



Wasatiyyah
Approach:
The Definition,
Conception and
Application

Dr. Abdullah Md Zin



First Edition 2013

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Title:

WASATIYYAH APPROACH: THE DEFINITION, CONCEPTION AND APPLICATION

ISBN: 978-967-0581-07-1

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Published by:

Institut Wasatiyyah Malaysia
Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Aras 4, Blok B3, Kompleks Jabatan Perdana Menteri
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62502 Putrajaya Malaysia
Tel: +603- 887 23522
Fax: +603-88883121

Printed by:

GLOBAL SMART PRINTINGS SDN. BHD.
A-G 20, Jalan UP 1/1A, Spring Ville
Taman Ukay Perdana
68000 Ampang
Selangor



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Honourable Dato' Seri Dr. Abdullah bin Md. Zin was born on the 2nd of August 1946 in Kampung Alor Selising, Besut, Terengganu. He was granted four children with his wife Datin Seri Wan Naimah Binti Haji Wan Latif.

Having received his early education at *Padang Luas Primary School*, Terengganu (1954-1958) until he completed his Standard Six, he then furthered his studies at *Ittifaqiyyah Religious Secondary School*, Jerteh, Terengganu (1959-1962). He then continued his studies at Sultan Zainal Abidin Upper Religious



Secondary School, Kuala Terengganu (1963-1966). His accomplishments were only the beginning- in the period of 1968-1972, he had studied to be conferred B.A. (Hons) Da'wah and Usuluddin, from Madinah Islamic University; from 1972 to 1973 he studied to be awarded B.A. (Hons) Syariah, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt; from 1973 to 1974 M.A. Da'wah, Al-Azhar University, Cairo, Egypt, in 1975 he received his Diploma in Education from Ain Shams University, Cairo, Egypt; and from 1986-1990 he had furthered his studies and obtained Ph.D in Da'wah and Sufism from Kent University in Canterbury, England.

The Honourable Dato' Seri used to serve as a Teacher in Klang Islamic College (June 1976-April 1977); and later at the National University of Malaysia or (UKM), from 1977 to 1993 he had been appointed the position of a Lecturer; from the year 1993 to 2000 as an Associate Professor, and from 2000 to 2004 he had been appointed a Professor. Other than being a



lecturer, he was also given a significant role in UKM's Academic Administration (1991-1997), and later was appointed as the Head of the Da'wah and Leadership Studies Department; (1998-1999), before being named the Dean of the Islamic Studies Faculty. In the period of 2000-2001 he had established the Malaysian Islamic University College (KUIM) or better known as the Malaysian Islamic Science University (USIM). From 2001 to 2004 he had served as the Professor and the Deputy of Rector, KUIM.

In the political arena, he had been granted several significant positions: a five-year period of 2004 to 2008 witnessed him taking the Besut Parliamentary seat, simultaneously the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, from 2004 to 2009 he had been a member of the UMNO High Council, and in the same year as the Deputy Chairman of the Religious Bureau of UMNO Malaysia, then as the Chairman of the Religious Bureau of Terengganu UMNO Liason

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Body. From 2004 to 2009, he had been named the Deputy Head of UMNO for Besut Division and from 2008 up to the present he is the Treasurer of UMNO for Besut Division.

He is now serving as the Advisor on Islamic Affairs to The Right Honourable Prime Minister from 2009 up to the present; Besut Parliamentary Member from 2008 up to the present; and UMNO's Treasurer for Besut Division from 2009 up to the present. He is currently the Malaysian Institute of Wasattiyah Chairman beginning December 2012 up until now.



FOREWORD BY DIRECTOR OF MALAYSIA NSTITUTE OF WASATIYYAH (IWM)

Alhamdulillah, I would like to express our deepest gratitude to Allah SWT for His blessing which made the publication of this book a success.

On behalf of Malaysian Institute of Wasatiyyah (IWM), I am also very thankful to Malaysian Government under the lead of R.H. Dato' Seri Mohd Najib Tun Hj Abdul Razak for believing in us and for giving us the honour to carry the responsibility to translate and realize Wasatiyyah approach in our beloved country.



The publication of this little book is one of the preliminary efforts by IWM in providing explanation and understanding of Wasatiyyah approach. The definition and clarification of Wassatiyah approach must be derived from credible and respected resources and trusted to be the accurate or *thiqah* reference. This is because without this authority, there might be parties that would attempt to distort the real understanding and eventually would result in failure for us to achieve the desired positive outcomes. Worst, we would be labeled as an ummah that is just mediocre and average.

Instead, the true definition of Wasatiyyah is far from what is literally translated by some parties. In fact, this approach has explicit and implied meaning which must be explored and explained through the appreciation and understanding of the history of Rasulullah S.A.W.



Insya Allah, this publication will be the start of the explanation of the true Wasatiyyah approach which is much needed by the *ummah* of Islam, especially for us in Malaysia.

It is hoped that this approach would not only be specified for the Muslims but also for the whole nation of Malaysia regardless their religious and cultural background. May Allah bless this effort as the fulfillment of *Fardhu Kifayah*.

Haji Mohd Yusof bin Din

Director

Malaysian Institute of Wasatiyyah.



Wasatiyyah Approach: The Definition, Conception and Application

1. INTRODUCTION

The leadership of R.H Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak, the Prime Minister of Malaysia introduced 1Malaysia, ***“People First, Performance Now”***. 1Malaysia is the calling to foster national unity among the multiracial and multifaith Malaysians based on key values which should be practised by every citizen.



The idea, 1Malaysia is a programme which comprises a package of national unity, development, harmony, peace, and security which is aligned with the principle of ***“People First, Performance Now.”*** 1Malaysia is also the continuation of the Government’s effort in developing the Nation to be united and to practice strong ethics.

The notion of 1Malaysia is also parallel to the spirit evident in the history of Rasulullah S.A.W. during the development of a nation and Islamic civilisation in Madinah. The community of Madinah consisted of various ethnicities and religions living in peace and harmony upholding the Madinah Constitution which supported and celebrated the freedom in religion, justice for all and protection for the minority while giving freedom for the non-Muslims to observe their religion.



The excellence of the community of Madinah which was the result of the Holy Prophet's leadership and his companion was recognised by Allah (s.w.t). as stated in Surah Ali Imran, verse 110:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَتَنْهَوْنَ
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

This means:

“You are the best nation [ever] brought forth for mankind: you bid what is right and forbid what is wrong, and have faith in Allah”.

In Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143 explains that an excellent community (**ummah**) is moderate *ummah* (**ummatan wasatan**) which refers to an *ummah* that is just, unbiased neither towards the life now nor the life hereafter, but must be balanced between the two as stated in the following words of Allah (s.w.t).



وَكَذَٰلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ
وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

This means:

“Thus We have made you a middle nation that you may be witnesses to the people, and that the Apostle may be a witness to you”.

Learning from the holy words, it is affirmed that **“wasatiyyah”** is the approach advocated by Islam. The approach is comprehensive and integrated in nature which is highly beneficial in solving the issues and needs of *ummah*.

The approach of **wasatiyyah** also means practising Islamic teachings in a holistic and perfect manner in each aspect an individual and a community life by increasing the quality of life of the *ummah*. This continuous improvement encompasses development in education, humanity,



unity, economy and finance, law and order as well as defence.

2. THE DEFINITION OF “WASATIYYAH”

Lexically, the term “*wasatiyyah*” is an abstract noun from the root word “*al-wasat*” which forms the word “*al-Awsat*” which means truly just and unextreme.

Another term in Arabic which is similar to *wasatiyyah* is “*i’tidal*” which means unextreme and loose.

Allah (s.w.t). has stated the term *wasatan* in his words which means: “*And thus we have made you a just community*” surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143. This is also mentioned by Rasulullah S.A.W. that the term “*middle*” in his words which means:

“The best thing is always the most middle.”



In English ***“Wasatiyyah”*** which rooted from ***“Wasat”*** means middle or balanced while ***“Awsat”*** means the mid of everything. Similar definition applies to the word ***“virtue”*** which means ***“the mid between two bad characters or two bad extremes”***.

3. WASATIYYAH IN THE HOLY QURAN

Al-Quran uses wasatiyyah to imply middleness, moderation and balanced, for example, in the following verse:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

This means:

“Those who, when spending, are neither wasteful nor tightfisted, and moderation lies between these (extremes)”.

(Surah Al-Furqan, verse: 67)



وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ
مَلُومًا تَحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

This means:

“Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether, or you will sit blameworthy, regretful”.

(Surah Al-Isra', verse: 29).

وَلَا تَجْهَرُ بِصَلَاتِكَ وَلَا تُخَافِتُ بِهَا وَابْتَغِ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ﴿١١٠﴾

This means:

“Be neither loud in your prayer, nor murmur it, but follow a middle course between these” (which means do not recite Al-Quran verses in solah too loudly or too softly but loud enough to be audible for the ma'mun).

(Surah Al-Isra', verse: 110).



قَالَ إِنَّهُ يَقُولُ إِنَّهَا بَقَرَةٌ لَا فَارِضٌ وَلَا يَكْرُ عَوَانُ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ

This means:

“Musa answered, ‘Allah says, she is a cow, neither old nor young, of a middle age...”

(Surah Al-Baqarah, verse: 68).

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ
مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنْ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ

This means:

“By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world. Be good (to others) just as Allah has been good to you...”

(Surah Al-Qasas, verse: 77).



رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾

This means:

“Our Lord, give us good in this world and good in the Hereafter, and save us from the punishment of the Fire”. (This is the best prayer (dua) for a Muslim”).

(Surah Al-Baqarah, verse: 201).

4. WASATIYYAH IN AL-SUNNAH

Moderation approach practised by Prophet Muhammad S.A.W is evident in various aspects of the Muslims’ lives during his era, among them are:

The rejection of extreme priesthood way of life:

Extreme priesthood can be defined as the act of denying the practice of good and bebeficial things in



life for instance, marriage and development. Al-Tabrani narrated from Uthman bin Maz'un in which he said: ***“O Rasulullah, please permit me to undergo castration (ikhtisa’) to eliminate sexual desire”***. Hence Rasulullah S.A.W. said to him, ***“O Uthman, verily Allah has changed the life of priesthood to a way of life (Hanif religion) which is easy”***.

Similarly, al-Bayhaqi narrated that Rasulullah S.A.W. stated ***“Get married, and I shall be proud of you among other ummahs on the Judgement Day and do not practise the life of Christian priesthood”***.

The permission to entertain, laugh and joke especially in gathering like a wedding celebration:

Rasulullah S.A.W. was against the practice of being rigid and too serious at places and occasions where human need to rest, entertain, laugh and joke around.



By the same token, Rasulullah S.A.W. also gave permission to play music, sing and dance in gatherings and celebrations like wedding and *eid* celebration. He, once permitted the *Habsyis* to dance in *Nabawi Mosque* during an *eid* celebration as he stated: ***“So that the Jews know that our religion is easy. Verily, I am being send with the Hanif religion which is easy (hanif in aqidah and easy in the rules and regulations)”***. (Hadith narrated by Ahmad).

The encouragement to take care of beauty and enjoy the gift and blessings from Allah (s.w.t):

It is *halal* and permitted for Muslims to wear beautiful attire and use fragrances, as he stated ***“Verily Allah is beautiful and likes beauty”***. (Hadith narrated by Ahmad, Muslim and Tirmizi).



The overlap between the rights of Allah, self and the creations:

Rasulullah S.A.W. is against extreme habits in performing fast, solah, zikir and reciting of al-Quran to the extent of violating the rights of self, family and community. He advocated that justice means giving the rights to those who do deserve neither more nor less. This was exemplified in his action to Abdullah bin Amr when he was too extreme in his Islamic rituals as Rasullullah S.A.W stated to him: ***“Verily your body, your eyes, your family and your guests have rights on you.”*** Also narrated by Tirmizi: ***“Hence, give the right to those who own the rights”***.



5. WASATIYYAH APPROACH IN THE PRACTICE OF THE *SAHABAH* (COMPANIONS OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD S.A.W.) AND *TABI'IN*

Rasulullah S.A.W. had always encouraged his *Sahabah* to adopt *wasatiyyah* approach in their daily lives. Hence they implemented the approach in all aspects of their lives including leadership and administration, *da'wah* and education, economic management, social and others.

Narrated by Ali bin Abi Talib, as he stated:

“The best ummah are those who belong in the middle group. Those who are slow would be able to catch up while those who are more advanced would be able to slow down”. Narrated by Ibn Abi Syaibah: What Sayyidina Ali meant was he hated the habit of being extreme and also carelessness.



Similarly narrated by Abdullah bin Amr who said:

“Work for the worldly business as though you are going to live forever dan work for the world hereafter as if you are going to die tomorrow.”

The previous words mean to advocate Muslims to work for both, the world now and hereafter. It is forbidden to practise one part while neglecting the other part.

Umar bin Abdul Aziz in his sermon mentioned:

“Verily, among things that Allah really loves is being moderate in making effort, forgiving when in power and use diplomacy in leadership. Those who do good to others in life of this World, Allah will in return do good the him/her in the Hereafter.”



Al-Hassan stated:

“Your life journey – in the name of Allah, other than Whom there is no other god – between the two which is tight and loose. Therefore, you must be patient – may Allah bless you – verily the amount of ahli sunnah was very small. They neither visited the rich nor were they with the bid’ah members. They were patient in practising sunnah until the day they died. Hence – InsyaAllah – their attitude. (Narration of Al-Darimi)

He also stated:

“Pursue knowledge whilst not neglecting ibadah and perform ibadah whilst not neglecting knowledge because those who work without knowledge would bring more harm than good. Those who act without knowledge will fight the ummah of Muhammad with their swords.” (Ibn al-Qayyim, Miftah al-Sa’adah)



The group referred to was the Kharijites who killed among Muslims. This is due to the lack in thinking and not because of their unkind hearts.

6. WASATIYYAH APPROACH ACCORDING TO PREVIOUS ULAMA (PREVIOUS SCHOLARS)

The *Sahabah* and *Tabi'in* were those who strongly supported the wasatiyyah approach. Similarly the vast majority of scholars in *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *usul* and also the *mutakallimim* strongly advocated wasatiyyah and of course, they did not support the group of “*restrictors of the religion*” and the “*loosers of the religion*”.

The distinguished ulama who were strong supporters of wasatiyyah were al-Mawardi (M.450H), Imam al-Haramayn al-Juwayni (M.478H.), Imam al-Ghazali (M.505H), Ibn Qudamah (M.620H), Ibn Taymiyyah (M.728H), Ibn al-Qayyim (M.758H) and al-



Shatibi (M.790H).

With no intention to explain their opinions in details, but just to mention to those who are interested, do explore further the opinion of Ibn Taymiyyah in his book, ***“Majmu’ al-Fatawa”***; Ibn al-Qayyim in his book, ***“Madarij al-Salikin”*** and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in his book, ***“Ihya’ Ulum al-Din”***.

7. WASATIYYAH APPROACH ACCORDING TO ULAMA OF *MUTA’AKHIRIN* (CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARS)

Among the *Muta’akhirin* ulama who discussed Wasatiyyah were Muhammad ‘Abduh, Rashid Rida, Mahmud Shaltut and Hasan al-Banna.



1. The opinion of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida about Wasatiyyah

The author of Tafsir *“al-Manar”*, Muhammad Rashid Rida and his teacher Muhammad Abduh had given an interesting translation of the words of Allah (s.w.t) in surah al-Baqarah, verse: 143 which mean:

“Thus We have made you a middle nation.”

The term *“al-wasat”* can be defined as just and excellence. This means if there is more of something, therefore it is considered extreme. By the same token if there is less of something, it is considered as negligence and carelessness. An increase or decrease from what is supposed to be is hence deemed as a flaw or misdeed. Hence excellence is the midway between the two flaws ***(the weakness of both extreme; “increase and decrease”).***



In addition, Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida further explained that before Islam, there were two groups of people: the first group, they were materialistic and their focus was only on physical importance. They consisted of the Jews and the *Musyrikin*. Whereas, the second group only emphasized on spiritual and they abandoned life in this world. They were the Nasara and a group of Hindus in India.

Therefore, Islam focuses on both rights which are the rights of the soul and the rights of the physical. In other words, it can be stressed that Islam has given the rights to various aspects of a human because a human has a body and soul; has animal instincts and angelic traits.



2. Wasatiyyah According to Mahmud Shaltut

Among the ulama who gave detailed explanation on wasatiyyah was Sheikh Mahmud Shaltut, Sheikh al-Azhar. He wrote this in his tafsir (*Min Tafsir al-Quran al-karim*) or translation of the Holy Quran,

Islam is a truthful guide which establishes an appropriate law for all time and places. The situations the *ummah* of human in the whole world are divided into two: *ifrat* and *tafrit*. These situations can be observed in all matters of *aqidah*, *akhlaq*, the relations of human and life, individual and community, international relations and others.

Islam introduces *manhaj* (methodology) for middleness in all aspects to secure goodness and harmony for the human race. Islam promotes moderation, middleness and balance without any elements of extremism.



a. Wasatiyyah in aqidah

In Islamic *aqidah* or faith, Islam explains the midway among those who deny the existence of God and they believe that the world happens naturally and coincidently as recorded in the Quranic verse:

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

This means:

“There is nothing but the life of this world: we live and we die, and we shall not be resurrected.”

(Surah al-Mu'minun, verse: 37).

On the other hand, there is another group who believe in many gods, they ascribe partners to Allah by believing in other gods. The *aqidah* of Islam clearly states that Allah is the Only God, the God that to be worshipped and other than Whom there is no other god as stated in the firman of Allah (s.w.t).



قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَكِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

This means:

“Say (Muhammad), ‘He is Allah, the One. Allah is the All-embracing. He neither begat, nor was begotten, nor has He any equal.’

(Surah al-Ikhlās, verse: 1 – 4).

b. Wasatiyyah in akhlaq

Wasatiyyah in the aspect of *akhlaq* (***the practice of virtue, morality and manners***) also resides in the middle of two extremes whereby the first group lives without the guide of good values while the second is very rigid and too restricted in practising the good values. Hence wasatiyyah in Islamic *akhlaq* is to be in the middle of not too tight and not too wasteful either, not too proud nor too self degrading and not too coward or overly daring. The foundation of *akhlaq* is



stipulated in the firman of Allah (s.w.t).

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ
مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

This means:

“Do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it altogether, I or you will sit blameworthy, regretful”.

(Surah Al-Isra', verse: 29).

And the words of Allah (s.w.t):

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا وَكَانَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ
قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

This means:

“Those who, when spending, are neither wasteful nor tightfisted, and moderation lies between these (extremes)”.

(Surah al-Furqan, verse: 67).



c. Wasatiyyah in life

The relation of human and life must also be based on the concept of middleness between the extreme of material world in which include food, drinks, lust, wealth gathering and status. On the other extreme which is spiritually, the rejection of life as a whole, for instance, not wanting to be married, not making effort in earning a living and so on. Hence Islam has endorsed the midway as stated in the following:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا

This means:

“By the means of what Allah has given you, seek the abode of the Hereafter, while not forgetting your share of this world.”

(Surah al-Qasas, verse: 77).



فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ

This means:

“And when the prayer is finished disperse through the land and seek Allah’s grace.”

(Surah al-Jum’ah, verse: 10).

قُلْ مَنْ حَرَّمَ زِينَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي أَخْرَجَ لِعِبَادِهِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتِ مِنَ الرِّزْقِ

This means:

“Say, “Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants, and the good things of [His] provision?”

(Surah al-A’raf, verse: 32).

d. Wasatiyyah in legislation

In formulating the law of the Country which is closely related to human lives, Islam never gives



absolute freedom to human without any limit. Thus, Islam clearly stipulates some matters, while in some areas allows freedom in formulating the law. In areas stipulated in *syara'*, the human mind will not be able to fully understand the *hikmah* or reasons underlying some rules like specific *ibadat* or ritual which is not bound by time and place. These kinds of ritual are permanent in nature and do not change. Whereas rules that are related to certain obligations for instance, the administration of a country, Islam allows the flexibility to form *ijtihad* (decision in Islamic law) for the sake of *ummah*.

3. Wasatiyyah According to Hassan al-Banna

Hasan al-Banna, the founder of Ikhwan Muslimin movement in Egypt was among the ulama who advocated ***Wasatiyyah Islamiyyah*** when he found himself being in the middle of two groups. At one extreme was the group who fought for freedom and

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change while at the other side, there was the group who was rigid and rejected change.

Similarly when he dealt with a group of overly rational people and another which was at the end of the other side who totally neglected the element of mind and thinking. Hasan al-Banna was also considered witty in his balanced stance between those who were blindly influenced by the advancement of the West and those who limited everything within Islam and rejected any achievements by the Westerners in science and technology.

Hasan al-Banna was famous for his personality that was balanced and in moderation. He was regarded as *Salafi* and *sufi*, *turathi* and *asri*, *muhafiz* and *mujaddid*, *abid* and *mujahid*. Similarly, he regarded Islam as the religion of *ibadah* and *qiadah*, *din* and *daulah*, *mushaf* and sword.



8. COMMENTS AND OPINIONS

R.H. Dato' Sri Mohd Najid Tun Haji Abdul Razak spoke during the meeting between Ulama and Umara in February, 5th 2010 suggested that the Muslims to appreciate and practise the approach of ***“Wasatiyyah”***. During the gathering he further emphasized this in his speech:

“Wasatiyyah approach emphasizes on Islamic teaching in moderation, balanced and holistic in all activities of an individual and community lives. This is evident by giving priority to the development of the quality of the ummah’s lives from the aspects of education, human capital development, economic and financial system, knowledge and unity”.

Actually, the practice of ***Wasatiyyah*** approach by Muslims in Malaysia specifically and in this region generally has been around for quite some time. In



Malaysian context, the process of upholding “*The Syiar of Islam*” (the slogan of Islam) in the name of Wasatiyyah began more obviously since we gained Independence. We cannot have the era when only certain leaders emphasize the appreciation of Islam because every leader has his own style. This is evident as we uphold the Federal Constitution by deciding that Islam is the Official Religion in line with the history and the practice in this Country. Nevertheless, the Federal Constitution also states that other religions are free to be embraced in peace and harmony.

The Federal Constitution clearly states the status of Islam as the Official Religion of the Federation without undermining the roles of other religions; the status of Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language without undermining the roles of other languages; and the privileges of the Malays and the Bumiputra (*native*) of Sabah dan Sarawak without denying the legal rights of other ethnicity. This is the strong



evidence of the principles ***Wasatiyyah*** that are practised in the Federal Constitution.

Malaysia is a multiracial country with 60 percent of the citizens are Muslims. The biggest minority of 40 percent are those who embrace various religions like Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity and others. Besides, Malaysians also vary in terms of language, culture and socio-economic status.

Despite the complex diversity, the status of Islam is well protected as it is officially stipulated in the highest law of the country which are the Federal Constitution and the State Constitutions. This is further enforced with the establishment of various institutions to manage and implement The Syariah Law, for instance, Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (***Malaysian Islamic Development Department***) and Jabatan Kehakiman Syariah Malaysia (***Malaysian Syariah Judiciary Department***). In addition, a few



more institutions were established to enhance the social and economic development of the Muslims. For example, there are Jabatan Wakaf, Zakat dan Haji (*Department of Waqaf, Zakat and Hajj*) at the federal level dan Pusat Pungutan Zakat (*Zakat Collection Centres*) at state level. This clearly shows that Islam in Malaysia is not just about religious rituals but it is practised as a complete and comprehensive or *syumul* way of life.

Although Islam has been given a preeminent status in the Malaysian legal and administrative systems other religions are also given constitutional rights and are free to be practised peacefully.

In managing the ethnic and religious relationships in Malaysia, since Independence, the Government has always favoured the philosophy of integration rather than assimilation. There is huge difference between these two philosophies. Integration means diversity is



respected, sustained and celebrated. This is very much consistent with Islamic principles that everybody is free to choose his/her religion and that diversity form the basis to get to know each other better. Contrary to the concept of integration, the assimilation approach identifies differences in order to create a common identity. Malaysia is not in favour of this approach in developing the nation as it does not fit the realities of the citizens.

Actually Wasatiyyah approach is not newly introduced in Malaysia. It has been around for decades since Independence. Malaysia, as a democratic Islamic country has appeared as a modern industrialised nation with high-middle income. We has also been successful in defying the stereotype that Islamic countries tend to be less democratic, more autocratic, with the stigma of despite being wealthy with natural resources, are incapable of managing it well.



Balanced moderation that we are advocating is not in the sense of being mediocre as defined by some foreign parties or the West. Instead, *wasatiyyah* by Islamic definition is the concept that has been instilled and exemplified by the Holy Prophet Muhammad S.A.W through the chronology of history including the spirit of Madinah Charter and the balanced moderation practised by the Companions, *tabi'in*, previous *ulama* and *muta'akhirin* ulama who are venerated.

The Prime Minister, R.H. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib has declared Wasatiyyah as the guiding principle of 1Malaysia; "People First, Performance Now". This is the philosophy and formula that will realise the nation's aspirations in achieving Vision 2020.

With the faith that Islam is a blessing to the entire universe YAB Dato' Sri Mohd Najib when he spoke in the public debate in the 65th United Nations General



Assembly in di New York, Monday, September, 27 2010, he stressed:

“Attempts to demonize Islam offend the one and a half billion adherents of the religion. It intensifies the divide between the broad Muslim world and the West. The real issue is not between Muslims and non-Muslims but between the moderates and extremists of all religions, be it Islam, Christianity or Judaism...”

He further explained:

“We must choose moderation over extremism. We must choose negotiations over confrontation. We must choose to work together and not against each other...”

In his speech he finally proposed the Global Movement of the Moderates for all religions to

.....



cooperate in fighting and rejecting the extremists that threaten the world with their bigotry and biased opinion.

The speech by R.H. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib signifies Malaysia's determination to see global peace strive again, hence eliminate the extremists. More interestingly, he also displayed his confidence to propose the idea to save the world from sinking into the abyss of despair and deprivation. The clash of the Islam and West worlds is not the main issue that has led the world to such chaos. Instead, it is caused by the extremists and opportunists who took advantage of the situation.

The idea of moderation proposed by Dato' Sri Mohd Najib should be supported by international community to make it the new way forward of the New World in order to stragise towards just, equality and world peace.



CONCLUSION

To uphold “*The Syiar of Islam*” is indeed a noble cause which must be maintained within our Nation. The Muslim Ummah must be the leader, champion and fighter of our sacred religion. Wasatiyyah approach has been selected by the Government because it is an approach that is moderate and balanced, neither extreme not it is loose or careless.

This approach is an approach for human, community and nation development based on the holistic Islamic teachings which comprise the needs of physical, spiritual and ***aqli*** (rasional). This means, Islam is a complete way of life encompassing all aspects of human life. Islam is aqidah, syariah, akhlaq and also includes the aspects of development and civilisation. At the same time the freedom of other believers to practise their religion is guaranteed and protected in the Federal Constitution.



The Muslims now should not be reminiscing on the excellence of Islam in the past. Instead they should be the exemplary *ummah* or *khaira ummah* in making history and developing civilisation. In order to build the excellent personality as in the Renaissance of Islam, the mastery of both revealed and ***aqli*** knowledge must be reinforced and strengthen.

Indeed, there is much more to be done for us to climb the ladder of success for us to achieve the excellence of the previous great Muslims Scholars. However, most important, we must continuously take further steps, so that today is better than yesterday and that tomorrow is better than today as stated by Allah (s.w.t). in surah al-Taubah, verse 105:

وَقُلْ أَعْمَلُوا فَسَيَرَى اللَّهُ عَمَلَكُمْ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ

This means:

“And say, ‘Go on working: Allah will see your conduct, and His Apostle and the faithful...”





