corpus and the Non-Muslim Sources* (Berlin: Gerlach Press, 2024).

20. See: Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Isḥāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955); Rizwi Faizer (ed.), *The Life of Muḥammad: Al-Wāqidī's Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, trans. Rizwi Faizer, Amal Ismail and AbdulKader Tayob (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

I would not have been able to complete this work without the support and assistance of a few outstanding individuals. The author, Wadah Khanfar, made time to revise the translation and offered valuable advice and suggestions. Ahmed Vall Ould Dine generously brought his Arabic expertise to bear in unraveling difficult passages and expressions in the primary sources. Osama El-Mourabit undertook the unenviable task of checking and correcting all the references and did so with consummate professionalism. My biggest debt is, nevertheless, owed to Na'eem Jeenah, the editor of the English translation. Na'eem not only revised the text, but also subjected it to a rigorous fact-check. He also compared my translation of passages from the classical sources with extant translations published elsewhere, undertaking all of this with great industry and humour. I am grateful to him for all that I have learnt in the process. While I have no doubt that this collaborative effort has made the English rendition of *The First Spring* much better, I alone assume responsibility for whatever infelicities remain.

Aslam Farouk-Alli

Ankara, Türkiye

07 April 2023 / 16 Ramaḍān 1444

Introduction

Message and methodology

The divine mandate entrusted to Muḥammad ibn ʻAbdallah (ﷺ) was unique. It was the last and final mandate in which there was a direct relationship between God's revelation and humankind. Muḥammad (ﷺ) was the final prophet sent to all creation; there is no prophet after him. Importantly, he was a prophet sent not only to his people, but to all of humanity.

This mandate has several implications. Most importantly, it was a divine affirmation that human beings had reached a moment of distinguished maturity that enabled them to bear the message in its fully articulated and final manifestation, and for their future to unfold without the need for further revelation from the heavens. It also affirmed that humanity had begun moving toward a universalism that transcended nation, tribe, gender, or colour, and therefore needed a universal discourse that was not limited to one group over another.

In essence, Muḥammad's (ﷺ) message bears glad tidings for all humanity. It announced the beginning of the phase of human maturity and universalism. The ascension of humanity to a level of collective consciousness and universal understanding made it possible for human beings to be addressed by a universal message that transcends the limitations of place and time. Place is transcended by going beyond linguistic, ethnic, and national categories, while time is transcended because the message is not constrained by the necessities of a specific era.

Say: "O People, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but Him; He gives life and death, so believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided. (Qur'ān 7:158).

This divine address, directed to all people, did not simply announce the sending of a prophet like the prophets sent before him. The prophets before Muḥammad (ﷺ) had been sent specifically to their communities, and their messages addressed the circumstances of the people in those eras. Allah, the Sublime, would send a prophet and, after a period, would send another to renew the covenant and to correct any deviations and shortcomings. History proceeded in this manner until humanity reached a level of interaction and integration, having developed mutual dependence in terms of thinking, modes of living, and well-being. It had thus become difficult for them to be divided into opposing and closed civilisational centres, with each claiming to possess absolute truth and dismissing those outside their circle as barbarians and savages. There arose a need for a new universal discourse that would enable humanity to move into the future in peace and security, safeguarded by the perfect religion, interacting with it, and guided along the path it mapped out without the need for further divine intervention through the deployment of more prophets.

At the beginning of the seventh century, humanity was heavily burdened by conflict that caused destruction, terror, and subjugation. It was clear that, "Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of humankind have earned." (Qur'ān 30:41). For humanity to find a balance and again grow and develop, there was a need for a new philosophy of being and a methodology capable of sparking a global transformation in thinking and conduct, while maintaining relevance for humanity across time. It therefore became necessary to change the thinking, methodology, and spirit of the world, and for humanity to be liberated from its chains and limitations, to enable the initiation and spread of a new global revolution. This spirit was illustrated in the response by one of the Prophet's companions, Rabi' ibn 'Amr, when the Persian general, Rustum, asked him: "Why did you come to our land?"

Rabi' ibn 'Amr responded: "Allah has sent us to deliver whichever of his servants desire [such deliverance] from the narrowness of this world to its wide expanse, and from the oppression of religions to the justice of Islam. Allah has sent us with His religion to His creation and whoever accepts it will be accepted by us."[21]

21. 'Alī 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1997), vol. 2, 298.

This was the conjuncture for the final divine message to be delivered, as a natural and organic evolution that was neither strange nor unforeseen. This message was not an unprecedented innovation, but one whose essence was known to humankind, a message from which people had strayed with the passage of time. It was part of the psyche and collective memory of human beings, a memory that had been suppressed by time, self-interest, and vain desire.

The message of Islam is not a deviation from humanity's religious heritage; it is, rather, the legitimate heir of previous divine messages, which had all been Islamic messages, but had been confined to particular times and places. The message of Muḥammad ibn ʻAbdallah (ﷺ) thus came as the final instalment that completed the earlier messages. It consolidated the teachings and legislation that had come before it, since they had been only partial manifestations suited to particular phases of human development. Islam, in the form conveyed by Muḥammad (ﷺ), is the perfect religion delivered after human consciousness had developed fully and was suited and ready to bear the complete message. "This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (Qur'ān 5:3).

Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, assured us that the prophets before Muḥammad (ﷺ) had taught their people the major principles of Islam, from belief in Allah to belief in the day of reckoning, and that they had been given laws that suited their needs and level of maturity. Muḥammad (ﷺ), however, conveyed the complete Islam, in terms of principles, values, and legislation, an Islam that coalesced with human consciousness, beginning from a fixed moment in a specific place, and progressing toward a universalism that transcends borders and is open to the future. Its principles did not need any amendment, correction, or supplementation.

The novel aspect of this message is that it takes people back to their origin, to their affiliation to Adam, which encompasses all of humanity and affirms that Adam originated from clay. This concept of humanity goes beyond narrow affiliations and rises above the bigoted prejudices that have led to conflict and destruction on earth. This message elevates

Islam's Core messages

religious, political, and cultural frameworks above the notion of inevitable conflict that controls the evolution of empires, nations, and groups, replacing it with a universal system, the essence of which is the belief in one God, and the foundations of which are ethical.

Another new characteristic of this message is that it extends to the end of time. Allah informed His Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) that he was the final prophet and messenger, that there would be no prophet after him, and that his message would be the final revelation from Allah to His creation. This message will not deteriorate with the passing of time and will remain vital and relevant for all future generations. From this perspective, Islam inhabits the future and has, therefore, to be in continuous development, constantly in touch with current realities and oriented toward tomorrow. Islam is equipped with a unique trait that gives it internal momentum, steering it through time along the path of human destiny. This trait is the continuous interaction between the fixed foundation of revelation and the evolving human intellect, between the fixed text and evolving interpretation, which generates the vital thinking that is in harmony with the movement through time. Islam is, therefore, a constantly developing, living entity that never fails to provide solutions to the problems that humanity may face at any future conjuncture. Therefore, if we ever feel that Islam is in crisis, this would be an indication that the ongoing and necessary interaction between the foundation and the intellect had been disrupted. Since the foundation is pristine and perfect, the intellect that is responsible for interpreting and conveying the message must therefore be in crisis.

all-time religion

Model for emulation

A reader of the sīrah will find a clear consistency and symmetry between the Prophet's (ﷺ) actions and his leadership. This is obvious in his grasp of priorities, his constant consideration of the balance of forces, his deep comprehension of the details of political thinking and activity, and his knowledge of the historical background and ancestral memory of tribes and societies. He also possessed piercing insight, was able to see the strategic gaps within various groups, and exhibited a highly developed capacity to use these abilities to forge alliances and

form coalitions.

In addition to being fully cognisant of the political and strategic realities of the Quraysh and other Arabs across the peninsula, the Prophet (ﷺ) was also familiar with the balance of forces in the region surrounding him, whether between regional powers—like the kingdoms on the periphery of the Arabian Peninsula that included the Ghassanids, the Manādhirah, the Yemenites and the Abyssinians—or international powers like the Persians and Byzantine Romans.

It is therefore unsurprising that the prophetic strategy resulted in stunningly profound changes in the Arabian Peninsula and transmitted global shockwaves that destabilised the international centres of power that had remained unshakeable for eight centuries. The Islamic strategic coup played out over the very short period of two decades, making it the swiftest and most important transformation in the history of international strategy.

Books on the Prophet's (ﷺ) life offer richly textured narratives on his battles, alliances, and pronouncements, but this is only raw material that requires examination and verification, and it needs to be assessed within the framework of a general methodology that ties together various incidents so that they can be read within their specific contexts. Only then can we have a comprehensive and coherent narrative that stands on a firm foundation. Only after such an exercise would we be able to extract a deeper understanding of the fundamentals of the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategic praxis.

Four authoritative reference points

Adopting this approach, I decided to engage particularly with those sīrah texts that have a strategic dimension, and to interrogate them within the framework of four authoritative points of reference.

The first of these points of reference is the Noble Qur'ān, a text whose authenticity has been validated with absolute certainty. The Qur'ān addresses numerous events that occurred during the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission. These are of the highest value in the study of the Prophet's (ﷺ)

life and are clearly articulated in the Qur'ān. It is therefore necessary to link narrations of specific events in the sīrah to the verses revealed to him at that time and place. Since the divine message coincides with the stages and unfolding events of the prophetic mission, evoking the verses of the Qur'ān based on the order and occasion of their revelation provides us with a rich base of knowledge for understanding the sīrah and for grasping the contexts within which it played out. Furthermore, the divine message was also a discourse that addressed popular opinion, with elements directed at the Prophet (ﷺ) and the Muslim public, and with messages to others as well. Thus, if we evoke the specific message revealed at a particular time and consider the political and strategic responses provoked by that Qur'ānic address, we are able to grasp the general context within which the Qur'ān was revealed, and are able to see the strategic horizons that directed the Prophet's (ﷺ) actions at that particular moment. In our present context, this is similar to interrogating and analysing official statements and national security discourse emanating from the highest authorities of states and governments, to understand the priorities, strategic security vision, and political postures of those countries, and to grasp their international relations' positioning. On this basis, we may determine the future balance of international relations.

The second point of reference is arrived at by counterposing the sīrah presented in Islamic reference works against the history of other nations in the same period, such as that of the Persians, Romans, Abyssinians (the Aksum kingdom), Himyarites, and others. Many events with a strategic dimension that have been dealt with in the sīrah are also mentioned in the historical writings of these nations, especially in Roman history. The Byzantines were meticulous about recording the history of their emperors, especially their wars, many of which occurred in regions under Byzantine control. These histories also recorded relations with other empires, and they assist in giving us an understanding of the regional and international environment in the period coinciding with specific events in the Prophet's (ﷺ) lifetime. There are also several Himyarite histories recorded in the ancient South Arabian Musnad script that were produced in Yemen in the southern Arabian Peninsula between the tenth and ninth centuries BCE. They include four records of the battles and wars of Dhū Nuwās al-Ḥimyarī

against the Christians, two of which bear his signature. There are also Byzantine narratives and records of delegations and envoys from this period.

The third point of reference is derived from reading isolated events within a broader context, drawing on the notion in politics that dependence exclusively on information—even if it is accurate—may not lead to an understanding of an event or its implications, since information without context is not necessarily enlightening. I agree with the adage that information is often no more than accurate lies, because information that is bereft of its motives, foundations, and sources is not helpful for understanding events, and could, in fact, be confusing and misleading, especially if deliberately manipulated. Historians and chroniclers are, after all, human beings with their own inclinations, interests, political and religious affiliations, and biases. A source or a historian may transmit an event accurately, and yet may relate it in a manner that suggests a meaning that he favors, allowing that narration to then be utilised in a manner that is far removed from what the event really suggested.

Therefore, to understand a historical experience and to extract lessons from it, we need to read whatever information and accounts we have at our disposal within the framework of a complex methodology. Such a methodology should allow us to glean the overall objectives of the actors, and to make an accurate evaluation of the balance of forces and alliances, as well as an assessment of the event that considers the vested interests of the various parties involved at the time it occurred, while also taking into account the weaknesses, strengths, opportunities, and risks relating to the actors at the time.

The methodology that we have adopted is one where a single event is considered as part of a greater whole, giving the event a life and meaning while protecting it from isolation and exploitation. In this way, we can transform information into knowledge, and historical narratives are thereby liberated from their literal prisons and descriptive import, as well as from their political projections. They then become comprehensive accounts consistent with an inclusive understanding of the spirit of the sīrah and its higher objectives, and in harmony with the

norms of life and its challenges.

The fourth point of reference is the adoption of a comprehensive view of the strategic context. A strategic balance of forces is not created solely by armies and alliances; it is the result of a complex process comprising of several elements in which the political integrates with the economic, the social with the religious, and the regional with the international. Therefore, in our attempt to map out the context in which the prophetic strategy was born and took shape, we will broaden our field of vision and examine the situation in all its complexity. Our reading of the sīrah is a comprehensive interrogation of many of these elements. It is, therefore, a reading that encompasses the events in the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) as historians have narrated them, but one that also transcends these accounts in search of the strategic, economic, and religious contexts that defined this region and the world over three centuries.

Principles of the Prophetic strategic methodology

The divine mandate descended on the Noble Prophet (ﷺ) from the heavens in a fixed time and place: in the year 610, in Makkah. From the very first revelation, the Qur'ānic directives mapped out the terms of his mandate, explaining that he was sent as a messenger to all humankind until the final hour, and that his message was intended to be a mercy for all creation. Since these two dimensions were deeply entrenched in the very nature of the divine mandate, the Prophet (ﷺ) would remain firmly committed to them, granting them due consideration in all his pronouncements and actions; his failing to do so would have meant that he was not fully compliant with his mandate.

The greatest challenge posed by this mandate was the need to reconcile everyday actions arising out of engagements and events—which are dictated by the demands of time and place—with a horizon that stretches out into the boundless future. As he engaged his reality, the Prophet (ﷺ) was aware that he was setting precedents for the future, since his primary task was messenger of the Lord of all creation. This was his objective and his duty, and every action that he undertook

emanated from this mandate. Thus, that which would become the law and that which would be regarded as his normative practice (sunnah) arose out of reconciliation between the Prophet's (ﷺ) actions and their future implications. This is indeed a great burden that could be carried only by someone of great wisdom, who had insight into the far-reaching implications of his actions.

When we attempt to extract the principles of strategic praxis from the sīrah, we must remain conscious of the sphere of the divine mandate and its objectives, because of the continuous influence it exercises over the Prophet's (ﷺ) mind and spirit, and, consequently, on his actions and behaviour.

The first principle is a strong thread that runs through the story of Muḥammad's (ﷺ) life. It is the ethical-reformist nature of the prophetic strategic methodology, which strove to ensure the establishment of good character and the enjoining of all that was virtuous, and was developed through an interaction with inherited goodness, and an exposure of all contrived falsehoods. It was therefore a methodology that did not depart from the established moral legacy, but was instead its heir and was steadfastly consistent with it. This relates to the good that was brought by the prophets and messengers who preceded Muḥammad (ﷺ), and to what was brought by people of different religious affiliations at any other time. The sīrah attests to this in rich detail, and we will provide some examples of that detail in this book. The positive pronouncements made by the Prophet (ﷺ) about the Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl (Alliance of Virtue), which was consecrated in the home of ʻAbdallah ibn Jadʻān before the beginning of Islam, bears witness to this. The alliance was entered by idolaters, but it had a noble objective. The Prophet (ﷺ) regarded it as a virtuous initiative, and he later said that if he had been invited to endorse it after the beginning of Islam, he would have done so.

The second principle is that the prophetic methodology of strategic praxis was not exterminatory. It does not contain a thirst for victory-at-any-cost that can be observed in the biographies of numerous leaders who have been immortalised by history and who have redrawn the maps of the world.

The Prophet (ﷺ) did indeed change the world, but with an essential difference: he changed it in the pursuit of a divine mission and a higher calling, not in the pursuit of dominance and power. He was able to pursue transformation as part of a divine mission without being driven by vengeance, a desire for authority, or to gain monopoly over wealth. During his engagements with the Quraysh and other Arab tribes, he sought to make them partners in the divine mission, without conquering or subjugating them. His strategy was to elevate their status, protect their honour, and liberate them from the shackles of their misguided thoughts and beliefs. He did not desire their destruction or their extermination, as is confirmed by his recurrent supplication: "O Allah, guide my people, for they do not know." This principle of tolerance and patience is present in all Muḥammad's (ﷺ) strategies and plans, and it is illustrated in the following authentic ḥadīth.

> It has been narrated on the authority of ʻĀ'ishah (May Allah be pleased with her), the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ), who asked the Prophet (ﷺ): "Messenger of Allah, have you experienced a day that was more terrible than the day of Uḥud?"
>
> He replied: "The harshest treatment that I received from your people was what I experienced on the day of al-ʻAqabah. I had presented myself to Ibn ʻAbd Yālayl ibn ʻAbd Kulāl with the purpose of inviting him to Islam, but he did not respond to me in the way that I had expected. I therefore departed, with my distress visible on my face, and I did not recover until I reached Qarn al-Thaʻālib. There, I lifted my head and saw that I was covered by a cloud that cast its shade on me. I stared at it and saw the angel Jibrīl in it. He called out to me: 'Verily Allah, the Sublime and Honoured, has heard what your people have said to you, and how they responded to your call, and He has sent the angel in charge of the mountains to you to command him to do with them as you wish.' The angel in charge of the mountains called out to me, bid me peace, and said: 'O Muḥammad, verily Allah has heard what your people have said to you. I am the angel in charge of the mountains, and your Lord has sent me to you so that you may command me as you desire. If you desire that I should bring together the two mountains that stand opposite each other at the

two ends of Makkah to crush them in between, I will topple these two mountains on them.'"

But the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) replied: "All I desire is that Allah produces among their descendants those who will worship only Allah, and will not associate partners to Him."[22]

In that very difficult moment, when the Prophet (ﷺ) tilted toward hope that the coming generation would be Muslims who believed in Allah alone, he also tilted toward the third important principle**.**

The third principle is the preference for long-term positive consequences and incremental progress over immediate and short-term solutions. Despite the bitter reality and the narrow horizons for success in Makkah, the Prophet (ﷺ) chose to continue along the longer, more treacherous path, and to reject the option of quick solutions. The Prophet (ﷺ) favoured a drawn-out engagement that required a long-term and intelligent strategy of transformation that would, ultimately, guarantee that Allah would produce from the children of idolaters a new generation that would worship Allah alone, and not associate any other with Him.

The fourth principle of the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategic vision, which guided his 23-year journey, was a deep-seated optimism and perpetual orientation toward a welcoming future, instead of drowning in the depths of the present moment and its complications. This fortified the Prophet (ﷺ) with perseverance and the endurance and long-term vision that such perseverance demands.

When the Prophet (ﷺ) prayed to Allah to provide the idolaters with progeny who would worship Allah alone, he was looking to the next generation, the generation of youth, the children of the arrogant Qurayshi leaders. Targeting the youth requires a perpetual orientation

22. This ḥadīth is muttafaq 'alayhi (agreed upon by the two eminent authorities of ḥadīth scholarship – al-Bukhārī and Muslim). See Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (Damascus and Beirut: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 2002), "The Book on the Beginning of Creation, Chapter: If any one of you says *Āmīn*", vol. 1, Ḥadīth no. 3231, 797; and Muslim, "The Book on Jihād and Campaigns, Chapter: The harm that the Prophet (PBUH) encountered from the idolaters and hypocrites", vol. 3, 1420, Ḥadīth no. 1795. The wording of the ḥadīth as narrated here is that of Muslim.

toward the future, a focus on planning for its needs and challenges, constantly reflecting on it, and striving continuously to escape the psychological confines of the present moment. Islam, in the Prophet's (ﷺ) discourse, occupies the future, and it will be embraced by the coming generations. It has, therefore, to respond to the desire of the future generation to gain familiarity with everything that is novel and to break away from blindly following their elders. It is a methodology that addresses generations that have become fatigued by boredom and stagnation and are in search of an opportunity that will open new horizons, a generation characterised by a high degree of flexibility and one that embraces learning and adventure.

We will see how the Prophet (ﷺ) favoured this methodology at every strategic turn, in letter and spirit and without hesitation, even when it cost him dearly. He privileged the opinions of the youth during the battle of Uḥud, even though he personally preferred to remain in Madinah, and even though his senior companions agreed with him. This decision had direct security consequences when the leader of the hypocrites, ʻAbdallah ibn Ubay, used it as an excuse to withdraw with a third of the army just before the battle began, saying that the Prophet (ﷺ) had "disobeyed me and followed boys and those who are inconsequential."

The fifth principle of the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategy was based on audaciously seizing the initiative. He refused to be restricted to the corner into which his opponents had attempted to push him, but would surprise everyone by moving forward, creating confusion, and forcing his enemies to react. There are many examples to illustrate this point. When the Prophet (ﷺ) became convinced that the Qurayshi leadership would stand arrogantly firm and was unrelentingly inclined to reject the call to Islam, he began thinking out of the Qurayshi box and set his sights on the second most prominent city in the Hijāz after Makkah. His visit to Ṭā'if was, thus, an exploration of new horizons. However, when the negotiation track with the leaders of the Banī Thaqīf tribe in Ṭā'if reached a dead end, he neither gave up nor was deterred. He again took the initiative and made an honourable return to Makkah under the protection of al-Maṭʻam ibn ʻAdī, resumed his search for new allies, and reached out to tribal leaders during the ḥajj until the first and second ʻAqabah pledges were secured, and the Hijrāh (the migration to Madinah) had taken place.

As soon as he arrived in Madinah, he immediately took the initiative to integrate the Islamic ranks by forging fraternal links between the Makkan émigrés (al-Muhājirūn) and their Madinan allies (al-Anṣār). Thereafter, he integrated the Madinan ranks with the Charter of Madinah (Ṣaḥīfat al-Madinah). Settled in his new capital, he took the initiative to block Qurayshi caravans and created fear in the hearts of the idolaters at the possible collapse of the trade routes that linked them to the outside world. When the need arose to deal with problems on the Madinan front, he did not hesitate to expel the Banī al-Naḍīr and Banī Qaynuqā‘ tribes. When his army faced a setback during the Battle of Uḥud, he took the initiative to pursue the idolaters even before the blood of his wounds had dried. When the Quraysh attempted to wipe out the Muslims during the Battle of the Trench, by gathering the largest army as yet ever assembled, the Prophet (ﷺ) surprised them with the trench, upsetting their military plans. As for the Bedouin Arab tribes in the desert, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to keep them destabilised with surprise attacks, not allowing them the opportunity to attack the Muslims. When the Quraysh exhausted all military options after their rapid collapse at the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet (ﷺ) undertook his greatest initiative at al-Ḥudaybīyyah; he changed the rules of the political game, surprising the Quraysh with what they least expected and forcing them into a truce that served as a foundation for the full recognition of the Muslim state. He then took the initiative to open channels of communication with foreign powers by sending his ambassadors to the kings of the ancient world and entering into military correspondence when required, as in the case of the Mu’tah campaign.

Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) sixth principle was that he did not allow his internal front to divide; he was committed to maintaining the ranks, strengthening alliances, and building coalitions, not only among his Muslim companions but in Madinan society more generally, and with non-Muslim state partners as well. This principle can be captured in a single expression, which he pronounced when ‘Umar suggested killing the leader of the hypocrites. It was related in the story of Banī al-Muṣṭaliq by Ibn Isḥāq, who said that Muḥammad bin Yaḥyā ibn Ḥibbān, ‘Abdullah bin Abi Bakr and ‘Asim bin ‘Umar bin Qatadā narrated it to him.

While the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was in that area, Jahjāh bin Sa'īd al-Ghifārī, a hired hand for 'Umar, and Sinān bin Wabr fought over the water source. Sinān called out, "O Anṣār," while Al- Jahjāh called, "O Muhājirūn!" Zayd bin Arqam and several Anṣār men were sitting with 'Abdallah bin Ubay bin Sallūl at that time. When 'Abdullah heard what had happened, he said, "They are bothering us in our land. By Allah, the parable of us and these foolish Quraysh men is the parable: 'Feed your dog until it becomes strong, and it will eat you.' By Allah, when we go back to Al-Madinah, the Most Mighty will expel the weak from it." He then addressed his people who were sitting with him: "What have you done to yourselves? You let them settle in your land and shared your wealth with them. By Allah, if you abandon them, they will have to move to an area other than yours." Zayd bin Arqam, who was a young boy, heard these words and conveyed them to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ). 'Umar bin Al-Khattab was with the Messenger (ﷺ), and he said, "O Allah's Messenger! Order 'Abbād ibn Bishr to cut off his head at his neck." The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "What if people started saying that Muḥammad kills his companions, 'Umar? No. Rather, order the people to start the journey [back to Al-Madinah]."[23]

Jābir ibn 'Abdallah reported another incident:

When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was dividing the spoils of Hawāzin among the people at al-Ji'rānah, a man from Banī Tamīm said: "Be just O Muḥammad!" The Prophet (ﷺ) responded: "Woe unto you! Who will be just if I am not just? I will perpetrate a miscarriage and fail if I am not just." 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb then said: "O Messenger of Allah, should I not rise and kill this hypocrite?" The Prophet (ﷺ) responded: "I seek Allah's refuge should people come to hear that Muḥammad kills his companions."[24]

23. Abū Bakr al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubūwwah* (Beirut and Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmīyyah & Dār al-Rayyān li al-Turāth, 1998), vol. 4, 52.
24. Narrated by Aḥmad ibn Hanbal, "Narrations on the ten people promised Paradise," Ḥadīth no. 14526. The original also appears in al-Bukhārī and Muslim.

The seventh principle was that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) was careful not to confront all his enemies at the same time. He worked actively to dismantle their alliances and to disunite them, even if this required making deals with some of them for a short period. This is what he did, for example, during the Battle of the Trench, when he negotiated with ʻUyanah ibn Ḥuṣn and al-Ḥārith ibn ʻAwf, the leaders of the Ghaṭafān tribe. He offered them a third of Madinah's date harvest if they and their companions would withdraw from the battle. He justified this to Saʻd ibn ʻUbādah and Saʻd ibn Muʻadh, the leaders of al-Aws and al-Khazraj tribes in Madinah, by saying: "I see that the Arabs are shooting at you with one bow [in that they have developed a common front against you] and have you surrounded from all sides, so I wanted to break their unity for you."[25]

The Prophet (ﷺ) was careful not to fight two enemies in a single battle; only when he was done with one would he confront another. He confronted the Quraysh's caravans in the first year after the Hijrāh, but only after concluding an alliance with the Jews and ratifying it in the Charter of Madinah. He fought the Quraysh at Badr after reconciling with the coastal tribes such as Ḍimrah, Juhaynah, and Ghaffār. Furthermore, he did not deal with the Banī Qurayẓah until after the Battle of the Confederates and the consequent tempering of the Qurayshi threat. He also dispatched war parties against the Najd tribes to steer them away from Madinah and to ensure its safety while he travelled to al-Hudaybīyyah, and he conquered Khaybar only after he had neutralised the Quraysh with the al-Hudaybīyyah Peace Treaty. There are many other such examples.

The eighth principle is that Muḥammad's (ﷺ) strategy was flexible and multi-faceted. He utilised both soft and hard power in the appropriate context and at the appropriate time. It was in the interests of the Muslims to announce their security dominance in Madinah immediately after the migration. It was therefore a priority for them to demonstrate their hard power using raiding parties and military expeditions, thus allowing the Prophet (ﷺ) to keep the forces of the Quraysh unsettled by blocking their caravans, yet without any military confrontation, for a full year. Thereafter, alliances were concluded with the coastal tribes to increase

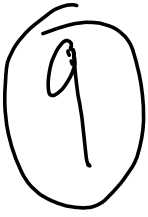
25. al-Bayhaqī, *Dalā'il al-Nubūwwah*, vol. 3, 430.

the economic burden on the Quraysh and to disrupt its trade, which passed through the desert. When the situation demanded direct military confrontation, the Prophet (ﷺ) led the Muslims at Badr and, thereafter, defended Madinah at Uḥud. When the Quraysh's options had run out after the Battle of the Trench, the Prophet's (ﷺ) strategy changed from defence to offence, combined with a good dose of soft power. The Treaty of al-Hudaybīyyah, then, was very different from what the Quraysh had been accustomed to, and it was different from the ideas around which they had built their strategy. It was an important transition that the Prophet (ﷺ) had crafted, and it bound the Quraysh in ways they were unable to escape without officially recognising the Islamic polity.

All this transpired over a six-year period, with Muḥammad's (ﷺ) diplomatic and military efforts accompanied by soft power. The Prophet's (ﷺ) poets, such as Hassān ibn Thābit and 'Abdallah ibn Rawāḥah, operated like official spokespersons of Madinah, reacting to events and transmitting ideas, positions, and directives to influence public opinion across the Arabian Peninsula. The Prophet (ﷺ), for his part, confronted the Qurayshi leadership and other influential parties in the tribe, while simultaneously addressing the downtrodden classes of Makkah. One example of this was when he lifted the embargo on the sale of wheat by Yamāmah to Makkah after being implored to do so by the Quraysh. The sanction had been imposed by the Yamāmah chief, Thumāmah ibn Athāl, after the Quraysh had treated him harshly for having embraced Islam. Also illustrative was the high moral standard displayed by the Muslims in their treatment of the captives from the Battle of Badr, and their forbidding the mutilation of the idolaters who had been killed, thus rejecting the principle of reciprocity.

We will see how the Prophet's (ﷺ) upstanding morals and wise actions became important factors in garnering the support of a marginalised community in Makkah, the Aḥābīsh, when the Muslims requested entrance to Makkah to perform the 'umrāh (lesser pilgrimage) in the same year as the signing of the Hudaybīyyah Treaty. We will also see how the masses of people in Makkah became increasingly impressed by the Prophet's (ﷺ) fairness and respect for the principle of equality in a tribal context where the status of the elite was elevated and the weak were forever challenged.

Makkah was conquered morally before it was conquered militarily, which is why its inhabitants did not put up a fight in the year of the conquest. In fact, they flung open the city doors for the Prophet (ﷺ) without fear, trepidation, or any expectation of retaliation.



The ninth principle was the Prophet's (ﷺ) methodical, objective, and strategic reading of events, which was fully concordant with prioritisation, and provided a careful assessment of the balance of forces while remaining ever-conscious of outcomes and consequences. He measured the extent of every action, placing each in the correct order of priority without agitation or haste. He showed leniency to the extent that one might think that he was not strict; but he was also decisive when that was required, to the extent that one might think that he knew no leniency. His actions arose out of a careful understanding of the context, taking into consideration its circumstances and strategic gravitas.

After he established that the Banī Qaynuqā' had acted treacherously, he decisively expelled them from Madinah; he did the same with the Banī al-Ṇaḍīr. When he saw that the Banī Qurayẓah had indeed participated in the conspiracy to uproot Islam in Madinah, he decided to exterminate them. On the other hand, he was not decisive regarding the matter of 'Abdallah ibn Ubay ibn Sallūl and did not order his killing, incarceration, or expulsion. He dealt with ibn Sallūl with kindness and indulgence. All this was done with a deep awareness of the extent and nature of the harm that each of these parties was capable of inflicting upon the Muslims. The three Jewish tribes represented an existential threat and were planning to harm the Muslims militarily. Decisive action against them was therefore necessary. Ibn Sallūl, however, agitated people, spread rumours, and incited against the Muslims. He had allies and followers and an elevated status among the Khazraj, but his threat was not an existential one because he spoke much and acted little. He promised to assist the Banī Qaynuqā' and Banī al-Ṇaḍīr, but then abandoned them and did nothing to help. He also had the opportunity to take control of Madinah during the Battle of Uḥud when the Muslim army was divided, but he did not do so. He was thus more of a noisemaker than a real threat, and the Prophet (ﷺ) decided to control the threat that he posed by winning over his followers rather

than provoking them by targeting him.

The Prophet (ﷺ) engaged the tribes in a similar manner. The Khuzā'ah were the Prophet's (ﷺ) old allies. He reconciled with them and maintained contact, but when a clan of the tribe, the Banī al-Muṣṭaliq, tried to abandon the alliance, the Prophet (ﷺ) fought and subdued them. He later married a woman from the tribe and reconciled with them. On the other hand, the Prophet's (ﷺ) first military expedition was against the Ḍamrah tribe, which resided on the route followed by the Quraysh's caravans. They submitted without a fight, and he then reconciled with them. He did the same with the Juhaynah tribe: he won over their leaders and drew them into the security orbit of Madinah, which encouraged them to become helpful allies of the Muslims against the Quraysh and its caravans. In this way, the Prophet (ﷺ) was able to achieve a central strategic goal: to impede the Qurayshi caravans and place them under economic strain.

There was, however, a different calculation with regards to the Ghaṭafān tribe, since they were a conglomeration of Bedouin tribes located deep in the desert and extremely skilled in military raids and campaigns. The Prophet (ﷺ) therefore dealt with them with a combination of leniency and decisiveness, drawing them closer with promises of booty and dismissing them with the threat of the sword, each at the appropriate time and in accordance with a careful strategic assessment.

The Quraysh, who were the main opponents of the Muslims, were dealt with incrementally, beginning with a targeting of their economy, followed by military confrontation, and, finally, a ceasefire, each at the appropriate time and place.

CHAPTER ONE

Makkah's location and status

"Allah knows best where to place His Message" (Qur'ān 6:124).

Geography is the handiwork of Allah on earth, but history is the making of human beings in time and space.

Geographically, Makkah is of divine construction, since Allah chose that specific valley to be the cradle of the Ancient House, and guided Ibrāhīm (Abraham) to it so that he might establish a human presence and the first social formation around the House. Allah, the Glorious and Sublime, chose the location and afforded it its status. If it were not for this divine choice, human beings would not have settled, nor would life have flourished, in that valley. Even Ibrāhīm described the place as an "uncultivated valley" (Qur'ān 14:37), a barren valley deep in the heart of the desert, concealed among desolate mountains.

Today, when we study this choice from a strategic and historical perspective, we realise that it was truly the choice of the Most Honourable and Wise, as the final message could not have been born anywhere else except in Makkah, at that time and at that place, and "Allah knows best where to place His Message".

We begin our discussion on Makkah at the beginning of the fifth century, when it witnessed the birth of the political and social entity known to us as the Quraysh. Most historical accounts about Makkah before this period contain fanciful ideas, mythic tales and emotional ramblings that cannot be construed as reliable. However, even though historical sources differ in the way that they narrate the specific events of fifth-century Makkah, we are nonetheless able to grasp the most important and relevant events that led to the birth of the Quraysh as a socio-political entity shaped by the hands of the most prominent personality in its history, Quṣay ibn Kilāb.

Quṣay ibn Kilāb and Qurayshi exceptionalism

There is no significant disagreement between historians that the Makkah to which the Prophet (ﷺ) was sent was the political and social entity that had been built by his fourth-generation grandfather, Quṣay ibn Kilāb ibn Murrah ibn Fahar. While it is difficult to establish his birth and death dates with absolute certainty, it can confidently be asserted that he was born sometime around the beginning of the fifth century, and that he lived for about eighty years.

Ibn ʻAbbās described him as "the nobleman of the people of Makkah, with no challenger in this regard".[26] Quṣay's elevated status was a result of his many achievements, without which the Quraysh would not have had the reputation we associate with them.

It is indisputable that Quṣay was responsible for the Quraysh's ascendancy in Makkah, having wrested control of it from the Khuzāʻah tribe. While his father was Qurayshi, Quṣay's wife was the daughter of the Khuzāʻah chief, Ḥulayl al-Khuzāʻī. When Ḥulayl died, Quṣay felt that he and his people were more entitled to administer the Holy Sanctuary. He mobilised the tribal groups affiliated to Fahar ibn Mālik ibn al-Naḍr ibn Kinānah, which were collectively known as the Quraysh, and led them in an armed confrontation with the Khuzāʻah, leading to arbitration, in accordance with the prevailing Arab custom. The arbitration ruled in favour of the Quraysh being granted control over the Sanctuary and ordered the Khuzāʻah to pay blood money for the victims who had fallen during the clash.

This was the moment when the Qurayshis burst onto the stage of Arab history as the custodians of the Kaʻbah and the neighbours of the Holy Sanctuary. Thenceforth, the Quraysh occupied a high status among the Arabs, a position that may be attributed to the wisdom and cunning of Quṣay. By examining his actions after he took control of Makkah, we can see that he was a man with a vision. He understood that the Holy Sanctuary was at the very heart of Arab existence on the Peninsula, not only as the point of religious convergence, but also as a

26. Abū ʻAbdallah Muḥammad Ibn Saʻd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubra* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-ʻIlmīyyah, 1990), vol. 1, 85.

centre of economic activity and political influence. Whoever managed to take control of the Sanctuary would reach a position and status that no one else could.

Historical records suggest that Quṣay was acutely aware of the distinguished and unique status of the Kaʿbah, and that he wanted to project that same status onto the Quraysh; his ambition was to make them unique among the Arab tribes. Immediately after the arbitration between the Quraysh and Khuzāʿah, he took the first step in this effort by granting the Quraysh a standing that had not been attained by any tribe before it, including the Khuzāʿah, which had ruled Makkah for a period that was between two and three centuries. He gathered the Quraysh from the far ends of Makkah and from the neighbouring hinterland and surroundings and settled them on the Makkan plain, adjacent to the Sanctuary, thus making them neighbours of the Kaʿbah. Historical reports suggest that this was not viewed favourably by the other tribes, since no one had lived in the Sanctuary before. It was regarded as sacred land; people entered it only for ritual circumambulation and daytime gatherings, and then returned to their dwellings in the hilltops and surrounding areas in the evening. Al-Yaʿqūbī confirms this.

> In Makkah, there were no dwellings in the Sanctuary and people would enter during the day and leave at nightfall. When Quṣay - who was the most cunning of Arabs - gathered the Quraysh, he settled them in the Sanctuary, spent the night there with them, and woke with them [spread out] around the Kaʿbah. He was approached by the noblemen of Banī Kinānah, who told him: "This is regarded as a great sacrilege by the Arabs. If we let you get away with it, the [other] Arabs will not." He responded: "By Allah, I will not leave this place." And he stood firm.[27]

It was clear that by building their homes in the Sanctuary - something no one before them had dared do - the Quraysh would be granted honour and a unique status over others, elevating them above the well-established tribal categories based on lineage, strength, and numbers. The Quraysh was not the largest tribe in numerical terms, nor was it the most powerful in terms of deterrent force; it was not even a well-

27. Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh al-Yaʿqūbī* (Najaf, Iraq: Manshūrāt al-Maktabah al-Ḥaydarīyyah, 1964), vol. 1, 209.

integrated tribal unit before Quṣay's intervention. It was through sheer shrewdness that he was able to give the Quraysh a status above the standards followed at the time, when comparisons between the tribes depended on ethnicity, lineage, numerical superiority and fighting strength. Although the Quraysh were unable to compete against other tribes in terms of these indicators, its new position as neighbours and custodians of the Sanctuary had effectively established a new criterion for status that none of the other tribes had been able to attain, and there was no way that the others could achieve this sublime honour.

Quṣay's purpose in settling on the Sanctuary plain was not only symbolic; it was also strategic par excellence. By gathering the Quraysh from the hinterland, the surrounding areas and hilltops, and settling them around the Ka'bah, he transformed them into a solid and tightly integrated unit, and entrenched their strength and tribal solidarity.

However, this bold move contravened the established traditions pertaining to the Holy Sanctuary. Since the Arabs regarded the Ka'bah as a religious symbol, it could not be the sole possession of a specific tribe. Quṣay's move, therefore, was not easily accepted. Al-Ya'qūbī indicates that the chiefs of Kinānah—the mother tribe to which the Quraysh were affiliated—condemned Quṣay's actions and informed him that even if they were to remain silent about the transgression, other Arabs would not. However, Quṣay had already prepared a plan to convince the Arabs that the relocation of the Quraysh to the environs of the Sanctuary was to their benefit. If they were to see this and benefit from it, he believed, then they would accept it and acquiesce. Again, al-Ya'qūbī's text is a useful reference.

> The time of the pilgrimage had arrived and Quṣay said: "The time of pilgrimage has arrived, and the Arabs have heard what you have done; they now hold you in high esteem, and I am not aware of a virtue held in higher regard by the Lord than food, so every one of you should set aside a portion of his wealth." They did so, and he accumulated a huge amount. When the first pilgrims arrived, he slaughtered a camel on every road leading to Makkah, as well as in Makkah. He constructed an enclosure and filled it with bread and meat, and he provided water and

> milk for drinking. He went to the Sanctuary and made a key and a covering for the Kaʻbah and created a barrier between himself and the Khuzāʻah. The Sanctuary was now firmly in Quṣay's hands. He then built his house in Makkah, having thus built the first house in the city, and declared it to be the House of Assembly.[28]

Because Quṣay had realised that the legitimacy of the Quraysh could be affirmed if their control over the Sanctuary brought direct benefits to the pilgrims, he surprised them with lavish amenities that they had not been accustomed to in the time of the Khuzāʻah: food at the entrances to Makkah to welcome the visitors, water and milk for thirsty travellers who had traversed the desert for weeks on end, meticulous administration of the Sanctuary, and general order in Makkah, the like of which the Arabs had not previously known. Quṣay was thus able to show the advantages of having the Quraysh oversee the Sanctuary and tend to the needs of the pilgrims. He thus justified their resettlement in the Sanctuary and around the Kaʻbah through providing essential services to the pilgrims. No one objected.

Quṣay's next initiative was to transform the Quraysh into an organised political entity. He established, for the first time in Makkah, a comprehensive administrative system that resembled an executive government with ministries that were aligned with the most prominent tasks of the Quraysh as the neighbours of the Sanctuary and the custodians of the Ancient House. He declared the feeding of pilgrims to be a permanent function and created salaried positions called al-Rifāḍah (Food Provisioner) and al-Siqāyah (Water Supplier, for supplying pilgrims with water and milk). The maintenance of the Ancient House became the third permanent function, al-Ḥijābah (Maintainer of the Kaʻbah). He also built a large house, Dār al-Nadwah (the House of Assembly), close to the Kaʻbah, and made it the centre of Qurayshi public life and a parliament for Qurayshi noblemen and elders. This became the seat of governance and leadership. The fifth permanent function that Quṣay established was that pertaining to matters of war; he called it al-Liwāʼa (The Brigade). All these functions were under his direct leadership, making him the absolute leader of the Quraysh.

28. al-Yaʻqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1, 209.

Though he never bestowed a royal title upon himself, the Quraysh, "in Quṣay's lifetime and after his death," according to al-Yaʿqūbī, "saw his commands as religious obligations". The House of Assembly became the Qurayshi centre of existence for all aspects of life.

Ibn ʿAbbās described the status of the House of Assembly:

> In his house, the door of which faced the Ancient House, all the Quraysh's affairs were conducted: matters of marriage or war or consultation among themselves. Even when [a Qurayshi] slave girl is given her freedom, she is emancipated there and only thereafter returned to her family. They do not raise the banner of war for themselves or for anyone else anywhere other than in the House of Assembly, and it is raised by Quṣay. Their slaves are only pardoned at the House of Assembly. A Qurayshi caravan always departs from it and, when they return, they stop there first, in honour of Quṣay, seeking his counsel and acknowledging his virtue. They follow his command as if it were a religious obligation; they followed no other, both during his lifetime and after his death. He held the positions of Maintainer of the Kaʿbah, Water Supplier, Food Provisioner, Convener of the House of Assembly, and he ruled over all Makkah.[29]

Quṣay left his mark on Makkah by implementing the first town plan for the city. He divided it into districts and distributed these among the various clans of the Quraysh, so that each subdivision occupied a specific district. He was remembered as a person of bold initiatives. When the Quraysh settled on the plain around the Ancient House, they felt constricted and wanted to expand outwards and build new houses. Though custom dictated that plants and trees that grew in the Sanctuary could not be cut, Quṣay ordered that they be cut anyway so that the land could be made suitable for building. Because the Quraysh were afraid of the divine consequences of such an action, he took the initiative to cut down some of the vegetation himself. When other Qurayshis saw that no harm had come to him, they prepared the land and built the city.

29. al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol.1, 211.

Quṣay died after having settled most of the Quraysh in the Sanctuary. They became known as the "Quraysh of the plains", due to the flat land that they occupied. Other clans settled on the hilltops and in the desert surrounding Makkah, and they were referred to as the "Quraysh of the hinterland". Only two branches from the lineage of Fahar were counted amongst the Quraysh of the hinterlands; the rest preferred a bedouin lifestyle and raiding. The future historic role of leading the Arabs thus fell to the Quraysh of the plains. They would be referred to as "the People of Allah" and gained a reputation as "the most cunning of Arabs, the most intelligent of people, and the most eloquent in speech".[30]

Quṣay's cunning and importance in Qurayshi history were manifested in his ability to build firm political and administrative structures. It was clear to him that custodianship of the Ancient House and tending to the needs of the pilgrims were the essential elements for establishing unparalleled legitimacy in terms of leadership and prestige. It was legitimacy that transcended the boundaries of tribal allegiance and complex associations, because it was specific to the Quraysh and not possessed by any other tribe. The Ka'bah was venerated by all Arabs, and even though some of the other tribes had sacred sanctuaries where religious rites were performed, the Ancient House in Makkah transcended the bounds of tribal and group association and was unanimously venerated by all inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula.

Quṣay had four sons: 'Abd al-Dār, 'Abd Manāf, 'Abd al-'Uzza, and the last, 'Abd or 'Abd Quṣay. Before Quṣay died, he bequeathed five responsibilities to his first-born son, 'Abd al-Dār: maintenance of the Ka'bah, provisioning of food, supply of water, The Brigade, and the House of Assembly. 'Abd al-Dār was the weakest of the brothers, and the others were more prominent than he in the public sphere. His father wanted to raise his status by granting him all the positions of leadership. Even though these positions were collectively given to 'Abd al-Dār and to his children after him, 'Abd Manāf was the most prominent Qurayshi nobleman after his father, and he continued to entrench Makkah's position and expand its districts, organising the settlement of the subdivisions of the Quraysh. Ibn Sa'd narrates: "When Quṣay

30. Abū Manṣūr al-Tha'ālibī, *Thimār al-Qulūb fī al-Muḍāf wa al-Mansūb* (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-'Aṣrīyyah, 2003), 18.

ibn Kilāb perished, ‘Abd Manāf ibn Quṣay took over, and the authority over the Quraysh was in his hands. He divided Makkah further, beyond the divisions that Quṣay had established for his people.”[31]

Despite Quṣay’s bequest in ‘Abd al-Dār’s favour, historical sources show that he was weak and unable to carry out the responsibility of leadership of the Quraysh, which led ‘Abd Manāf to assume that role. This created a discrepancy: although the official leadership was bestowed on ‘Abd al-Dār, effective leadership was in the hands of ‘Abd Manāf. Even though ‘Abd Manāf was able to live with this reality in deference to his elder brother and out of respect for his father’s bequest, the future would witness conflict between the sons of ‘Abd Manāf and ‘Abd al-Dār over these leadership positions. This resulted in the most important factional development in Qurayshi politics: the establishment of the Alliance of the Scented (Ḥilf al-Muṭayyībīn) and the Alliance of the Allies (Ḥilf al-Aḥlāf).

After ‘Abd Manāf, effective leadership of the Quraysh passed on to his son Hāshim, who had inherited the leadership of the Quraysh from his father, as well as discernment, administrative sophistication, and broad-mindedness from his grandfather. Hāshim’s greatest achievement was the entrenchment of Makkah as a trading centre where desert transport routes crossed at the end of the fifth century. Historical sources paint a bleak picture of Makkah’s economic status in the period before the trade pact established by Hāshim. The following quote is extremely striking and rich in significance:

> Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf was the first to establish the two journeys. His reason for doing so was to address the practice referred to as al-i‘tifār [literally meaning “polluted by soil”]. According to this tradition, if a household was afflicted by poverty and it did not find food for its sustenance, the head of the family would take his family to a spot known for this purpose and set up a tent in which they would remain until they starved to death. It so happened that a household from the Banī Makhzūm tribe was afflicted by extreme deprivation and considered undertaking al-i‘tifār. Hāshim heard of their plight

31. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol.1, 47.

> because one of their sons was an acquaintance of his son Asad. Hāshim addressed the Quraysh thus: "You have innovated a practice by which you are diminished while the [other] Arabs grow; you are shamed while the [other] Arabs are honoured. You are the people of the Holy Sanctuary and the people follow you, yet this i'tifār is almost overwhelming you." He then gathered the head of every household for two trade journeys. Whatever profit was generated by a person of wealth was divided between him and a poor person from his family, until the poor among them became just like the rich.[32]

Thus, if Quṣay is regarded as the creator of the Qurayshi entity, Hāshim—with his initiative, his sharp mind, and his good planning—was the instigator of the golden age in Makkah. He took Makkah out of extreme poverty and gave it a noble presence, opening the doors of regional trade to its caravans. Thereafter, Makkah was able to transcend its status as a small, isolated village visited by Bedouin pilgrims and became a frequently visited city, through which overloaded caravans passed as they crossed the desert. Makkah became a conveyor of cultures and a bearer of news and stories about the lands of Persia, Rome, Abyssinia, and Yemen. After a long slumber, Makkah was alive and active.

The trade pact and the beginning of the "Golden Age"

According to numerous chronicles, the flourishing of Makkah's economy began when, during a business trip to the Levant, Hāshim noticed that prices were more inflated there than in Yemen. He saw an excellent business opportunity that could put the Quraysh on the path to wealth and prosperity.

The phenomenon of high prices in the Levant and low prices in Yemen may be explained by examining the state of international trade at the end of the fifth century, when Hāshim visited the Levant. The international routes that joined the Chinese and Indian markets with the two global empires of the time—Persia and Rome—are relevant in

32. See also: Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurṭubī, 1964, *al-Jāmi' li Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣrīyyah, 1964), vol. 20, 205.

this regard. The Chinese and Indian markets were the most influential in the global economy of the ancient world. As a result, a network of land and sea routes developed, linking those markets to the Persian and Roman empires. The network of roads was called the "Silk Road"; it was not a single road but a network of pathways, the most important of which was the Northern Silk Road that had a tremendous impact on world history, and which China is currently trying to revive by way of a gigantic economic project.

For 2,000 years, the Northern and Southern Silk Roads—which cross overland from China to Central Asia, then over the Byzantine State to Europe—were, unquestionably, the most important international routes. They stretched over thousands of kilometres, passing through many lands, nations, and peoples, with caravans transporting a variety of merchandise, the most important of which was silk, from which the route derived its name. However, the merchandise was not restricted to silk; the caravans carried various other products, such as frankincense, perfumes, precious stones, and spices. The problem with the Northern and Southern Silk Roads was that they were under the control of several political authorities whose positions were influenced by each other and by the wars and conflicts that broke out between the various parties.

The Maritime Silk Route, on the other hand, was a sea route that took advantage of seasonal winds. Its south-to-north branch joined India to the Persian Gulf and terminated in Basra, from where the traveller could move over land to Iraq, which was under the control of the Sassanid Empire, and finally to Damascus. This route was subject to disruptions when conflict erupted between the Sassanid Persians and the Byzantine Romans. The east-to-west branch of the Maritime Silk Route stretched from India westwards to Aden. This route flourished especially when the land routes and the south-to-north maritime route were disrupted. Usually, when conflict broke out between the two international powers (the Persians and the Byzantines), the land route and the south-to-north maritime route would be suspended, while the west-to-east maritime route would remain active.

At the beginning of the fifth century, clashes between Turkish tribes in Central Asia were at their height, resulting in regular disruptions

or even a shutting down of the Silk Road's land routes. In addition, the continual confrontations between the Persians and the Byzantine Romans brought activity on the south-to-north part of the Maritime Silk Route to a halt, causing the prices of imported goods such as silk, frankincense, perfumes, utensils, and fabrics to skyrocket. In these instances, only the east-to-west Maritime Silk Route remained active. Yemen was under Himyarite rule, and it had had sustained maritime contact with India for at least half a millennium. Considering the continual warring between the Persians and Romans, this maritime route was more stable than the other routes, since it lay beyond the contact points between the two great powers. Consequently, the cost of merchandise traversing this route was generally much lower.

From Aden, Byzantine ships (or Abyssinian ships, Abyssinia being an ally of Byzantium at the time) usually transported merchandise to Egypt's Red Sea ports. The goods were then carried to Alexandria over land, and from there to Europe. Alternately, other ships would transport merchandise from Aden to the Port of Elath, now known as Aqaba in Jordan, and from there over land to Damascus. Some merchandise found its way to Gaza and then to Europe by sea. The most transported product along this route was frankincense, which was used in church ceremonies. However, clashes between the two superpowers sometimes disrupted even the Red Sea Route, causing the merchandise to pile up in the Port of Aden and resulting in a drop in prices.

This is the background to the phenomenon that grabbed Hāshim's attention and changed the future of Makkah. The merchandise from India that reached Yemen by sea was relatively cheap compared to the merchandise sold in Damascus. Hāshim realised that if he were able to transport merchandise from Yemen to Damascus and Iraq via Makkah, he would be able to circumvent the conflict hotspots and tension points between the two empires. As a result, the Quraysh's trade would flourish, and Makkah would be enriched because of the huge price disparity between Yemen and Damascus.

A major problem for the caravans that were crossing the desert was their exposure to Bedouin raids, a common practice on the Arabian Peninsula. However, the status of the Quraysh among Arab tribes

granted it a unique opportunity to use its symbolic position to protect its caravans from raids. The trade pact that we hear a great deal about, and that is mentioned in the Noble Qur'ān in Surah Quraysh (Surah 106) has two aspects to it. The first is an accord that allows for the passage of Qurayshi trade to the Levant, Yemen, Iraq, and Abyssinia. These states had borders with crossing points, and they levied taxation on trading caravans. Trade in these lands required formal permission, which resulted in the trade pact that would be realised by Hāshim and his brothers. The second aspect of the pact was an agreement with the Arab tribes residing along the trade routes that crossed the desert. The Qurayshi pact with these tribes secured the interests of both sides: the Quraysh gained protection for its caravans from raids, and, in return, the tribes benefitted directly from the protection fees that they received from the caravans, or from trade privileges that allowed them to conduct business with the caravans. This often entailed the bedouin tribes selling hides to the caravans and purchasing utensils, weapons, and clothing from them. In this way, the pact created a new economic and political map in the Hijaz and in the northern parts of the Arabian Peninsula, which placed Makkah at the very centre. This pact is essential if we are to understand the nature of the conflict that later broke out between the Prophet's (ﷺ) state in Madinah and the Quraysh. It also played a huge role in making sense of the network of alliances between the two groups, and the tribes inhabiting the areas along the trade routes, which will be explained later in greater detail.

Al-Tha'ālibī addresses the impact of the Qurayshi trade pact on Makkah and on the status of the Quraysh:

> The Quraysh traded only with people who came to Makkah during the pilgrimage seasons and would do so at the Dhī'l Majāz and 'Ukāẓ markets. They would not leave their homes during the sacred months, nor travel beyond the Sanctuary, due to a commitment to their religion and love for their Sanctuary and homes, and because they had undertaken to see to the needs of everyone who entered Makkah. They were in a barren valley, as Allah, the Sublime, related concerning Ibrāhīm: "Our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley near Your Sacred House" (Qur'ān 14:37). In the Qur'ān, Allah

mentions Hāshim ibn ʻAbd Manāf as the first Qurayshi to travel to the Levant, to call on kings, to undertake long journeys, to traverse the lands of enemies, and to enter a pact with them.

He used to undertake two journeys: a winter journey to the al-ʻAbāhilah. the kings of Yemen, and to Aksum in Abyssinia; and a summer journey to the Levant and the land of the Byzantine Romans. He would enter pacts with tribal leaders and clan heads for two purposes: the first was because Arab predators, vile bedouins, raiders and seekers of fortune did not leave the people of the Holy Sanctuary or anyone else in peace; the second was because some Arabs did not respect the sanctity of the Sanctuary or give importance to the sacred months. This group included the Banī Ṭay', Khathʻam, and Qaḍāʻah. Other Arabs undertook the pilgrimage to the Ancient House and regarded its sanctity as a religious principle.

In terms of the pact, Hāshim set aside a share of his profits for the tribal leaders. He also transported some of their wares with his, and herded their camels with his. This alleviated some of their difficulties regarding travel, and it unburdened the Quraysh from the anxiety of enemy attacks. This arrangement benefitted both parties: the one that stayed at home profited, and the one that travelled was guaranteed safe passage. The Quraysh thus flourished and were able to access the best that the Levant, Yemen, and Abyssinia had to offer; their lot was improved, and their livelihood became pleasurable. When Hāshim died, al-Muṭṭalib took over; when he died, ʻAbd Shams took over; and upon his death, Nawfal took over, and he was the youngest of them.[33]

Trade within the Arabian Peninsula spans millennia, and the land route that crosses from Yemen to the Levant was several centuries old. However, the organisation of this route within an established framework linked to trade agreements that traversed states and tribes was the work of Hāshim and his brothers from the Banī ʻAbd Manāf. Based on extant historical accounts about Makkah, we may state that the first pact that

33. al-Thaʻālibī, *Thimār al-Qulūb*, 100-101.

Hāshim forged with Arab tribes signalled a turning point in the lives of the Qurayshis. Little Makkah, secluded in the heart of the desert, with its humble economy dependent on providing for the welfare of pilgrims, and its trade dependent on the seasons and the needs of its markets, soon became the centre of trade that crisscrossed the desert, linking the markets of the Levant, Iraq, and Yemen, and supplying them with their essential needs at the lower prices that generated higher profits. All this was a result of the disruption of the other international routes because of the continual clashes between the Persians and the Byzantine Romans.

Although the pact was initiated by Hāshim, it took its final shape only years after his death. Hāshim had probably first concluded a pact with the Byzantine authorities in the Levant, and had entered into agreements with tribal leaders along the trade route from Makkah to Damascus only on his return journey.

The pact was later expanded to include other territories beyond the Levant. The Banī ʻAbd Manāf forged a pact with the Negus (the king of Abyssinia), with the Iraqi authorities that represented the Sassanids, and with the Himyarite kings in Yemen. As a result, the caravans of the Quraysh were able to traverse the desert in peace and security, brimming with various merchandise. With the passing of time, and as the Qurayshi traders gained more experience in the various markets, five central trade routes developed. The first route ran from Makkah to Yathrib, then to Khaybar, on to Tabūk, and finally to Gaza, which was an important port from where merchandise was transported to Europe by sea. This was the trading route that Hāshim usually traversed. He died during one of his journeys to Gaza and was buried there (which is why it became known as "Hāshim's Gaza"). The second, coastal route headed out westward from Makkah to the Red Sea coastline, and then north toward the Levant. The third route was a maritime route from the Shuʻaybah[34] Port on the Red Sea to Abyssinia, the Kingdom of Aksum. A maritime offshoot from there headed northward towards Elath, now known as Aqaba. The fourth was the Najdi route, which went to Yathrib and then, via Najd, to Iraq. The fifth route ran south from Makkah,

34. A historical port on the Red Sea coast, south-west of Makkah. It was Makkah's central port for a time, until Jeddah became the main port during the reign of the third caliph, ʻUthmān ibn ʻAffān.

passed through Ṭā'if, then went from Najran to Yemen.

Makkah thus became a central node that joined four large markets: the Levant, Iraq, Yemen, and Abyssinia. Qurayshi trade was structured around, and took advantage of, the changing seasons and weather. The winter journey was to Yemen and Abyssinia, and the summer journey to the Levant, during which the traders travelled as far as the Ghassanid capital of Bosra (now in southern Syria). However, most of the Qurayshi trade was via Gaza, which was an important port for exporting goods to Europe.

These routes flourished as the Persian-Byzantine conflict intensified, since Makkah had become an alternative crossing point between the established trade routes. Makkah thus benefited from international destabilisation, especially when the conflict resulted in the suspension or disruption of the Red Sea maritime route. The Qurayshi caravans then became the only means by which to transport merchandise between Yemen and the Levant.

From trade to politics

In addition to his trading acumen, Hāshim is regarded as a central character in Qurayshi history, and much has been narrated about his extreme generosity, integrity, honour, judiciousness, and wisdom. Chroniclers also note his physical attributes. He was described as tall and light-skinned. While we may mention this image, we should be circumspect about accepting all these accounts as being authentic, since many of these biographical details were added retrospectively and much later, in an attempt to elevate Hāshim's status, since he was the Prophet's (ﷺ) great grandfather.

Considering Hāshim's leadership role in managing the trade pact, the political structure of the Quraysh had to be adjusted. The children of 'Abd al-Dār retained their symbolic leadership positions in Makkah on the grounds that they were the heirs of their grandfather's bequest. However, it was the children of 'Abd Manāf, including Hāshim, who executed administrative and other duties. This was particularly the case

with the provisioning of food and water, which required much effort and a great deal of financial support. Hāshim was unhappy that the notional responsibility for the five essential duties remained that of his cousins, who were descended from ʻAbd al-Dār. He, along with the other sons of ʻAbd Manāf, believed it was unfair for their cousins to enjoy the symbolic honour of leadership while they undertook the actual daily work. They therefore tried to unite the formal authority of the five duties and the practical reality that the work required.

Consequently, a dispute broke out between the two parties. Some Makkan tribes supported the position of Hāshim and his brothers, while others stood with the sons of ʻAbd al-Dār, insisting on the inherited status of the authority. This incident marked the beginning of a huge rift that affected the entire Qurayshi political edifice and lay the foundation for the two most important alliances in Makkah's history: the Alliance of the Scented and the Alliance of the Allies. Standing with the Banī ʻAbd Manāf were the Banī Asad ibn ʻAbd al-ʻUzza ibn Quṣay, the Banī Zahrah ibn Kilāb, the Banī Taym ibn Murrah, and the Banī al-Ḥārith ibn Fahar. The Banī ʻAbd al-Dār were supported by the Banī Makhzūm, the Saham, the Jamaḥ, and the Banī ʻAdī ibn Kaʻb.

The Alliance of the Scented was the alliance of the Banī ʻAbd Manāf, so named because they had taken a container filled with perfume to the Kaʻbah, immersed their hands in it, rubbed the perfume onto the Kaʻbah, and there swore an oath allying themselves. The second alliance, that of the Banī ʻAbd al-Dār, was the Ḥilf Laʻqat al-Dam (Alliance of a Lick of Blood), alternately called the Alliance of the Allies. They were referred to by the first name because they had immersed their hands in the blood of a slaughtered camel and wiped it onto the Kaʻbah.

The two alliances gathered their forces and prepared for battle. Just before the conflict could erupt, they reconciled, after agreeing to share the leadership duties between the two sets of cousins. In terms of the agreement, the Banī ʻAbd Manāf were given the duties of supplying water and food, while the Banī ʻAbd al-Dār was responsible for Maintenance of the Kaʻbah, The Brigade, and the House of Assembly.

We should pause and reflect on this division of labour between the

two parties. Water Supplier and Food Provisioner were both service duties, while Maintenance of the Ka'bah, The Brigade, and the House of Assembly were more ceremonial. The supply of food and water embodied the values of munificence, striving, and generosity, but also required the sons of 'Abd Manāf to provide direct assistance to the pilgrims and carry all its financial burdens. This does not mean that the Banī 'Abd Manāf spent exclusively from their wealth; other Makkan tribes also contributed financially to provide logistical support and water to pilgrims. Nevertheless, the greatest burden and responsibility fell on Hāshim, who was financially self-sufficient. He exerted the greatest effort of all the Quraysh in fulfilling these duties. Ibn Sa'd explains:

> They reached an agreement that Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Quṣay would be in charge of Water Supplies and the Food Provisioning. He was a man of wealth, and when the pilgrimage season approached, he addressed the Quraysh, saying, "O people of Quraysh. You are the neighbours of Allah and custodians of His house. Pilgrims are coming to you in this season to glorify the sanctity of His house. They are the guests of Allah, and the most deserving of esteem are the guests of Allah. Allah has selected you for this purpose and honoured you with this role. He protects your rights more than any other neighbour does. So respect His guests and pilgrims who come with dishevelled hair and covered in dust from every city on worn-out mounts. They have crawled, are covered in filth, have lice in their clothes, and have exhausted their provisions. Settle them and quench their thirst."
>
> The Quraysh would come to their assistance and every household would provide something, according to its means. Hāshim ibn 'Abd Manāf ibn Quṣay would set aside a huge portion of his wealth every year, the wealthy people of the Quraysh would also assist, and every person would contribute 100 Heraclian mithqals [of gold].
>
> Hāshim ordered the construction of cisterns (made of animal skins) near the well of Zamzam and filled them with water from the other wells of Makkah so that the pilgrims could drink therefrom. He

began feeding the pilgrims on the Day of Tarwiyah [the first day of the hajj pilgrimage] at Makkah and Mina, and on the Day of Jam‘a at ‘Arafah. He soaked the crumbs of bread in the soup of meat mingled with fat, parched barley, wheat, and dates. He provided them with drinking water in Mina when water in the cisterns ran low. When the pilgrims departed from Mina, the hospitality would end, and they then dispersed and returned to their homelands.[35]

We may conclude from this that when Hāshim undertook the responsibility of providing food and water, he was cognisant of the esteemed moral value of these duties. That is why he addressed his people using ethical language when enjoining them to fulfil the duty of hospitality in their capacity as “neighbours” of Allah and custodians of His house. Even though all members of the Quraysh contributed to these two duties, the greatest burden fell on Hāshim’s shoulders, which is probably what contributed to the depletion of the wealth of the Banī Hāshim after him. Even though his descendants inherited virtue, ethical status, and a good reputation, they were never as wealthy as their cousins. This left its mark on the Alliance of the Scented; they upheld ethical values, entrenched generosity and justice, and embraced Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) mission and provided him with social solidarity and tribal support. By contrast, the Alliance of the Allies retained possession of the duties of the House of Assembly, Maintenance of the Ka‘bah, and The Brigade, which were linked to ceremony and status. This alliance thus became the ruling establishment, which was committed to its own vested interests and was prepared to transgress all that was sacred, if required, to preserve its hegemony and authority. They even used force against anyone who opposed them or challenged their political hegemony. The Alliance of the Allies combined wealth and politics and used these against Muḥammad’s (ﷺ) mission. They were driven by arrogance and haughtiness into a violent confrontation with Islam that led to a prolonged struggle between the two camps and resulted, after twenty-three years, in victory for the alliance of virtue and magnanimity over the alliance of segregation and supremacy.

Hāshim ibn ‘Abd Manāf likely died at the end of the fifth century. Chroniclers recorded that he married a woman in Yathrib named Salma

35. Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt*, vol. 1, 63.

bint ‘Amr from the Banī al-Najjār tribe, which was affiliated to the Khazraj confederacy. Yathrib was located on the trade route between Makkah and the Levant. A son was born of his union with Salma, and she named him Shaybah. The boy remained with his maternal uncles of the Banī al-Najjār until he was an adolescent. Muṭṭalib ibn Quṣay, Hāshim’s brother, took over the trade after his death, and gained a reputation for generosity. He travelled to Yathrib and returned to Makkah with Shaybah ibn Hāshim, carrying the boy behind him on his camel. When he approached Makkah, the Quraysh said al-Muṭṭalib had returned with a slave, to which he responded: “This is the son of my brother Hāshim.” However, the story was not forgotten, and Shaybah ibn Hāshim became known as ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (the slave of al-Muṭṭalib).

We know that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib died when the Prophet (ﷺ) was eight years old, and that the Prophet (ﷺ) was born in 570, most likely on Monday, 15 Rabī‘ al-Awwal / 30 January 570. Thus, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib must have died in 578, and if we assume that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib lived to the age of eighty-two, as many reports suggest, then his birth was likely around the year 496. If, however, he lived to the age of ninety-two, as other reports suggest, then his birthdate was probably closer to 480, and we can conclude that this was the year in which Hāshim died. All the dates are speculative, of course, but we discuss them here to familiarise ourselves with the historical events that dominated the world around Makkah at that time, and, more especially, the political state of affairs in the Persian and Byzantine empires on the one hand, and in Abyssinia and Yemen on the other.

الربيع الأول

This book examines the political and strategic trajectory pursued by the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) during a mission that spanned twenty-three years, and it carefully considers the regional and international contexts within which the Prophet's (ﷺ) life played out. From an examination of his biography, it seeks out the fundamentals and principles of the new methodology that resulted in the greatest-ever strategic and historic transformation of the international system. The Prophet's (ﷺ) biography is replete with lessons for individuals, communities, and nations. In this era of unpredictability and rapid change, humanity is in dire need of a new philosophical vision and a fresh start. The western hegemony that has dominated the global stage for the past three centuries has reached a point of bankruptcy, where it can no longer offer creative solutions that might guarantee a secure future for humanity. The world's civilisational and cultural heritage is rich and diverse, encompassing much wisdom and collective experience that has been accumulated over many millennia. Our present malaise demands that we study this enormous human capital and draw lessons from it so that we might devise solutions for the future that are inspired by a multiplicity of sources, including Islam.

دار عرب للنشر والترجمة
DAR ARAB FOR PUBLISHING & TRANSLATION

ISBN 978-1-78871-103-6