

# ‘A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE CONCEPTS OF *HE* (HARMONY) IN CONFUCIANISM AND *SALAM* (PEACE) IN ISLAM AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT’

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**Abstract:** The numerous wars, conflicts and crises that beset our world today seem to lend support to Samuel Huntington’s thesis of ‘the clash of civilizations’ as put forth by his famous book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. However, given the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious landscapes of many nations, accepting multiculturalism is inevitable for peaceful coexistence. Both China and Malaysia are multicultural countries. This paper aims at a comparative study of the Confucian concept of *He* or ‘harmony’ and the Islamic concept of *Salam* or ‘peace’ in relation to the current and important subject of sustainable development. There are two aspects to the discussion: first, the key values present in the concepts of *He* and *Salam* will be examined and contrasted; second, their relevance and application to the specific issue of sustainable development will be highlighted. The paper concludes that comparative studies of shared values and concerns contribute towards our effort at understanding and accepting differences and embracing diversity which are essential for peaceful and enriching coexistence.

**Keywords:** Confucianism, Harmony, Islam, Peace, Sustainable development

**S**ince September.11, the entire world seems to be overwhelmed by terrorism and extremism. Large scale military operations brought

thorough and destructive damage to some countries such as the Gulf wars to Iraq or the wars in Afghanistan; some protests and conflicts within nation are also changing the direction of its country’s destiny such as Red Shirt movement in Thailand or the Arab Spring. Consequently, wars and conflicts are making people more eager for peace. However, the global destructive situation caused certain acceptance of Samuel Huntington’s theory of “Clash of Civilizations”.

The theory of ‘the clash of civilizations’ predicts that people’s cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world. S. Huntington states: “Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics.”<sup>1</sup> It implies that the fundamental reason for future wars will be differences between civilizations. It also denies that multiculturalism can support the world’s sustainable development. Huntington’s theory generated fierce criticisms from various academic writers who have challenged his claims empirically, historically, logically and ideologically.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel, P.H.(1993) “the Clash of Civilizations?”.Foreign Affairs,P22—P49.

Amartya Sen is an Indian economist who was awarded the 1998 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economics. He regards the theory of 'the clash of civilizations' as divisive of cultural diversity. He states that elements of civilization usually first emerge from a corner of the world, and then spread across everywhere until they have some new reflections and new functions.<sup>2</sup> Based on this view, civilization should be diverse and inclusive, not isolated and divisive. Fang Keli, the former dean of the graduate school of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, criticized the theory of 'the clash of civilizations' in his article<sup>3</sup> that the founder of the theory is not reconciled to the decline of western civilization's absolute position in the world. When Samuel Huntington called for the renewal of Western identity for the preservation of the United States and the West<sup>4</sup>, he did not emphasize dialogue and cooperation, but began with the assumption of conflicts between different nations.

However, it is not only conflict and confrontation between civilizations, but also interaction and communication. It is proven by history that the world's development is brought about by a combination of both dialogues and conflicts. From history we can see active and friendly dialogues between different cultures and nations taking place. Conflicts also existed and will not disappear in the future, but it is not the only dominant feature of the history of civilizations. Samuel Huntington exaggerates the negative impact of conflicts in human history and the world's development.

In 2001, the United Nations launched the 'United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations' which was a proposal from the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>5</sup> In the 56th United Nations General Assembly, the resolution on 'Dialogue among Civilizations' was co-sponsored by 75 countries including China, and was adopted by consensus. It is quite evident that having dialogue between civilizations is shared by many nations.

In 2005, the Chinese president Hu Jintao proclaimed the theory of a 'harmonious world'. China adheres to an independent foreign policy of peace, a new

security concept featuring "mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and win-win" for all nations, and advocates the maintenance of cultural diversity and a multi-polar world. These main contents of the theory implies that multi-cultural dialogue and communication is an important solution for the current chaos in many aspects of global affairs, and it can also be a means of achieving sustainable development in order to keep our world peaceful in the future.

*He* 和 (Harmony, harmonization) as the fundamental idea of Confucianism, is probably the most cherished ideal in Chinese civilization. It is also held by the Chinese government as a vital approach for her current international relations. Fei Hsiao-Tung, one of the finest sociologists and anthropologists in China is responsible for promoting this idea. He redefines the idea of 'harmony but not sameness' in his book within the current international context.<sup>5</sup> Based on the current international situation, he renews the Confucian idea of *He*, and points out that the relationship among different civilizations should be mutually beneficial. His explanation on the idea of *He* offers a basis to approach the unity of the present 56 ethnic groups in China and national development.

As a typical multi-cultural country, Malaysia attracts the world not only by her exquisite tropical rainforests but also by her multi-cultural society. Muslims constitute the major population in Malaysia. Other main ethnic groups are Indian and Chinese. Although these ethnic groups are completely different in language, religion and culture, Malaysia's social development is more stable and harmonious compared to the other Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Philippines. According to Samuel Huntington's theory of 'the clash of civilizations', the probability of conflicts occurring in Malaysia should be higher than in Thailand or the Philippines. On the contrary, the reality proves otherwise and social harmony can be achieved in a multi-cultural country. In his book, Samuel Huntington also asserts that the Confucian-Islamic civilization alliance will become an important reason for conflicts between civilizations in the 21st century.<sup>6</sup> But the actual situation is telling us that China is enjoying peaceful

<sup>2</sup> Amartya., S.(2006).*Our Globlization, Bei Jing Forum.*

<sup>3</sup> Fang K.L(2001). "The trend of Chinese Culture under the economical globoliazion". Journal of Graduate School of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences . 2001. 01 ISSN : 1000-2952

<sup>4</sup> Huntington, Samuel P.(1996). *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

<sup>5</sup> Fei, S.T.(2009).Collected works of Fei Xiaotong. China, Nei Menggu people's publishing house.

<sup>6</sup> Samuel, S,H.(1993) "the Clash of Civilizations?".*Foreign Affairs*, P22---P49.

and stable development with her 56 ethnic groups, including Muslims and non-Muslims. And in Malaysia, both Muslims and Chinese and the other ethnic groups are also living and developing together peacefully. The national program of 'One Malaysia' is an excellent example. It promotes mutual understanding between different ethnic groups and

working together for a better life for all Malaysians. The case of China and Malaysia, provides a basis to explore the ideas Confucianism and Islam may have which can guide their people to live harmoniously with other nations and any common values which they may share.

It is important to begin with the study of the relationship between two Confucian ideas: He 和 (harmony, harmonization) and Tong 同 (sameness). Samuel Huntington accepts diversity of the world. However, he emphasizes conflicts between civilizations and his advice is either to separate or unify other civilizations to be under the control of western civilization. Samuel Huntington does not consider the world's diversity to bring about Harmony (He). His solution is Tong which means all non-western civilizations should emulate western civilization. His definition of harmony is the whole of the non-western world should conform to western civilization and be under her control. It is clear that his theory is put forward for the sake and interest of the western world only.

The idea of He (harmony, harmonization) has supported the Chinese civilization over two thousand years. 'Harmony but not sameness' is its fundamental idea. He is usually translated into English as 'harmony', although it may be more appropriately rendered as 'harmonization' in certain contexts. The terms appeared before Confucius. By the end of the Western Zhou period (1046–771 BCE), the Chief historiographer, Shi Tong discussed the concept of 'He' and 'Tong'. He believed in the condition of accepting 'He' and refusing 'Tong'.

He said:

和实生物，同则不继。以他平他谓之和，故能丰长而物生之。若以同裨同，尽乃弃矣。故先王以土与金、木、水、火杂，以成百物。

"Harmony is the law of creation, sameness cannot last for long. Putting different things together and balance their relation can be called as harmony. Therefore, things could grow lushly. If putting the same things all together, then it soon will be abandoned. Therefore, the former emperors mixed earth with gold, wood, water and fire to create everything."<sup>7</sup>

Shi Tong noted the importance of diversity, and distinguished between diversity and sameness. He believed that the unity of the world is a complex of different elements and reasons. By the end of the Spring and Autumn period, in the state of Qi, Yan Ying, further explained the relationship between 'He' and 'Tong' in the following manner:

He said:

公曰：“和与同异乎？”对曰：“...若以水济水，谁能食之？若琴瑟之专一，谁能听之？同之不可也如是。”

The master asked: "does 'He' as same as 'Tong'?" Yan said: "...if cook water by water, who would able to eat it; if play music only by one tune, which would able to enjoy it? This is why sameness cannot be accepted."<sup>8</sup>

Yan Ying gave his own understanding of 'He'. Yan Ying thought that 'He' means a variety of differences can be brought to complement each other, to transform and influence each other. Instead of following sameness, harmony between different things can create a new unity.

Based on these understanding, Confucius used the concept of 'He' and 'Tong' in the domain of interpersonal relations.

He said:

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<sup>7</sup> Guo Yu. Zheng Yu. 《国语·郑语》

<sup>8</sup> Zuo Zhuan. Zhao Gong 20th year. 《左传·昭公二十年》

君子和而不同，小人同而不和

“The gentleman likes harmony but not sameness, the small man likes sameness but not harmony.”<sup>9</sup>

Confucius believed that the gentleman is the one who is good at coordination, and can unify different ideas well into a mutual understanding and not obey blindly. The idea of ‘harmony but not sameness’ in interpersonal relations are reflected in three areas: at the level of the family, the nation and internationally.

Harmony in the family is the first concern. As the basic element of society, family harmony is the basic pillar for a healthy society. Confucius believed the key for keeping family harmony is having Xiao 孝 ( Filial piety ) and Ti 悌 (love for one’s brothers).

His student, Yu-zi said:

君子务本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其为仁之本与。

The gentleman should hold his principle. Only who has the principle could have morality. Keeping filial is one of the principles of being Benevolence.<sup>10</sup>

Confucius asked his students to love their parents and obey their elder brothers. For it is the way of being a gentleman. However, Confucius did not think that complete obedience will bring harmony in the family. Filial piety does not only include “try your very best to take care of your parents” (事父母能竭其力), but also requires “to offer advice to correct parents’ mistakes”(事父母几谏). To brothers, it is not enough to merely take care of them but brothers should always encourage and supervise each other “切切偲偲，怡怡如也”<sup>11</sup>. The teaching implies that instead of complete obedience, having harmony in a family also requires different voices which can be understood as ‘harmony but not sameness’.

The second concern is having harmony in the state which includes the relationship between the governor and the people and also between governor and his minister. On the governor guiding his people, Confucius said:

“上好礼，则民莫敢不敬；上好义，则民莫敢不服；上好信，则民莫敢不用情。夫如是，则四方之民襁负其子而至矣。”

“When those above love the rites, none of the common people will dare be irreverent; when they love what is right, none of the common people will dare not to submit; when they love trustworthiness, none of the common people will dare not to show their true colors. In this way, the common people from the four quarters will come with their children strapped on their backs. What need is there to talk about growing crops.”<sup>12</sup>

The image which Confucius described above shows a great achievement of harmony between the governor and his people. However, Confucius mentioned that such an achievement must be with certain conditions which are the governor must love the rites, that which is right and trustworthiness. Only then can he be trusted by his people.

In the relationship between the governor and his minister, Confucius emphasized the quality of integrity. He believed it to be the guarantee for sustaining the relationship between the governor and his minister. Confucius said:

定公问：“君使臣，臣事君，如之何？”孔子对曰：“君使臣以礼，臣事君以忠。”

<sup>9</sup> *The Analects*. Zi Lu. 《论语·子路》

<sup>10</sup> *The Analects*. Xue Er 《论语·学而》

<sup>11</sup> *The Analects*. Zi Lu.

<sup>12</sup> *The Analects*. Zi Lu. 《论语·子路》

“The ruler should employ the services of his subjects in accordance with the rites. A subject should serve his ruler by doing his utmost.”<sup>13</sup>

The one who serves the governor should work with loyalty to his utmost; however, it does not mean he should follow blindly whatever the governor orders. Confucius believed that the relationship between the governor and his minister to be more of a cooperation. The governor and his minister have different functions. Ministers will follow his leader; however, his function is also to give advice. His student, Zi-Lu, asked Confucius how to serve the governor, and Confucius replied: “Do not stand up to him while, all the time, you have been dishonest with him.”<sup>14</sup> In his teaching, loyalty does not mean sameness. People should have different ideas even when they are in front of the king. A great decision comes from discussion with different voices, and only a variety of ideas can make a thoughtful consideration for building society.

The third concern is with international relations. This mainly reflects the ideas of opposing war and embracing peace. There are two sides to the Confucian understanding on international relations. The positive side is to help others from what he is good at.

“夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲达而达人”

“Now, on the other hand, a benevolent man helps others to take their stand in that he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in that he himself wishes to get there.”<sup>15</sup>

The negative side is not to impose on others what you do not want.

Confucius said:

“己所不欲，勿施于人”

“Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.”<sup>16</sup>

Student of Confucius, Zi-gong, also said:

“我不欲人之加诸我也，吾亦欲无加诸人。”

“While I do not wish others to impose on me, I wish not to impose on others either.”<sup>17</sup>

The teaching seems to talk about the relationship between people, however, it is also used to deal with issues between countries. So the teaching can be interpreted as: I wish to live in peace, then I have to let others live peacefully. I do not allow invasion from other countries, then I will not invade other countries first. Furthermore, Confucius explained the way to prevent war. He used an example to discuss acceptance of diversity and tolerance between countries. Confucius said:

管仲相桓公，霸诸侯，一匡天下，民至于今受其赐。

“Guan Zhong helped Duke Huan became the leader of the feudal lords and saved the Empire from collapse. To this day, the common people still enjoy the benefit of his acts.”

桓公九合诸侯，不以兵车，管仲之力也！如其仁！如其仁！

<sup>13</sup> *The Analects*. Ba Hu. 《论语. 八佾》

<sup>14</sup> *The Analects*. Xian Wen. 《论语. 宪问》

<sup>15</sup> *The Analects*. Yong Ye.30. 《论语. 雍也》.30

<sup>16</sup> *The Analects*. Wei Ling Gong. 24. 《论语. 卫灵公》.24.

<sup>17</sup> *The Analects*. Gong Ye Chang.12. 《论语. 公冶长》.12

“It was due to Guan Zhong that Duke Huan was able, without a show of force, to assemble the feudal lords nine times. Such was his benevolence. Such was his benevolence.”<sup>18</sup>

Confucius opposed war and this can be seen in his teachings. The historical examples he used to teach his students indicates his emphasis on accepting diversity from different countries in order to achieve mutual understanding. It is obvious that having peace is the ultimate purpose for every living creature in the world. In order to realize this aim, we need to avoid war. Confucius praised Guan Zhong because he helped his lord to unify nine states without using military power. Furthermore, he and his lord tried to meet the rest of the Dukes to find out the mutual objective of achieving unity.

‘Harmony but not sameness’ is not only regarded as an important teaching for pursuing peace in the past, but is still fully accepted by the current Chinese government. In 2003, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao used the idea to explain how to forge friendship with neighboring countries and how to solve international conflicts as shown in his speech at Oxford University.

The understanding of ‘harmony but not sameness’ is also to be found in Islamic teachings. Muslims believe their fundamental responsibility to God is keeping the world in peace. The Qur’an says that Muslims are assigned to be the Khalifa of Allah or his vicegerent on earth which is the consequent of accepting the oneness of God or the unity of the Ultimate Reality (al-tawhid). It is important to make clear that unity in the Islamic context does not mean uniformity. If God had wished to create a single nation or people, he would have done so, whereas the Qur’an asserts clearly:

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اِنَّا خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَّاُنْثٰى وَجَعَلْنٰكُمْ شُعُوْبًا وَّقَبٰىلٍ  
لِّتَعَارَفُوْا اِنَّ اَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللّٰهِ اَتْقٰىكُمْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ عَلِيْمٌ حٰجِيْمٌ ﴿١٣﴾

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).<sup>19</sup>

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a leading Islamic thinker, explains that “Islamic unity on the human level means integration of diverse elements, whether they be the male or the female, various ethnic groups, tribes or social classes into a whole, by means of a higher principle.”<sup>20</sup> From this statement, we can see clearly that Islamic unity reflects a similar understanding with the Confucian idea of ‘harmony but not sameness’ and both Islam and Confucianism accept diversity to be a condition of the world.

In the Islamic context, vicegerency presupposes servant hood. Human beings cannot become participants in God’s creative work without firstly humbling themselves before their Creator. Moreover, being vicegerent, human beings need to learn from God’s qualities such as Mercy, Wisdom, Generosity, Nobility and so forth. The entire world is the creation of God’s Mercy (Rahmah). Consequently, being merciful towards the world instead of cruel or violent should be a part of the responsibility of God’s vicegerent. And the term Islam itself which means ‘peace’ reveals that peace is always one of the fundamental objectives for Muslims to achieve. Unfortunately, the current global situation of terrorism and fundamentalism veil the truth of what Muslims actually believe in. However, it does not mean the real Islamic spirit is not present or will disappear. Every Islamic country is trying to establish a peaceful society and harmonious relations within itself and with other countries. For example, Malaysia’s multicultural

<sup>18</sup> *The Analects*. Xian Wen.16.17. 《论语·宪问》.16.17.

<sup>19</sup> *The Qur’an* 49:13.

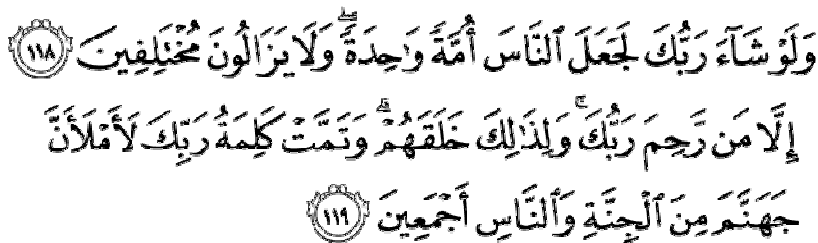
<sup>20</sup> Seyyed Hossein Nasr.(2009) . *Islamic Unity--- the Ideal and Obstacles in the way of its Realization*. “Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition, Revised and Expanded” , ed. Joseph E. B. Lumbard, World Wisdom, Inc.

society is demonstrating to the world that Islam is about sharing peace and love with different civilizations. Different qualities from two nations are manifested when Muslims and Chinese live together such as to be found in Malaysia. Borrowings from other cultures, languages and customs bring mutual understanding and benefit which further support human and social development.

Being Khalifa Allah, Muslims have to accept the Unity of God. The way to manifest the understanding of Unity and at the same time to perform their duties as God's vicegerent is to find peace. It does not only mean a peaceful society but also inner peace which balances and guides the various tendencies of the soul and thoughts in the mind. The Islamic concept of peace can be understood in three aspects.

Firstly, Islam adheres to cultural pluralism and opposes divisiveness.

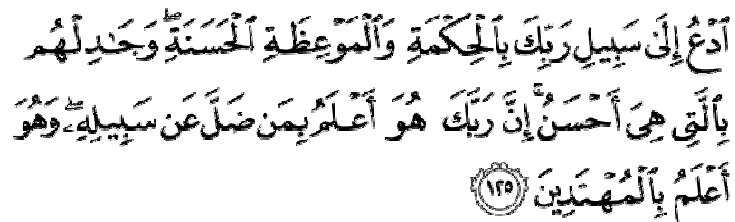
In the process of attaining peace, Islam asks Muslims to communicate with different civilizations with the condition of bringing justice. Islam opposes the situation of one culture dominating the world. Also, Islam opposes conflicts among civilizations. Muslims must accept and work with the differences of religions, race, skin colors, languages and ways of thinking among human beings. As it is mentioned in the Qur'an:


  
 وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۗ وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ مُمْتَلِكِينَ  
 إِلَّا مَن رَّجِمَ رَبُّكَ ۚ وَلِذَلِكَ خَلَقَهُمْ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَةُ رَبِّكَ لَأَمْلَأَنَّ  
 جَهَنَّمَ مِنَ الْجِنَّةِ وَالنَّاسِ أَجْمَعِينَ

“If thy Lord had so willed, He could have made mankind one people: but they will not cease to dispute. Except those on whom thy Lord hath bestowed His Mercy: and for his did He create them”<sup>21</sup>

In the face of differences of civilizations, Islam does not encourage conflicts. On the contrary, Allah asks Muslims to face other nations with tolerance, wisdom and gracious speech.

The Qur'an says:


  
 ادْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ ۗ وَحَدِّثْهُمْ  
 بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ  
 أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

“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.”<sup>22</sup>

The Qur'anic teachings ask Muslims to use the best and most gracious ways to communicate or dispute with other people. It sets a condition for Muslims to be always modest with other nations and cultures. The Qur'anic spirit reveals that harmony is the ideal state that Islam wants to establish when Muslims are with other people. The Qur'an also further confirms this understanding:

<sup>21</sup> The Qur'an:11:118—119.

<sup>22</sup> The Qur'an:16:125

﴿ وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا بِالَّذِي أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴾ (٤٦)

And dispute ye not with the People of the Book, except with means better (than mere disputation), unless it be with those of them who inflict wrong (and injury): but say, "We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and in that which came down to you; Our Allah and your Allah is one; and it is to Him we bow (in Islam)."<sup>23</sup>

The world is created with diversity which is a truth repeated many times in the Qur'an. So, there certainly will be differences between Muslims and other peoples in numerous aspects. For Muslims to see the oneness of God is to accept the diversity of the world, at the same time to believe in the unity of creation and its interrelatedness. As God's vicegerent, it is an obligation for Muslims to seek the common ground to establish dialogue with other civilizations and to accept that all human beings in spite of differences in race, culture and religions come "from the same God" as asserted by the Qur'anic verse above. Mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence is clearly enjoined and conflicts are allowed only if injury is inflicted upon the Muslims.

In the process of attaining peace, Islam accepts diversity of civilizations. However, the ultimate purpose is to communicate with other nations on a shared common ground in order to become an integrated whole. Islam believes that only by realizing unity in the face of diversity that peace and harmony can be achieved.

Secondly, Islam is against enmity and conflicts and enjoins Muslims to care for other human beings.

The Qur'an says:

﴿ كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾ (٢١٦)

"Fighting is prescribed for you, and ye dislike it. But it is possible that ye dislike a thing which is good for you, and that ye love a thing which is bad for you."<sup>24</sup>

The Prophet of Islam said: "Do not pray to confront your enemy, you should ask peace from Allah"<sup>25</sup> He also said that the ugliest word is 'war' which clearly indicates that both from the Qur'an and the saying of the Messenger of God, Islam has a strong opposition towards war. For achieving peace, Muslims are asked to show mercy which is a quality of God.

The definition of love in Islam is divided into two parts. The first part is love towards God and the Prophet of Islam. The second part of love is towards the entire world. Muslims are required to take care of non-Muslims with justice as demonstrated by the Prophet and the first Muslim community in Medina. Muslims as stated clearly by the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet are only allowed to fight non-Muslims who injure them, that is out of self-defense and not aggression.

<sup>23</sup> The Qur'an:29:46

<sup>24</sup> The Qur'an:2:216

<sup>25</sup> Muhammad al-Bukhari. (1995) *The Translation of the Meanings of Summarized Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Muhammad M. Khan, Trans). Kazi Pubns Inc.



The Qur'an says:

لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ أَنَّ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسَطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ ﴿٨﴾

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.<sup>26</sup>

Islam believes that humanity comes from one ancestor, Adam who is the first man God created. Consequently, Islam looks at the entire human race as one family. People from different nations, ethnic groups and tribes are all brothers and sisters from one family. No matter how different they are from each other, Muslims are always asked to have the attitude of love and tolerance towards their brothers and sisters.

The Qur'an says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا ﴿١﴾

“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;...”<sup>27</sup>

Thirdly, the significant way of achieving peace is to be tolerant when facing different cultures.

Muslims believe there is no difficulty in communicating with other cultures even if there are obvious distinctions in religion.

The Qur'an says:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ جَمِيعًا ۚ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكْفُرُ ۚ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٩٩﴾

“If it had been thy Lord's will, they would all have believed,- all who are on earth! wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!”<sup>28</sup>

It is also mentioned in the Qur'an:

<sup>26</sup> The Qur'an. 60:8

<sup>27</sup> The Qur'an. 4:1

<sup>28</sup> The Qur'an.10:99

فَلِذَلِكَ فَادَّعِ وَأَسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَقُلْ  
 ءَامَنْتُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَأُمِرْتُ لِأَعْدِلَ بَيْنَكُمُ اللَّهُ  
 رَبُّنَا وَرَبُّكُمْ لَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ لَا حِجَّةَ بَيْنَنَا  
 وَبَيْنَكُمُ اللَّهُ يَجْمَعُ بَيْنَنَا وَإِلَيْهِ الْمَصِيرُ

“Allah is our Lord and your Lord: for us (is the responsibility for) our deeds, and for you for your deeds. There is no contention between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is (our) Final Goal.”<sup>29</sup>

Based on the Qur’anic guidance, Muslims should accept differences between human beings and to be tolerant when facing differences. It implies that Islam does not allow coercion in order to force others to be the same. The Qur’anic teachings show us that peace and harmony is based on tolerance towards different cultures and races. Simple uniformity by coercion will only cause more serious dissatisfaction and conflicts. God’s creation with its diversity implies that every nation has its advantages and disadvantages and gracious and wise communication will help to realize peaceful and meaningful relations. Mutual trust and mutual benefit will help bring about the sustainable development that is desired.

From the discussion of the Confucian and Islamic teachings, it can be concluded that both civilizations adhere to dialogue between civilizations, and both oppose conflicts. The Confucian idea ‘harmony but not sameness’ reveals its understanding of harmony which contains a dialectical relationship between He (Harmony) and Tong (sameness). It is also firmly based on tolerance of cultural diversity.

In the Islamic context, unity is regarded as the most basic principle. Islamic unity means integration of diverse elements inwardly and outwardly which bestows wholeness upon the human individual. In the realm of society, Islam believes that facing differences from other cultures with tolerance is the way to achieve peace. Only with a peaceful relationship, the world can develop and sustain itself harmoniously.

Both the Confucian and Islamic ideas show that diversity is not opposed to harmony. Only by accepting the truth that the world is diverse in character, that real harmony between human beings can be achieved.

There are also differences between the Confucian and Islamic attitude towards cultural diversity. From the perspective of ideology, Confucianism has a tendency towards secularism. The discussion of ‘He’ and ‘Tong’ are based mainly on human relations. As a monotheistic religion, every Islamic idea is based on the relation between man and God. The Confucian explanation on the other hand, is mostly about humanity, the nation and the world. In the Islamic understanding, the world is basically separated into two parts: the Muslim community and the non-Muslim community. Nevertheless, both communities share a common ancestry in that they are the descendents of Adam and Eve, and created by the one and same God, Allah.

The Confucian idea of ‘He’ has a clear meaning as harmony. Its purpose is to keep the world in a stable and balanced condition. From the perspective of social development, it is recognized as peace. And it is based on acceptance and tolerance among different cultures and under this condition, conflicts will be a minor occurrence and not a dominant feature.

The Islamic concept of peace is based on the understanding of Oneness of God. Islamic unity gives the concept of peace a profound meaning in that God has created the world and humanity to be diverse in nature but as God’s vicegerents on earth, Muslims have to forge and establish peace and harmony among human beings and nations in the face of this diversity.

<sup>29</sup> *The Qur’an*. 42:15

Therefore, both the Confucian ideas of He, and the Islamic concept of Salam express the spirit of harmony in a world that is clearly diverse in nature. People who understand the diversity of the world and are eager for world peace will certainly wish for a harmonious situation between the different civilizations and find resonance with both the Confucian ideas of He and the Islamic Salam.

The current world is becoming a globalized village. The communication between different civilizations is getting more rapid and fast paced. Thus, ensuing friction and misunderstanding are also increasing. Instead of creating and encouraging conflicts between civilizations, we should use the technologically advanced modes of communication to establish and forge greater understanding, respect and co-operation between nations so that we can have a harmonious and peaceful existence despite our numerous differences.

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