

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE AMONG MULTIRELIGIOUS AND MULTIRACIAL COMMUNITIES IN AN ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE -MALAYSIA AS A CASE STUDY

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**Abstract:** *Living in peace among people irrespective of their religious, cultural, and racial affiliations is the ideal aim of Islam as a message of peace for all humanity. Sharing life aspects peacefully among multi-religious and multiracial groups and communities is a kind of social integration, which has a high importance in spreading the message of peace and unity to all humankind in the society itself and in all over the world. The thing that might show positively in the development process of the society which succeeds in managing the life equation of diversity and integration that later leads people and different groups to live in peaceful coexistence. The purpose of this study is to illustrate how Islamic teachings are important, especially the terms of Tawhid, Al-Wasatiyyah, justice, and peace as an ideal slogan in managing human affairs by taking their religious and racial differences into account, to discover the relationship between peaceful coexistence and the process of development and to see to what extent they are linked to each other. This study argues that peaceful coexistence is a prerequisite for the continuation of the development process, by taking Malaysia's case as a real example of the equation, the study also will propose a set of recommendations on how peaceful coexistence and cooperation are important, and to ensure unity and harmony among a various community of religions, races and cultures in all the multi-religious and multiracial countries.*

**Keywords:** *Peaceful Coexistence, Development, Al-Wasatiyyah, Diversity, Integration, Malaysia.*

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## **Introduction**

Islam is a religion of peace, unity, and mercy, as Allah the Almighty says about the prophet (p.b.u.h) “We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures” (Al-Qur`an 21:107). Furthermore, the Arabic word *Islam* literally means peace. The wisdom of creating all human beings different, from one another is for one purpose, that they may know certain various characteristics of each other, then to mutually coöperate on things they look necessary for their mutual survival, the thing that leads them finally to be integrated and to live in peace and cohesion. So, the diversity of the creation is a reality and the integration is a necessity achievement towards development then towards building an ideal type of human civilizations that have passed through history, for instance, Islāmic civilization from the early beginning was a good example of peaceful coexistence that had been established in reality from the time the Charter of Medina was drafted by the prophet Muhammad by gathering between both spiritual and material dimensions. Moreover, all communities have their special ways to live in peace and harmony, more particularly the multi-religious and multiracial communities which see themselves under the necessity to be peacefully coexisted, then after looking forward to being developed, thus diversity might be a source of the successful societies.

The paper focuses on displaying the relationship between peaceful coexistence and the process of development from an Islamic perspective; it aims at exhibiting the role of some important Islamic principles in accomplishing development in good conditions. Many studies have addressed the importance of peaceful coexistence and how the people of one society or of different societies must peacefully coexist. Some other studies exhibited in different ways how Islam has contributed in calling for living in peace and harmony. This paper tries to give its different vision by making a new link between some Islamic terms, also it tries to give a new link between the two main concepts peaceful coexistence and development, and as a bid to rectify a gap found in some studies by shedding light on a few important Islamic principles that are regarded by many scholars as focal terms in Islam. The paper is divided into three main parts. The first part focuses on defining three important Islamic principles that are included as a core of the equation, the second part is as a bid to exhibit the relationship between peaceful coexistence and development, the third part is a look at the Malaysia`s case.

### ***Islamic Principles: Tawhid, Wasatiyyah, Justice***

Islam with its global vision, universal approach, and human dimension, has a set of principles if all peoples apply them in their life aspects they might solve many of their problems, and so, they live in harmony and in peace. Among these principles are *Tawhid*, *Al-Wasatiyyah*, and Justice. These three terms besides others are used to point out to the deepest Islamic vision that is included in this paper. It is clear that these terms are still in the discussion in the Quran and generally in Islamic Weltanschauung, therefore they have a polysemous context, mainly the two terms Tawhid and Al-Wasatiyyah, and this depending on their theoretical use, but empirically it relies on the look of the members of the multi-religious and multiracial community at each other and on the way they deal with each other. Obviously, The difficulty lies in the applied field on the ground and not in the theoretical aspect itself because theorization is a wide area. It is well known that the theoretical framework is a collection of interrelated concepts, like a theory but not necessarily so well worked-out. The following is a presentation of the three terms to see somehow they are working in concordance.

*Tawhid* is an Arabic term that literally means uniting or making a thing united and one, also it means the oneness of God, the oneness of the world, the oneness of humanity and creation, the oneness of knowledge. All these besides all the diversity, wealth, history, culture and civilization of Islam are compressed in one sentence *La ilaha illa Allah*, there is no God but Allah (Al-Faruqi, 1982). The sincere believing in the oneness of Allah leads the Muslim to believe in the oneness of all the creatures, and that all human beings are united.

The implication of Tawhid is the crucial belief of Muslims in the oneness of Allah the creator, that means as well the belief in the oneness of creation. Allah has created everything besides man, so they must be united.

All human beings are from one soul and one father as Allah said: `` O mankind! Reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate, and from them, twain scattered (like seeds) countless men and women (al-Qur'an 4:1). The word from *-min-* would then suggest here not a portion or a source of something else, but a species, nature, a similarity (Ali,2006) the thing that means all human beings are not divided but are one, from one source. So, *Tawhid* is a general of everything of reality, of truth, of the world, of space and time and human history and destiny (Al-Faruqi,1982). And the importance of *Tawhid* can be encapsulated in the words of Ismail Al-Faruqi who said "Al-Tawhid is that which gives Islamic civilization identity, which binds all its constituents together and thus makes of them an integral organic body which we call civilization "(Al-Faruqi,1982, p.17). *Al-Tawhid* also binds all humanity, i.e., all human beings are bound by *Tawhid* regardless of their various races, colors... All are in an integral organic body by birth. Furthermore, if a man performs the true *Tawhid* of Allah he will be the true vicegerent *Khalifah* of Allah on the earth (al-Qur'an 2:30).

A human being is connected to each other before being an adherent of such religious and racial groups, thus the Prophet (p.b.u.h) said "**The people are all the children of Adam and Adam was created from dust**" (al-Tirmidhī, 3270).

*Wasatiyyah* literally means the middle path and moderation. The term as well as is derived from an Arabic word "*wasat*" (al-Qur'an 2:143) which means middle, fair, just, moderate, milieu and setting. The word in its different forms is used in several contexts in the Qur'an, all the word forms revolving around similar linguistic meanings (Omer, 2015). In addition to this, the term is one of the basic Islamic principles meaning besides moderation, golden mean, denying extremities and radicalism (Relevance of al-Wasatiyyah, 2014). That is why Islam calls Muslims to practice its perspective, and to spread its message to all humankind through wisdom and beautiful preaching (al-Qur'an 16:125) As Yusuf Ali said: "we must do it with wisdom and discretion, meeting people on their own ground and convincing them with illustrations from their own knowledge and experience, which may be very narrow, or very wide. Our preaching must be, not dogmatic, not self-regarding, not offensive, but gentle, considerate, and such as would attract their attention" (Ali, 2006, p.180). Only through purposeful dialogue engagement among people, it can be a pioneering example for others.

Furthermore, the importance of *al-Wasatiyyah* comes according to its main implications on reality, these impacts are the following: Balancing between the permanent principles of Islamic law and the changing conditions of the time; the coupling of religious duty with the social reality; engaging in dialogue and coexistence with other people, and practicing tolerance with those who differ; as well as presenting Islam as a balanced, integrated civilizational mission for

the revival, liberation and unification of the *ummah*. (Hassan, 2011). Moreover, it is worth mentioning how this Islamic term has an important role to change people perceptions about their environment, and how to deal more rationally with the nature and environment they live in, even the term sustainable development might be realized in reality if people deal more peacefully and justly with the natural resources and all other creations that are subservient to man who can protect the interests of all coming generations by acting of conservation of creations (Muyibi, Jamal, & Salleh, 2010).

*Wasatiyyah* is the best-used instrument to make all the life aspects of human beings in balance and static equilibrium, so being a Muslim means being an adept of *al-Wasatiyyah* as a basic principle against extremism and all arrogant behaviors.

**Justice** or *adl* literally in Arabic the word *adl* derived from the verb *adala* which means to straighten or to sit straight, to modify. As well as it means to leave from the wrong path to right one, also means to be equal, to balance (Khadduri, 1984). Another term that goes hand in hand with justice is equity in natural rights which the children of Adam have honored by their creator (al-Qur'an, 17:70) as it was declared in the first Article of the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam that all human beings are one family and equal in terms of basic human dignity, basic obligations, and responsibilities, without any discrimination due to race, colour, language, sex, religious belief, political affiliation, social status or other considerations, and no one has the superiority over the another. The only referential criterium to judge people is faith, piety and good deeds (Ahmad, 2009), as well as justice, is the key to peace, and both peace and justice cannot be separated at all (Khadduri, 1984). In addition, the word justice has a big significance in the Quranic context, where Allah ordered all this *Ummah* to incline towards justice and rule by it because it is the pillar of all good deeds with people, "Allah commands justice, the doing of good, and liberality to kith and kin, and He forbids all shameful deeds, and injustice and rebellion: He instructs you, that ye may receive admonition" (al-Qur'an, 16: 90).

Justice is one of the essentials which keep up the social order as well as one essence of the judicial system, it gives an inspiration that the establishment of a judicial mechanism where every person is responsible for everything he has done without being opposed to any kind of prejudicial discrimination (Yahia, 2001). Apparently, the majority of evil and all bad deeds aspects including swindling and misappropriation –*Khyannah*- come due to the absence of forms of restraining force *Wāzī* which prevent people from ignoring the limits of law rules, and to block all means to evil consequences, the so-called religion-spiritual self-restraint that is the power of true faith including both hope and fear (Ibn Ashur, 2006) and consequently the one who has a strong fear of Allah never forgets the truth that one day he will meet every deed he has engaged and every word he has uttered (Yahia, 2001, al-Qur'an 99:7-8). Such an image that makes the just man lives in justice with others without intending to harm them; therefore, living with the divine teachings leads to perform real justice in reality. Undoubtedly, Justice is the foundation and the cornerstone of civilization and good governance, any political and economic system never can be successful without depending on justice and its aspects. De facto, the aim of the creation of the universe is primarily to uphold justice and truth, this fact comes to be clear by the words of Mahathir Mohamed who assessed the following "if we accept the fact that the universe has been created to uphold justice, we, being one of Allah's creations, should also uphold justice. In fact, upholding justice is one of our responsibilities as human beings" (Mohamed, 1993, p.4).

Ibn Taymiyyah said that: “Allah establishes the just state, even if it is an infidel, and does not rate the unjust state, although it is a Muslim one”. By taking a look at Islamic history, we can give an example of the social justice even with non-Muslims under Umar Ibn Khattab's rule with the elderly Jewish beggar. When Umar felt sorry for his situation, then he brought him to his house, then after to the treasury to give him what he needs, after that Umar said “it is unjust if we collect the capitation tax from him in his youth and abandon him in his old age” (Razak, 2011, p. 128). Such an image is a profound sermon on the spirit of humanity that was entrenched in the Muslim society. Furthermore, looking at our reality it is obviously declared how Islam has contributed to establishing the roots of justice in the field of human spirit, it is worth pointing out that the department of law and rights at Harvard Law School has posted at a wall facing the faculty's main entrance the following Quranic verse, after describing it as one of the inspirational and the greatest expressions of justice in history (Harvard, n. d) “*O ye who believe! stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor: for Allah can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice) or decline to do justice, verily Allah is well- acquainted with all that ye do*” (al-Qur`an 4:135).

The link between the three terms can be explained in the following statement believing and achieving the true significance of the oneness of Allah -Tawhid- leads to believe in the unity of all human beings with no distinction and this, in turn, leads the Muslim to deal more kindly, humbly and moderately with others - Wassatyyiah- with no extremism, by taking into consideration that Muslims are being ordered to establish justice that means putting things in their rightful place with balance and equity with no prejudice or discrimination, all this leads Muslims to be quite open-minded and full of kindness and mercy.

### ***Islam and the Calling for Peaceful Coexistence***

One of the main aspects of peaceful coexistence is the mutual respect as the prophet did when he stood up for a funeral of a Jew man out of respect, in *hadith* Qais ibn Sa'd who reported that a funeral passed by the Messenger of Allah (p.b.u.h) and he stood up. It was said to him, “It is a Jew.” The Prophet said, “**Was he not a soul?**” (Al-Bukhari, 1250 & Muslim, 961). Such an ideal reaction of the prophet Muhammed points out how Islam is a religion of mercy. Mutual respect and peace even with the dead of non-Muslims, not to mention the alive people whom Islam advises to deal peacefully with them either they accept the message of Islam or they do not, in this respect Allah ordered the prophet and his *Ummah* to enter into Islam the religion of peace “ *O ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy*” (al-Qur’an, 2: 208) and in the public relations and international dealings with others Islam calls to incline towards peace “ *But if the enemy incline towards peace, do thou [also] incline towards peace,*” (al-Qur’an, 8:61).

Also mutual understanding and cooperation are among the aspects of peaceful coexistence, without going on a case of dispute to war, Islam first opens the door of dialogue and calls for inclining towards peace instead of going directly to war, because peace is the origin, and war is a casual case for defending the abused people and bringing the right back to whom it belongs. So, the role of dialogue for mutual understanding and mutual respect, also the purposeful dialogue is one of the main roads to meet peaceful coexistence, and it is an ideal way to invite to Islam. “*Invite [all] to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance*”(al-Qur’an 16:125).

As well as peaceful coexistence is a guarantee of security for all the actors in this world, whether they are people or states. As peaceful coexistence has its main principles called the five principles of peaceful coexistence, namely, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. The importance of these five was confirmed by the Chinese President Xi Jinping when he said in a conference in 2014 that these five principles, as an integrated, connected and indivisible concept, capture the essence of today's international relations, and can apply to relations among all countries regardless of their social system, stage of development or size," (Kong Defang, 2014). Also, he said: "Countries are bound together in this community of common destiny, however, injustice and inequality are still pronounced problems in international relations." (Kong Defang, 2014).

Besides what Islam called to an international peaceful coexistence and all countries should learn from it, a message was sent by the words of Malcolm X (Malik el-Shabazz) who declared after coming back from pilgrimage *Haj* in Makkah, that America needs to understand Islam, the time the black skinned people were suffering from racism, because according to him Islam is the one religion that kills racism and erases its problem from its societies, and it is the one religion which removed from Muslims' minds the idea of discrimination between white and non-white.

### ***Development and Peaceful Co-Existence: The Optimal Equation of Optimal Life***

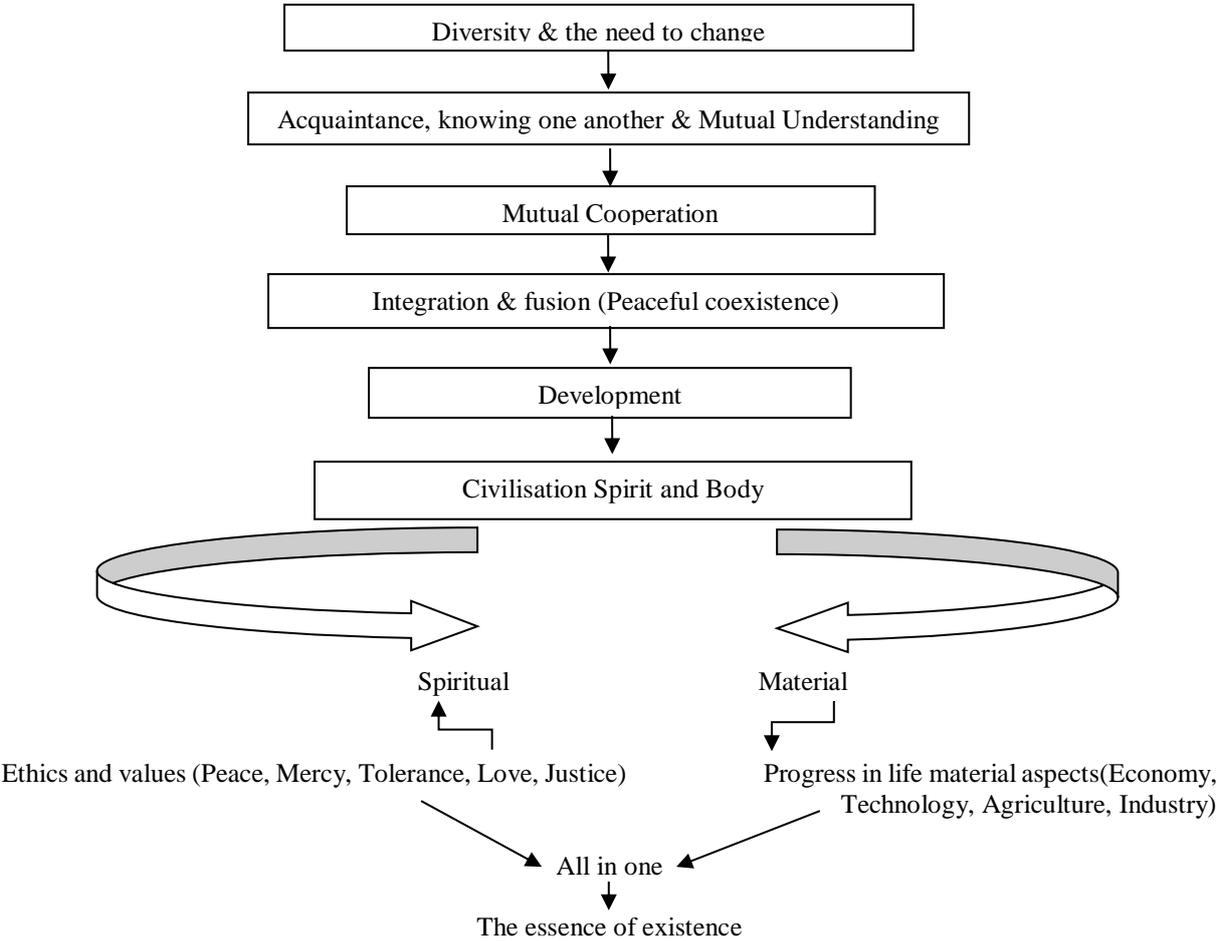
Looking at human history and at the current period, it is observed that no civilization lived for a long time when it faced shortcomings of human values and of ethics in general. Thus, ethics and values are considered as the essential pillars and the spirit of all civilizations that passed across history, the current civilizations, and the coming ones, and if one civilization loses its spirit it will consequently collapse. This idea is seen as a fixed rule by many historians and thinkers as Malik Bennabi who believes that every civilization has three main stages to be experienced as follows: Spiritual Stage, Rational Stage, and Instinctive Stage. The spiritual stage starts when a spiritual idea or religion emerges, and the spiritual potency controls the daily conduct of the individuals. In this period, the mind and behavior of society toward life are mainly spiritual. Bennabi maintains that only the spirit gives humanity the opportunity to rise and progress, and to form a civilization. When the spirit loses, the civilization falls (Alatas, 2009). The same thing argued by Ibn Khaldun, who has given a biological interpretation of the rise and fall of the nations and states in his coherent general economic theory. Ibn Khaldun argues that one of the main causes behind the rise of nations is the rule of law and a reliable judicial system for the establishment of justice, besides the collective responsibility and internal wish to set up a just system to encourage good deeds (Karatas, 2006). And reciprocally the absence of justice is a sign of impending fall and destruction "Such were the populations we destroyed when they committed iniquities (injustice); but we fixed an appointed time for their destruction (al-Qur`an 18:59).

Therefore, any civilization needs to be built on spiritual pillars, where all of its components live in harmony and in a symbiosis that is the natural aspect of all creatures and human beings in particular. The positive interaction between different organisms inside the society comes due to this symbiosis. The diversity of the society is a reality and the integration is a necessity. So that everyone has his ad hoc contribution when he goes hand in hand with the other, regardless of his racial, religious and political affiliation. Just aiming at cooperating and integrating to be finally developed. Because the collective work is blessed and more productive as the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) said: "God's hand is with the community" (Al-Tirmidzi, 2000).

Obviously, the principle of specialization through coöperation and coördination of factors of production is the source of economic surplus as Ibn Khaldun argued centuries before David Ricardo and Karl Marx (Karatas, 2006) and this, in turn, a paved way towards development.

Among the main spiritual, and human values that should be practiced by all, are the principles of justice and equity, the so-called the system of meritocracy which means a social system in which people’s success and status in life depend primarily on their talents, abilities, and effort, where every group of people has its talented individuals with high competence, capacity and skills to cooperate then to integrate with one another in a complementary circle. In other words, it is a social system in which people advance on the basis of their merits (Crossman, 2017). Meritocracy here is a kind of justice and trust or *Amanah* where the one who merits something, he should take it, as Allah said: “*Verily Allah commands you to render back your trust to those to whom they are due.*” (al-Qur’an 4:58) . Furthermore, the system of meritocracy is a focal stone of the social, political and economic justice, which based on different talented people, that so leads to development. Here the main example from reality is Singapore, the multi-religious and multiracial country, just taking a look at how intelligently, the leader Lee Kuan Yew and his colleagues were determined to build a multiracial society that would give equality to all citizens, regardless of their race, language or religion, Lee said it was an article of faith which guided our policies (Lee, 2000, p.12). And how all became peacefully coexisted, and this what Lee Kuan Yew used to say survival is for the most competent.

The relationship and the main steps of development –peaceful coexistence equation can be defined and explained in the following scheme.



Civilization here is the end of all the process, where the ideal purpose is to lump together between the two dimensions to finally arrive at the achievement of the optimal purpose of the existence, Spiritual and Material. Based on the scheme it can be seen that diversity is one of the divine signs in this world as Allah said: *"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes"* (al-Qur`an 49:13), *"And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colours: verily in that are Signs for those who know"* (al-Qur`an 30:22). Besides diversity there is the need to change that both lead the society with its multiracial, multi-religious and multicultural ingredients to know one another, Allah said *"that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)"* (al-Qur`an 49:13), then after knowing one another people go to practice a mutual understanding which in turn leads them to be necessarily cooperated with each other *"Co-operate –Help- ye one another in righteousness and piety"* (al-Qur`an 5:2) and to deal peacefully with one another and to prove the leading example of the nation of *Wasatiyyah*, Allah said *"Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just."* (al-Qur`an 60: 8). The verse calls Muslims to live with others, those who incline towards peace. And to live in symbiosis and in *Takaful* that is one of the pivotal policies of Islam in addition to Zakat (al-Qur`an 9:60) that is a policy of modern system of social security that has two main goals to reduce the rate of poverty and to improve the quality of life of the citizens (Billah, 2007) whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims, for all it is a good way towards the improvement of annual per capita income. *"Zakat or charitable gifts are to be given to the poor and the needy and those who are employed in their service. That is, charitable funds are not to be diverted to other uses, but the genuine expenses of administering charity are properly chargeable to such funds. Who are the needy?"* (Ali, 2006, p.120). Then after all this, the stage of development comes next as a result of the integration of the society. It is worth mentioning that integration here does not mean one group necessarily relinquish its own principles, customs, culture, language..., but only a set of common principles that include all and exclude none. And in the case of ardent necessity the concession principle in which all the integrated groups share the joint profit and loss will be necessary, under a social obligation that means do not look only for rights at the cost of duties, as a way to make both rights and duties balanced among all.

The last purpose is to build an ideal civilization that rationally gathers between the spiritual and material dimensions (Spirit and Body). Gathering between the production of human values and the production of material things is a prerequisite for one civilization that will live longer. Therefore, the greater the human values production at the cost of material production, the longer chance of reconstruction, and the greater the material production at the cost of human values production, the less chance of reconstruction. Thus, when the production of human values is eliminated, and when a society arrives at a stage of the bankruptcy of these values, as a result, it leads to the urgent inevitable end. So, in the absence of social ethics and social solidarity, the material production and development as a whole are meaningless.

## Malaysia: As a Model.

Malaysia has been chosen as a model in this study due to three reasons.

- Malaysia's development process is deemed successful, by taking the equation of development and peaceful coexistence into consideration.
- Depending on personal experience, this success is obvious at home in Malaysia.
- Malaysia as a member of the Muslim world, it can be a leading and pioneer example for all Muslim countries.

Malaysia is an Asian country, some call it the paradise of Asia because of its beautiful nature, and this country as others has a distinctive feature, that is the diversity of its people with their multi-religious, multiracial and multi-cultural affiliations. The Population of Malaysia reached to 31.19 million in 2016, 61,3% are Muslims, 19.8 % are Buddhists, 9.2% Christians, 6.3% Hindus, 2.6% Traditional and culture religion, and others. The percentage of an ethnic group of Malaysian citizen is as follows: 68,6% are Malay- Bumipytira, 23,4% Chinese, 7% Indians, 1% others.

Hefner makes a description about countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia and he states: "illustrate the striking examples of the legacy and the challenge of cultural pluralism" (Hefner, 2001: 4). This religious, racial, and cultural diversity is a pivotal part of Malaysian citizens, and actually, the society with its multi-religious and multiracial dimensions as a whole is integrated and peacefully coexisted. In a time where these religious and ethnic groups were under a hateful animosity, Malaysia is quintessentially a race-based society, where the population is segregated along traditional, i.e. racial and religious cleavages. For the past fifty years, the Malaysian nation has been held hostage by divergent racial and religious interests, rendering national unity an arduous task (Sofjan, 2009, p. 179).

By taking into account that the majority of people are Muslims, so under doubt, the Islamic teachings and Islamic principles play an important role in orienting Muslims' behaviors towards others, more specifically the three main principles that have been included in this paper, namely *Tawhid*, *Wasatiyyah*, and Justice/*Adl*.

*Tawhid* that means the oneness of God who is affirmed to be the essential source of diversity of human beings, *Wasatiyyah* or moderation which is an important approach in dealing with others, and it is observed if we take a look at the real situation of Malaysia's development process, to what extent *Wasatiyyah* has played a significant role in integrating people with one another and pushing them on the road of development. The Malaysian Prime Minister Dato Najib Abdul Razak who confirmed that in Malaysia Islam is synonymous with moderation inclusiveness and good governance, sixty percent of Malaysians are Muslims, Islam is the religion of the Federation, under it the right of Malaysians is protected to practice their religions in peace and harmony (Razak, 2011). By advocating *Wasatiyyah* as a path of integration and development, the Prime Minister said: "by adopting the *Wasatiyyah* approach over decades, Malaysia has emerged as a democratic Islamic nation and a modern industrialized country of upper middle income. We have also succeeded in disproving the stereotypical assumption that Islamic countries are usually undemocratic, autocratic rich in natural resources but poor in managing them well, and lacking in social justice" (Razak, 2011, p. 118).

Moreover, by adopting the principle of Justice, the so-called meritocracy system takes an important place in contributing to achieving integration, harmonization, unity, security,

stability, and peace. In addition, justice makes the members of the society go hand in hand with trust to achieve the main purpose of living in peace and being developed that all are looking for. So, Justice leads to mutual understanding and mutual cooperation without any compulsion as Allah said “there is no compulsion in religion” (al-Qur`an 2:256). By the establishment in Selangor of a state level religious consultative council, the Mentari Besar of Selangor Abu Hassan Omar who said in 1999: “ being a multiracial and multi-religious state, it is vital for people to understand and respect one another`s beliefs and culture. We must not allow people in Selangor to hold negative feelings or hatred for people from other religions”(Kamali, 2000, p. 194). Another example of the Malaysian efforts to practice these principles on reality are the articles of the federal constitution, as the Article (11) that safeguards freedom of religion without any stipulation in favor of any particular group (Kamali, 2000). It is clear that the unique feature of diversity in Malaysia is not considered as an asset, but also a creative challenge, just by adopting the idea of unity in diversity, the diverse religious, and racial groups have successfully realized an excellent achievement in a short period of time.

For a long period of time religious diversity in Malaysia, has led to the development of what social scientists refer to as “religious pluralism” that is of recent challenge for Malaysia to manage religious diversity and maintain social harmony (Abdul Mutalib & Sulaiman, 2017). This challenge is naturally happening because of the daily interactions that time to time might be out of control, and sometimes it is a kind of reaction of some minorities against the others, but when these minorities are being ideologically led by some opportunists, the situation will get worse, and here the government must put a stringent measures to deal with such acts, as the question of the discourses of religious pluralism that came from Indonesia and which has influenced the situation in Malaysia, the Malaysian Government by a huge efforts played a significant role to withdraw the penetration of the idea of religious pluralism. There is a belief that religious phenomena in Malaysia, despite having its uniqueness, is challenged by many circumstances and breakdowns in facing different religious backgrounds and identities (Abdul Mutalib & Sulaiman, 2017). A set of scholars argue that the discourse of religious pluralism is inevitable in the making of a multi-racial, multi-religious and multicultural Malaysia. This was due to the historical and legal facts that Malaysia from the beginning was in favour of the idea of “plural society” (Abdul Mutalib & Sulaiman, 2017). Despite these some discrepancies, the country is moving steadily on the road of development and progress that we can observe it today with broad indications of peaceful coexistence and remarkable harmony.

Thus why Malaysia has recently received much attention from other Islamic countries for its efforts in serving Islam despite being a multi-religious nation, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki said “Although Article 3 of the (Malaysian) Federal Constitution clearly states that Islam is the religion of the Federation, other religions can be practiced in peace and harmony” (Radhi, 2017). By promoting peace, *Al-Wasatiyyah* concept and moderation, Malaysia has been chosen to be the location for the King Salman Centre for International Peace (KSCIP) (Radhi, 2017). This comes after all the significant efforts taken by the Malaysian government to focus on combating extreme narratives among Muslims and to call for improving their relationship with others.

## **Conclusion**

In a nutshell, it can be concluded that diversity is a reality and integration is a necessity, and the union is power. Undoubtedly, where there is a will, there is a way. For the multi-religious, multiracial and multicultural communities, adopting such an equation and being mutually

cooperated and integrated is inescapable, because it is relevant to the question of survival. All human beings from all over the world need to coexist peacefully and to mutually understand one another, not to go to struggle and to hate each other under a foolish pretense that this group or this person does not belong to the same ethnic group or to the same religious community of the adversary. Disdaining others is a kind of Ethnic Superiority that leads to nothing but to self-destruction. Development generally refers to the material side, while peaceful coexistence refers to the spiritual one (human values). Combining the two leads to building a long-lived civilization. Obviously, peaceful coexistence is a precondition for development, because no civilization lived for a long time when it faced shortcomings of human values and of ethics. In general, values and ethics are considered as the essential pillars and the spirit of all civilizations

Islam gives the ideal solution and the best alternative for all humanity by adopting its main principles namely *Tawhid*, *Wasatiyyah* and justice, besides other principles such peace, mercy, cooperation and so on and so forth, all this in order to live in peace and harmony, and so to meet their pivotal purpose which is development, and in turn to realize the true meaning of being the true vicegerent or *Khalifah* on earth.

## Recommendations

1. Actions speak louder than words; we need sincerely to speak through our actions more than depending on a plethora of brilliant slogans that have been neglected in reality. Moreover, holding conferences and making countless studies about such a topic will never make positive effects on our life aspects -although these things are necessary - unless we do not preach to peace, love, and justice through our actions and deeds, all we are guilty " Except such as have Faith, and do righteous deeds" (al-Qur'an 103:3).
2. As human beings who are living in one family called humanity, under one supreme creator Allah the Almighty, the prophet said "**O people, Allah has removed the slogans of ignorance from you and the exaltation of its forefathers. The people are only two kinds: either a righteous, God-fearing believer dignified to Allah or a wicked, miserable, sinner, and insignificant to Allah. The people are all the children of Adam and Adam was created from dust...**" (al-Tirmidhī, 3270). **All we are from the same source all are equal, the only criterium we should follow to rate people is faith, righteousness and good characters.**
3. We cannot agree decisively with voices calling for practicing secularism and getting rid of being politically and economically religious, and to force religion out of people public sphere under the pretence that religions led people to hate one another, it is not utterly true, because many religions call for a set of principles including love and peace where the religion of Islam comes to the fore, but adherents do not put them into a suitable practice the thing that reflects negatively on the pure image of Islāmic teachings. Otherwise we should also call for getting rid of international laws that apparently became a mere ink on paper, because of the intentional infringements of great states that look only for their interests on the account of others, and obviously it seen that calling for peace with these states in the international scene it became a mere catchword, so peace is the cry of all but a game of few, as the Irish philosopher George Berkeley said: " Truth is the cry of all, but the game of few".
4. The equation of development and peaceful coexistence is deemed proper and successful in many multi-religious and multiracial communities such as Malaysia and Singapore, so under doubt, it is more right and necessary among the members of one religion, one race,

one culture, common history, and destiny. Hence, the main idea of this topic is recommended to be applied in all countries that still suffer from religious and racial conflicts as some Arab countries which are war-torn countries, and have suffered and still suffer a lot from sectarian conflicts that reflect negatively on the process of development. They should get rid of these hateful sectarian conflicts and be ready enough to go hand in hand in peace and harmony towards development and civilization.

5. Be peaceful, love and be loved, learn to tolerate and be tolerant by putting hatred under feet, one of the most brilliant wisdom of this life is one of the British philosopher Bertrand Russell as follows: Love is wise, hatred is foolish. In this world, which is getting more and more closely connected, we have to learn how to tolerate. Moreover, making core and compulsory courses on peaceful coexistence and tolerance is necessary.
6. Islam is a global and complete system of life, its teachings and principles have the priority to be applied overall, due to one reason, it is a divine system, not a human one that is prone to shortcomings and defects. Islam needs to be understood again and more again, because when this religion has been misunderstood extremism took place instead of *Wasatiyyah* and moderation.

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