

## The Concept of *Al-I‘Tibar* and the Fall of the Umayyads: An Explicatory Appraisal and its Contemporaneity in Understanding the Present Travails of Muslims

<sup>1</sup>Adebiyi Jelili Adegboyega and <sup>2</sup>Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim

<sup>1</sup>M.A in History and Civilization, Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences, International Islamic University Malaysia, 53200 Jalan Gombak, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

<sup>2</sup>International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), International Islamic University Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This article uses the Quranic philosophy of history, *al-I‘tibar*, in understanding what’s, why’s and how’s, which brought about the fall of the Umayyads. Based on this and the fact that history may, as Jeffrey Bartholet observes, “feed on itself,” the factors that caused the downfall of the Umayyads were on the one hand, explicatorily evaluated. On the other, these factors were assimilated within the present milieu of Muslims with a view to seeing how history has fed on itself. This study concludes that, failure to make good use of the objects of the lessons of history has created a situation whereby same factors which caused the fall of the Umayyads have significantly fed on themselves to cause the decline of the Muslim *ummah*.

**Key words:** Al-I‘tibar · The Fall of the Umayyads · Muslim nation · Present travails of Muslims · Lessons derivable from history

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### INTRODUCTION

This article uses the Quranic philosophy of history, *al-I‘tibar*, in understanding the present through the discernment of the lessons of history from the past. In this wise, history is couched as a means through which one can seek the understanding of the what’s, why’s, where’s, how’s and which’s of the events in time, with a view of not only provoking their understanding but also learning from them so as to shape the immediate and the future. This foretells that, between the past, present and the future, are embedded the lessons of history, which when properly digested will hand man the wisdom through which he can adjust his vicissitudes and situatedness in time. Based on this and the fact that history may, as observes Jeffrey Bartholet, feed on itself, the factors that caused the downfall of the Umayyads are on the one hand, explicatorily evaluated [1]. On the other, these factors are assimilated within the present milieu of Muslims with a view to seeing how history has fed on itself. Achieving these objectives therefore necessitates the need to raise and answer the following questions.

What are the factors which precipitated the fall of the Umayyads? In the synopsis, what are the contrasts between the present problems that are dwarfing the Muslims and those that were responsible for the fall of the Umayyads?

***Al-I‘tibar*: The Quranic Philosophy of History:** One of the thematic elements that occupy the centre spread of the Quranic message is history. It is through this instrumentality that the Quran acquaints man with the activities of the previous generations by unequivocally stating the factors which provoked their rise and fall. The philosophical colouration underlying this, is on the one hand instructive and definitive of man’s finitude with respect to the unchanging spiritual space as much as it concretizes his situatedness in time. On the other, it is integrative of the transcendental and the worldly and also, universalizing, synchronizing and assimilative of the various historical continuities and discontinuities that embody the totality of worldly history. The former philosophical construct which is explored for the purpose of this article, finds a place in the verse of the Quran which states that:

There is, in their stories, instruction (*ibra*) for men endowed with understanding. It is not a tale invented, but a confirmation of what went before it,- a detailed exposition of all things and a guide and a mercy to any such as believe (Quran, *Yusuf*: 111).

Given the Quranic interpretation of history as *al-I'tibar*-instructive value, which confirms what went before, history is in this sense, inextricably imbued with ethical and moral values. While expatiating on this, vis-a-viz Ibn Khaldun's conception of *ibra*, Mushin Mahdi submits:

*Ibra* is considered as a link between history and wisdom, but also the process through which history is contemplated with the aim of understanding its nature and of utilizing the knowledge thus gained in action [2].

Thus, through the interpretation of history as *I'tibar*, the Quran tasks man to intelligibly learn of the factors which conditioned the rise and fall of these generations. Peradventure, this sets the stage for mirroring and shaping the present through the past and the future through the past and the present. More explicitly, deciphering the moral lessons of history becomes definitive of man's situatedness in time as much as it establishes his finitude as a temporal being that is not only accountable to the Almighty creator, Allah, but also liable to relapse into error which may affect his obligated responsibilities and civilizational pursuit. This also affirms the organic nature of history. It is also noted that this concept fuses the transcendental and the worldly, hence giving history its nature as being in time and of the transcendental. Accordingly, Hassan Ibrahim discerns, 'the study of history is not an end in itself, but a means to derive *al-Ibar* and to stress the primacy of religion in life'[3].

Thus, history being inherently organic in nature makes it determinate in the hunt for the present through the past. This enhances the reconstruction and the re-engagement of the emergent future, through the past and the present as much as it highlights continuity as a constitutive element of the Quranic interpretation of history. Consequentially, this renders empirical, why the present is neither an isolated whole nor a whole, rather, a compounded part of the past and, on the other hand, a product of the causal transmutation of the past within the present. In this sense, since the present derives from the past, the future expectedly becomes a function of the past and the present. It is this situatedness of the past as a connector between the past and the future that gives the

past the elasticity of relevance and instrumentality of using it to seek where, why and how we are where we are at the moment. While intellectualizing this, Yedullahi Kazmi, a philosopher cum educationist avows:

Every historical accounts is located in some present, it speaks of the past to the present and past to a future. [...] The present can be viewed as the part and the past as the whole. An attempt therefore, to understand the present implicates our understanding of the past, while every understanding of the past necessarily implicates our understanding of the present [4].

Hasan Masudul, a Professor of Islamic History, also echoes this by alluding that history is the instrument through which one looks at the past, illuminates the present with the light of the past and develops a vision of the future [5]. Imad al-Din Khalil expresses similar view when, based on the *Quranic* view, he demystifies history, as A unified time...the walls that separate the past, the present and the future collapse and the three times commingle in a common destiny' [6].

In sum, *al-I'tibar*, the Quranic philosophy of history, instructively highlights the engagement of the past as a means through which lessons of history could be sought as means, the present understood and the future shaped, through the past and the present.

### **The Fall of the Umayyads**

**An Explicatory Appraisal:** In this section, interpretative synthesis of historical facts, both primary and secondary, will be used in bringing to focus, the causative basis of the Umayyads' downfall. However, before doing this, there is a need for the passing mention of some of the achievements of the Umayyads. This is to circumvent such a scenario which may portray or arouse the misconception that the Umayyads' era is a black chapter in the Islamic history. More so, not doing this will be a misrepresentation of history and utterly perilous to the concept of *al-I'tibar*. The Umayyads played earth-shattering roles in expanding the global coverage and geographical spread of Islam. Accordingly, they laid down the foundation of the *ummah* at the end and beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AH/8 C.E [7]. By extending Islamic territories from Arabia peninsula through Sind to Central Asia Andalusia and North Africa, the *ummah* foundation became spread across the length and breadth of the world. In so doing, Persia joined *Dar al-Islam* (abode of Islam); Muslims consolidated their hold on the Greek territories and make in-road into Europe through the

conquest of Andalusia. They also promoted education by establishing a number of educational centres, sponsored ship building industry and instituted welfare programmes for the people. What can be said to be the foundation of the Abbasids' achievement was laid by the Umayyads [8]. The sun soon set on the reign of the Umayyads in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.H/8C.E following their digression from certain Islamic values, hence the capitulation by the Abbasids. The yoke of what precipitated the fall of the Umayyads are under identified and explicitly evaluated.

**Loss of Leadership/ Political Will-Power:** The political-will to rule over a set of people is a function of the moral, intellectual and spiritual ability of a leader or the political elites. With this, a leader's intellectual competence becomes significant in initiating ideas required to achieve institutional or a group's vision. Therefore, this factor becomes critical in overcoming hurdles which might stand in the attainment of the goals, vision and mission of a group, society or community. Also, this must combine with moral uprightness because this supplies the impetus and consciousness of carrying obligated responsibilities according to the group's binding values. Same value prevents a leader from exploiting the resources of the state to his vantage, depriving people of their rights and from subverting the moral basis on which the legitimacy of his authority derives. Herewith, virtuousness will become a leader's guiding principle as much as accountability, exemplariness and minimalism. In effect, a leader will become a source of motivation, model and the inspiration which fuels and fire-up the members of his group in achieving their collective goals. The Umayyad caliphs, who include Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan (41-60A.H/661-680A.D), 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwan (73-86A.H/692-705A.D), Al-Walid bin Abdal-Malik, Walid I (86-96A.H/705-715A.D), Umar II (99-101A.H/717-720A.D) and Hisham bin Abd al-Malik (105-125A.D/724-743A.H), fall into this category of leaders. Added to this is Sulayman bin Abd Malik (96-99A.H/715-717A.H). They were men of moral timber and intellectual calibre, who tried to fulfil the responsibilities that come with being the *Khalifah* of the Muslim *ummah*. [5]. Each of them possessed the wisdom, gallantry and sterling qualities that stood them out as statesmen. In furtherance of this, al-awli writes, Muawiyah bin Abi Sufyan, "was of those celebrated for acuteness and forbearance," Abd al-Malik bin Marwan was "the first caliph who was parsimonious,"

and that Walid I "regulated affairs by a thorough administration." Also, Sulayman bin Abdul Malik, "was among the best of the kings of the *Banu Umayyah*" who "restored public prayers to their appointed times, the *Banu Umayyah* having suffered them to lapse of dilatoriness" al-Awli remarks. While commenting on Umar II, al-Awli proclaims that during his reign he filled the earth with justice, removed grievances and established good laws. In respect of Hisham bin Abd al-Malik, al-Awli notes, "he was discrete and wise" and "would never allow any money to enter his treasury until forty people had testified upon oath that it had been rightfully exacted and that every just claimant had been given his due."

However, when a leader takes to immorality by violating the values upon which a society is founded, then, the legitimacy of the leader's authority would become disputed. In its broad sense, immorality may mean obsession with worldly desire, officializing arbitrariness as the code of authority, the engendering of prejudice and the fostering of nepotism. Unrestrained sensuous promptings, self-indulgence, abuse of office, corrupt practices and slothfulness at the expense of the onerous responsibility for which *amanah* is trusted, also fall into this brace. As soon as a leader becomes besieged by any of these, then, the Quranic verse which calls for forbidding what is wrong and enjoying what is right stands to be compromised. This verse supplies the moral imperative of the Islamic concept of leadership. It tasks everybody and the leaders in particular, to lead the way of justice and morality by not only calling people to this path, but by also blazing the trail. Once a leader fails to do this, the community which he is leading would become susceptible to backwardness and derailment. In like manner, the bond between a leader and his people would become weakened, until it finally wanes. In effect, this could either lead to the fall of the state or provoke the drive for the change of leadership.

The preceding played a critical role in the fall of the Umayyads. Those caliphs who emerged after Hisham bin Abdul Malik and some among those who preceded him were either moral profligates, weaklings or intellectually incapacitated to handle the affairs of the *ummah*. One of them was Yazid bin Muawiyah, Yazid I, (60-64A.H/680-683A.D). According to chronicled accounts, he was inept and disinclined to the counsel of elders of virtues and chastity. It was also reported that he was profanely engaged in depraved affairs with some of his female slaves. He earned himself a reputation for tyranny and

mania in music and amusement. Besides, questions were raised about his intellectual aptitude as much as his religiosity as a caliph. While commenting on what made people to be disenchanted and ill-disposed to his leadership, al-Awli corroborates the foresaid by stating that, "the reason of his disposition by the people of Medina was that Yazid I became boundless in iniquities." Also, quoted by al-Awli is a statement credited to Abdullah bin Handhalah bin Ghasil, which was recorded by Al Waqidi. The statement that is quoted below makes clearer those actions of Yazid I which triggered the dissatisfaction of the people reads:

- By Allah we did not rebel against Yazid until we feared that we should be stoned from Heaven on account of a man who would marry slave mothers who had borne children to their masters and daughters and sisters and drink wine and abandon public prayers [9].

Al Qahabi who also witnessed the reign of Yazid I, likewise, pronounced that Yazid's I indulgence in forbidden things was a major reason why people revolted against his leadership. When a leader becomes morally defective, intellectually incapable and administratively incompetent, as was Yazid I, then, as earlier elucidated, the society and the leader's credulity stand on the path of perdition and dereliction. This fate eventually befell the Umayyads [9].

Yazid bin Abd al-Malik is another caliph whose superficiality and uneventfulness further compounded the woes of the Umayyads [9]. Not only did he debase to boozing, he also cast aside state's responsibilities for amusement and music as much as he gloried in appropriating peoples' property illegally and dispensed with justice. As a result of his undoing, the traditions of extravagance and laxity which were halted by 'Umar b Abd Al-Aziz, popularly known as Umar II, resurfaced. Thus, this led to what Abdur Rauf observes as deterioration, decline, degeneration and eventual collapse of the Umayyads caliphate [9]. Such excesses and acts of depravity became symbolic of many of the Umayyads caliphs and consequently, de-motivated them from being alive to the obligations of Islam. Therefore, they became negligent of the responsibilities that rest on their shoulders as caliphs. In other words, what Tahir Hussain Mashhadi outlined as the essence of good leadership, which includes, motivation, mutual trust, pride, spiritual

strength and faith in the righteousness of the course, became a lost virtue of these caliphs. In essence, they have lost the political-will required to sustain their leadership of the Muslim *ummah*. According to al-Marwardi, the duties of caliphs include protecting and enforcing the religious principles and regulations, managing the state resources for the great good of the people and deputize authority to competent hands. If one is to go by this, then, it is crystal clear and no gainsaying that the degeneration which plagued the Umayyads made them loose the political will to rule as the *Kulafa'* of the Muslim *ummah*.

**Corruption of the Ruling Elites and House:** The spiritual, moral, intellectual and political defects highlighted above, soon infected the caliph's ministers, governors and soldiers. As it were with the caliphs, these officials also started to glutton in self-suited aggrandizing desires as they began to dishonestly acquire wealth. Their allegiance thereby became detached and shifted from the *ummah* to the caliph and their respective tribal, racial and regional interests. For this reason, their allegiance became individualized and fragmented. With this they were de-spirited from pursuing the common good of the entire *ummah*. In view of this, Kausar Ali observes that the ministers scarified their duty at the altar of their selfish aims and ambitions and conducted the administration at their own will. Invariably, they started to perceive appointment into positions of authority as a get-rich ticket. Consequently, debased means such as bribery and battering military supports for bigoted vantages were used in soliciting such appointments. With time, this bribe-for-appointment syndrome became officialized since governance has been done away with, in preference for money-making. The altercation which ensued between Ziyad b. Ubaydallah Al-Harithi, a tax collector and Khalid b. Abdallah al-Qasri, the then governor of Iraq and Eastern provinces, exemplifies this. As chronicled, Ziyad bribed al-Qasri to enable him retain his position as the tax collector. Ironically, this was brought to Khalid's attention by Ziyad with the hope that the former will instruct that the gratification be increased. Sad enough, Khalid pronounced thus, 'Accept what he has given you and know that you have been cheated.' This is indicative of two things. The first is how corruption and sleaze crept into the Umayyads' administrative machinery. The second being the involvement of Khalid as both accomplish and someone deeply involved in illicit activities. To further

drive home this claim, it is necessary to relay that the same Khalid was imprisoned by Qaysi Yusuf b Umar, on the basis of ill-gotten wealth. As a consequence, Yusuf succeeded in exacting one hundred million Dirham from Khalid, a governor whose annual income was about 13 million Dirham. This, as chronicled, was acquired through exploitative appropriation of estates amongst other properties.

The questionable acquisition of *kharaj* land and other fertile agricultural land by the members of the *Banu Umayyah* also highlights how the ruling house became enmeshed in crooked and undeserved practices. Neither the caliphs nor the hapless masses could stop them from doing this. Another related matter was the imprisonment of Yazid bin Muhallab, a member of the ruling house, by Umar II, in order to exact the stolen wealth which he embezzled while in office. It is worth noting that it was the same Yazid bin Muhallab who connived with and confidently bribed Ibn al-Ahtam so that the latter can maneuver and influence Caliph Sulayman's decision in his favour, regarding the governorship of Khurasan. On another occasion, based on financial terms, both of them colluded to scandalize Walid bin Abi Sad before caliph Sulayman.

One may also need to cite Umar bin Abd Al-Aziz's (Umar II) admonition to the members of the ruling house. This was delivered against the backdrop of undeserving jewellery which he found in his wife's possession. While cautioning against this, he sermonized thus:

...during Abu Bakr Siddiq's and Umar bin Khatab's regimes, it remained untouched. Finally, Marwan took it into his possession and from him I inherited it. However, I fail to understand how a thing, which the Prophet refused to give his daughter, became lawful for me. I therefore, want you to stand witness that I leave the orchard of Fadak intact as it was during the Prophet's times [10].

On another occasion, he was reported to have told the members of the ruling house that:

...I do not want the floor of my house made impure with your feet. Your condition is highly pitiable. I cannot make you the masters of my piety and the business of the Muslims...[10].

These speeches extracts passes the verdict of usurpation of the *ummah's* resources on the ruling house. Also, it exposes how some members of the ruling house exploited their status to assume privileged position. Not

wanting to be linked with or infested by these condescending practices, Umar II sought the understanding of the members of the ruling house to excuse his caliphacy from 'the impurity of their feet.' This was too bitter a pill to be eschewed by the ruling house, hence, their resolve to poison him to death. Also, Atim bin Abdallah was incarcerated by Asad bin Abdallah, for being involved in corrupt practices. The development which trailed the evolution of Yazid bin Abdul Malik as the successor of Umar II offers another insight into how the ruling house became a seat of sleaze. Upon his emergence as the caliph, a group of forty men were reported to have paid him a visit. They dissuaded him from following the footprints of Umar II. To enable them revert to their old ways, they beguiled him that his status as the caliph absolves him of being accountable for his deeds, here and in the hereafter. Accordingly, al-Awliyy writes, "...and there were brought to him, forty Shaykhs and they testified to him saying, -'for the caliphs, there is neither a day of reckoning nor punishment'" This offered Yazid a ticket to debauchery as he abandoned the pious way of his predecessor and became ensnared in full blown decadence and depravity. It was this that became depictive of him. Forthwith, the gateway to the ruling house's old ways became widely opened. Again, they resumed interference in the affairs of the state without any inhibition. For this reason, Akbar Shah submits:

- Banu Umayyah then had many opportunities for exploitation. They imposed themselves upon the caliph's court and squashed all the amendments and reformations interfering with their capturing lands and property illegally and they were worse in matters of justice [10].

As it can be seen, the disease which plagued the caliphs soon endemically infected the royal family and the entire government machinery. The consequence was, as submitted by a member of the Umayyad family, the gradual alienation of people from their leadership. Abu Sulayman also observes that if a man uses his God given ability and honour in oppressive and corrupt undertakings, he has then simply violated the honour of his duties and compromised the purpose of creation. This is suggestive of the Umayyads of being guilty of deviating from the established course, thereby committing evils against their own soul and, perhaps, misappropriation of their vicegerentship of Allah. Also, the disease began to affect the members of the community

at large. At this juncture, the companionship of liquor between Al Walid bin Yazid bin Abd al- Malik, Al Walid II and Abd al-Samad calls for mentioning. In his description of Al-Walid II, al-Awliavers, "he was a libertine and a wine-drinker and a breaker of the divine commands. He wished to make the pilgrimage in order that he might drink upon the summit of the Kabah." Aside, finding in Abd al-Samad, the friendship of wine, Al Walid II adopted him as confidant with whom state affairs were conducted. A caliph consulting a drunkard on the state of the *ummah* shows how degenerate the situation was. What else could be more revealing of the scope of this decadence than the infamous statement credited to Umayyah bin Abdallah. He reportedly pronounced that the tribute of Khurasan was not enough to support the expenses of his kitchen. All this contributed to the waning of religious injunctions and the deterioration of the overall morality of the *ummah*. This degeneration also catalyzed the full fledged development of the eunuch system into *harem* institution. If this is to be contextualized in the light of Ibn Khaldun stages of the rise and fall of state, it fits into the fifth stage. As expounded by Ibn Khaldun, this is the state of prodigality in which the rulers will busy themselves in amusement, pleasure and building alliances based on personal interests. As further suggested by Ibn Khaldun, at this stage, the ruler, state and empire risk senility and eventual fall.

**Tribal and Regional Sectarianism/Arab Chauvinism:**

One of the pre-Islamic traits of the Arabian society was tribalism. It was on this threshold that their community was built, relationship sustained, religious ordinances conducted and marital relationship consummated. So, the life-wire and attributive nature of the pre-Islamic Arabia was unfettered loyalty to one's tribe. The Arab maxim "stand by your brother, be he the oppressor or the oppressed," bears the picture of what tribalism was in the pre-Islamic Arabian society. With the dawn of Islam, tribal solidarity bond and clannish bigotry was replaced with the *ummatic* bond and commitment to one God, Allah. Hence, Islam wedges the Arabian tribal society and humanity as a whole into one homogeneous whole. Dissimilar the pre-Islamic era, loyalty and solidarity therefore becomes ascriptive to the *ummah*. This principle was maintained by the rightly guided caliphs and, to a reasonable extent, during the early decades of the Umayyad's rule.

However, with the passage of time and as a direct consequence of the factors vocalized above, the pre-Arabian tribal prejudice re-surfaced. Accordingly, the

Arabian community became bifurcated into two tribal dichotomies, through, the Mudaris and the Yemenis Bani Kalb. These tribes were at one another's oesophagus as they engaged themselves in the fratricidal rivalry for power. In effect, each tribe aligned and staked their allegiance with the caliph that guaranteed their interest in the power equation matrix. As a result, they salvaged and crucified the principles of Islamic loyalty to the *ummah*. They went as far as exhausting their energies to install the caliph whose interest dovetails with theirs. This was the case with the Yemeni who associated with Abdul Malik bin Marwan, Marwan I, in opposition to ibn Zubayr who also enjoyed the support of Hijaz. Moreover, the rejection of ibn Zubayr's caliphacy by Hasan bin Malik, amongst others, was because he was not from the tribe of *Banu Umayyah*. Subsequently, other tribes became partisanly allied with the caliph so as to protect their interests. The devastating battle of Marj Rahat, 64 A.H, where the Qais and the Kalb slugged it out, was also on the account of tribalism. While the former were on the side of ibn Zubayr, the latter supported Marwan I. Consequently, grave enmity, which polarized the ruling house, erupted. Resultantly, this stiffened the affairs of the ruling house as it became besieged in the hustle and bustling for the seat of the caliph. Also, was the rise of factionalism and schism in different parts of the Muslim land. The rebellion of Yazid bin Muhallab against Yazid bin Malik (Yazid II) falls into same brace. This was provoked by the Himyarite-Mudarites tribal differences. By and large, the dissention between the two tribal groups spilled into Spain and Africa, thereby deepening the woes of the *ummah*. Therefore, the tribe that was favoured by one caliph would promote their camp's self-suited prejudices and split vengeance on the other. This was how many of the caliphs, including Ziyad II (101 A.H/720C.E), Hisham (102-125A.H/724-743 C.E) and al-Walid II (126AH/744C.E), exploited the delicate and shifting balance of tribal and regional solidarity and politics to sustain their hold on power. Eventually, this led to the breakout of a number of bloody tribal strives. As a result, the *ummah* was plunged into divisive columns and warring rows with the ruling house embroiled in wars of mutual attrition.

As a direct fall out of this tribal politicking, internecine and personal enmity within the ruling house, a number of regional interests and factions burgeoned. This was the case with Syria, Egypt and Kufa, three Muslim regions that were engaged in the clash of interest. This was depicted by Masudul Hasan [5] as the triangular conflict of interests amongst three caliphs. While Kufans recognized the caliphacy of Mukhtar, Marwan was

acknowledged by the Syrian and Egyptians and ibn Zubayr by the rest of the Muslim world. So, mutual rivalry and tribal politics has ostensibly interlocked with regional schism. With Iraq being outplayed and completely schemed out of this regional politics and power equation, regional seed of convulsion and dissatisfaction began to gather strength there. Invariably, Iraq became a fertile ground or launch-pad where the revolt against the waning ruling house was to be instigated. Khurasan also became another trouble spot where the Mudarites-Himyrites tribal feud replicated itself. With crises escalating on all fronts, the whole place was in state of higgledy-piggledy, thus, signaling the eclipse of the Umayyads rule [10]. This was capitulated upon by Abu Muslim al-KhĒrasani who spearheaded the Abbasid revolt in this region, specifically in Iraq.

The ruling house Arabism further compounded their woes. As observed by Hussein, Arabs were the ones who contributed and participated chiefly in the spread of Islam to territories in the East, Central Asia, Europe and North Africa. So, at the early stage of Islam, when the Arabs were the majority, the appointment of Arabs and governors in the provinces under Islamic rule is incontestable, is principled and logical. With the mass conversion of the Persians, Indians and other non-Arabs into Islam, it was expected that the rule of equal opportunity would be upheld. This was not the case, as the Umayyads considered it the inalienable rights of Arabs to be in charge of the *ummah's* affairs. Thus, delegation and appointment into administrative posts were exclusively allotted to Arab-Muslims. With this, it was the rule of tribe, race and colour and that was setting the pace. Thus, non-Arab Muslims, including those in Central Asia, Khurassan, Fezs, Iraq, Syria, North Africa and Andalusia were left in lull. Their desire to enjoy the rule of equity enjoined by Islam became a daylight dream. They were therefore taken aback and eventually, they became resentful of the Umayyads. The response of Abu al-Sayda-Salih b. Uarif who was on a delegation with two Arab tribesmen to Umar II, when the latter requested the reason for his silence forbears this. Salih explains:

- O commander of the Faithful, there are twenty thousand clients who made raids without receiving any stipend or allowance and there are similar number of 'protected people (*ahl al-dhimmah*) who have converted to Islam, yet are still made to pay the tribute. Our governor is a partisan of the Arabs, a

rough man who stands on the pulpit and proclaims, 'I come to you out of solitude. Today, I am a partisan of the Arabs and, by God; one man from my tribe is dearer than a hundred men who are not...[11].

The above provides the vista needed to mirror the feeling of pre-eminence that was flowing in the blood of the Arabs, particularly the Banu Umayyah. Consequentially, this stimulated in the minds of non-Arab Muslims, a separatist sensation of being marginalized and relegated to the status of second-rated Muslim. With this, they became ready hands who were not ready to spare the second thought before pulling down the rule of the Umayyads. This explains why they constituted the bulk of the force which joined hands with Mukhtar al-Thaqafi in the latter's revolt against the Umayyads in 686 CE. Same was the *raison d'être* why some regional factions in Kufa supported this course at its onset. On the whole, the spectre of uncertainty, fuelled by the tribalist inclination of the caliphs, led to regional rupture as the racial chauvinism of the ruling house spiralled. In the consequence, the ruling house and the whole *ummah* became divided into warring groups. Ostensibly, the Umayyads became vulnerable to a broad-based revolt. There is the need to state that exceptions to the tendencies which provoked this disgruntlement could be seen during the reign of Umar II and al-Hajjaj.

**Ideological Putrefaction:** Glamorously, a number of the Umayyads caliphs were engaged in acts that were diametrically opposed to Islam. Such was interpreted by people as deliberate and inexcusable violation of the sacrosanct injunctions of the Quran and the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Consequently, people became indignant towards them. One of these was the engagement of the services of soothsayers or astrologers by some of the Umayyads caliphs and some of their appointees. Also, was the granting of concessions to some privileged few to acquire *Kharaj* land, a trait which was typically aristocratic and palpably against established Islamic tradition. This contributed to shortfall in agricultural productivity and, advertently, to the dwindling of the Caliphate's financial buoyancy. The most cynical of such ideological deviations was their prioritization of *jizyah* over conversion to Islam. Thus, they preferred a buoyant treasury to calling and welcoming people into the fold of Islam. Thus, they discouraged people from embracing Islam and,

inconceivably, went ahead to levy and collect *jizyah* from non-Arab Muslims. Furthermore, they imposed regimes of illicit tax on the Muslim and non-Muslim populace. They went as far as depriving new converts *Ata'* [12]. Thus, Muslims who were resident in rural areas were left in a state of destitute, hence their resort to migrate to urban centres, like Basra and Kufa. This contributed to the heightening of the umbrage against the Umayyads, so, eroding their thrival and support base.

In addition, some of the Umayyad's Caliphs became negligent of some fundamental religious duties such as the *juma'h* prayer and Ramadan fasting [13]. All these, in addendum to the other factors articulated above, have demonstrated the undesirability of the Umayyads to provide the *ummah* the credible leadership that can uphold and enjoin on people the rules of the Quran and the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (s.aw.). Accordingly, Kennedy observes:

- ...At an ideological level, they failed because they could not offer the sort of leadership which many Muslims wanted. Their monarchy was essentially secular and they laid no claims to any special religious authority. [...] there were a lot of Muslims, especially in Iraq, who felt that charismatic, truly Islamic leadership was necessary to establish the rule of the Quran and Sunnah [14].

For being contemptible of religious injunctions, people began to treat the Umayyad's reign with contempt. Probably, this was on the consideration that those who should be respected and obeyed are those who respect and obey Allah injunctions and of His Prophet (s.a.w). One can synthesis this picture from the conversation between Yazid bin Anbasah and al Walid bin Yazid. While al Walid was trying to enquire from a group of people why some soldiers defected from his army, Yazid bin Anbasah replied:

We don't have any personal grudge against you. We are against you because you have violated the sacred ordinances of God, because you have drunk wine, because you have debauched the mothers of your fathers' sons and because you have held God in contempt [15].

Alcoholism, debauchery, infidelity as it can be observed were what caused al- Walid bin Yazid his *caliphship* of the *ummah* and also his life because he was killed at the spot where this altercation took place. This is just a vista amongst several other similar panoramas

depicting how ideological putrefaction cost the Umayyads the support of the people [16]. There were other principal factors such as the problem of succession and monarchical/hereditary succession and the problem of opposition which immeasurably contributed to the plunge of the Umayyads.

**The Eventual Fall:** Realizing that the authority of the Umayyads had waned, the Abbasids zeroed-in by wedging the voice of dissents. Consequently, they galvanized the critical mass of the disgruntled in Khurasan and other places by advocating reforms which would address the plight of all Muslims. They echoed their descendant of the Prophet's uncle, promised the rule of equality, equal entrée and accessibility and obliteration of all illicit taxes. Their catchphrase, *Ahl al Bayt'*, guaranteed them the support of the Alids [17]. Other opposing groups and aggrieved Muslims, especially the non-Arabs whose satiating and obvious enthusiasm to enjoy the rule of equal opportunity enjoined by Islam also supported them. It was thought by these supporters of the Abbasids that the family of the Prophet can provide the credible leadership which will sacramentally follow the Quran and Sunnah. By galvanizing all these forces together, there was monumental boost of the legion of hands that wanted the Umayyads dethroned. So, allegiance shifted to the Abbasids [18]. At the end, the Umayyads suffered a terrible defeat at the hand of the dissenting storm led by Abu Muslim Al-Kurasani. So, this culminated into their fall from power and hence, the emergence of the Abbasids in 132 A.H/750C.E as the supreme leaders of the Muslim *ummah* [19].

**The Contemporary Milieu of Muslims and the Fall of the Umayyads: A Synopsis:** As expatiated in the preceding section, loss of leadership/political will-power, ideological putrefaction, corruption of the ruling elites, Arab, tribal or regional chauvinism and administrative and financial crises were the nucleus of the factors that precipitated the fall of the Umayyads [17]. At the moment, it has been identified that the present disconsolate state of Muslims worldwide owes to a number of factors. Some of these include ham-fisted/secularized leadership, nationalism racial and tribal bellicism, contempt for sacrosanct values and rights, corruption, degenerate '*ulama*' and ideological putrefaction [18].

Thus, it is no gainsaying that at the moment, the bane of the Muslim *ummah's* problem is the dearth of quality leadership which appreciates, appropriates and combines

the essence of good governance with pristine Islamic value-system. By contrasting this with the Umayyads, it will be noticed that, in scope and form, the leadership problem of the moment is about the same with theirs. There are the problems of corruption, lack of political and moral will power, intellectual might and the ability to give the *ummah* a creditable direction in both cases. The dissimilarity, however, is in nationalistic obsession of our leaders at the moment, a peculiar ideology which was not operational during the Umayyad's era.

If one is to contrast the problem of national, regional and tribal prejudices with the Umayyad era, similar traits viz tribalism, regionalism, racial chauvinism can be observed. This is not without differences in their themes owing to the differentials in the vicissitudes of time in between this period and the Umayyad era. The extent of the effects also differs, however, in both cases; these factors deleteriously weaken the *ummah's* bond of fraternity, its *ummatic* immunity, therefore the sense of decline which subsequently prevails. At this juncture, it may be essential to contextualize in the light of one of the sagely sayings of Sayyidina Ali, the fourth of the Rightly Guided caliphs, the similarities in the factors that are responsible for the present dolorous state of the Muslims and those which were responsible for the fall of the Umayyads. Sagely, Sayyidina Ali proclaims:

- 'How many are the objects of lessons, but, how few the takings of lessons'

These words of wisdom can in its depth, be succinctly interpreted as meaning that few lessons are often put to use from events of the past. This could be as a result of a number of reasons among which are the lack of adequate understanding or no acquaintance with the whys of events of the past and conscious, subconscious and unconscious negligence of the lessons of history. In the consequence, there is a great possibility that history would as Bartholet says, feeds on itself, by falling prey of the same factors which caused setbacks in the historic past. This is the case with the Muslims today as it can be sufficiently inferred from the proceeding analysis that in refusing to learn from the factors which led to the fall of the Umayyads, these factors have in different forms contributed significantly to the *ummah's* present disconsolate state. Far beyond this, it can be affirmatively advanced that the factors which caused the fall of the Umayyads are to a reasonable extent same as those which are responsible for the present enfeeblement of Muslims.

Therefore, in studying the fall of the Umayyads, a penetrating grasp of why the *ummah* has been in a state of decline may be facilitated.

## CONCLUSION

In using the Qu'ranic philosophy of history, *al-I'tibar*, in understanding the factors which were responsible for the fall of the Umayyads, it has been shown that failure to make good use of the objects of the lessons of history has created a situation whereby same factors are significantly responsible for the present decline of the Muslim *ummah*. The most critical among these common denominators is the loss of leadership/political will-power. Others include tribal and regional prejudice, racial chauvinism, corruption of the ruling elites and ideological putrefaction.

Adebiyi Jelili Adegboyega is a graduate of Mechanical Engineering, who exhibited extensive interest in Islamic studies that qualified him to deservingly earn M.A in History and Civilization from International Islamic University Malaysia. His study was under the supervision of Prof. Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim and Prof. Ahmed Ibrahim Abushouk. He has some articles and books to his credit.

Hassan Ahmed Ibrahim earned his PhD in history from SOAS, University of London and is currently Professor of History and Dean, the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC) International Islamic University, Malaysia, (IIUM).

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