

Diversity Management in the Era of Open Civilization: A Call to Multiplexity

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This talk will deal with one of the most pressing problems of our time: diversity management. By diversity management I mean governing diversity of ideas, interests, innate and inherited qualities by accommodating them. Most of the conflicts humanity suffers today in America, Europe, Balkans, Middle East and Far East have been caused by the failure of social management systems. This is because social diversity turns into a source of conflict if not governed well. I name the present age “open civilization” because of the increase in the interconnectedness of the civilizations in the world due to the developments in transportation and communication. In the past civilizations were relatively isolated by geographical boundaries from each other. Yet distance died today and the world turned into a small village. In our age, people from different civilizations live together in the same society and share the same social space. Consequently the Other is not there but here. This observation forces us to ask the following question: How are we going to manage this increasing diversity in our societies? How can we manage to give freedom to social groups from different civilizations but at the same time keep social order and unity? What happens if the freedom of a group conflicts with the freedoms of another group? How can freedoms be negotiated in a cross-cultural setting? I will try to answer these questions by deriving examples from Islamic civilization in particular from Umayyad rule in Andalusia, Mughal rule in India and the Ottoman Empire in the classical and modern period before its collapse. I will argue that lessons may be derived for today from the Islamic civilization which has a rich legacy of diversity management over a wide geography and long history. I will conclude by arguing that we need "diversity management studies" as a new academic field in our universities to forestall conflicts prior to "conflict resolution studies" which come in to play after the conflict occurs.

This presentation will try to answer the following questions: (1) Why do conflicts occur? (2) Is it possible to prevent conflicts before occurring? How? (3) What is the difference between diversity management and conflict resolution? (4) Why do we need an effective diversity management system today more than ever? (5) How can we manage diversity today by learning from the Islamic and Ottoman heritage of diversity management?

Q1: Why do conflicts occur?

Argument: Conflicts occur because of the illusion that it is possible to dispense with diversity or the failing diversity management systems.

Diversity is either a source of conflict or power and prosperity depending on how it is managed.

Social diversity manifests itself in the difference of ideas, beliefs, interests, inherited, innate and acquired qualities.

Levels of diversity: micro (individual), meso (group), macro (civilizations)

Multiple civilizations and religions in the world, past and present, are reflections of human diversity at the global level

Is social diversity indispensable?

There have been two approaches to diversity, its consequence and what to do with it

Pluralist Democratic: Diversity is indispensable, a source of power and wealth, therefore manage it

Authoritarian Extremist: Diversity is dispensable, a threat to social unity and national identity, therefore eliminate it.

HISTORY: Diversity is indispensable because it is God's will and creation.

RELIGION (Islam): Diversity is indispensable

Q2: How to prevent conflicts before occurring?

Argument: Managing diversity is the best way to prevent conflicts before occurring. A multiplex worldview is the most effective way of managing diversity of ideas and thus accommodating discourse communities. The multiplexity was practiced in Islamic civilization, the last example of which is the Ottoman Empire, to accommodate diverse Muslim and non-Muslim groups in theology, law, ethics and mysticism.

Q3: What is the difference between diversity management and conflict resolution?

The present focus in the world today is to solve the conflict after it occurs as represented by the conflict resolution studies. I would like to reverse this approach by focusing on forestalling the conflict beforehand.

Diversity Management (DM) vs. Conflict Resolution (CR)

DM

Beforehand

Preventive

Forward looking

Less costly

CR

Afterward

Curating

Backward looking

More costly

Q4: Why is an effective diversity management system more important than ever today?

Argument 4: This is because the structure of social diversity has changed in our age and we entered the era of open civilization.

The era of open civilization is characterized by two structural changes:

1. Changing network of relations among civilizations: all are closely connected but not only the neighboring ones.

2. Emergence of multi-civilizational society and transformation of all societies into multi-civilizational societies

Q5: How to best manage diversity today?

Argument: A multiplex worldview is the best way of managing diversity.

Two responses to diversity: Multiplicity versus multiplexity

1. Multiplicity: postmodern, relativistic, horizontal

2. Multiplexity: traditional, recognizes relativism only at a level without generalization, vertical, includes horizontal multiplicity, doesn't fall in the pitfall of absolutist relativism.

It was practiced in Islamic civilization

Multiplex Traditional Islamic Worldview

1 Multiplex ontology: visible world, invisible world, divine world

2 Multiplex epistemology: reason, sense perception, reported knowledge.

3 Multiplex methodology: rational, empirical, mystic

4 Multiplex hermeneutics: external meaning, internal meaning, meaning of meaning

5 Multiplex truth: truth vary at each level of existence and knowledge.

Multiplex Traditional Islamic Normative System with multivalued logic

Multiplex normative system: 9 norms to be attached to human action.

Multiplexity in law with a multivalued logic

Multiplexity in morality

-shariah (law): Reciprocity, Retaliation

-tariqah: Forgiving

-haqiqah: Doing good in response to evilness

Multiplex Objectives of law:

Providing the necessities (Daruriyyat): universal axiomatic rights

Providing the needs (Hajiyat): legal rights

Providing the beautifying needs (Tahsiniyyat): moral rights

SOCIAL LEVEL

Diversity within Muslim community

Schools of philosophy

Schools of theology

Schools of law

Schools of mysticism (Sufis)

Diversity outside Muslim Community

System of Millahs (*Millet* System) in which each religious community was considered a millet. *Millet* means a religious community.

There were some required courses in the Ottoman education system to teach how to deal with diversity which include the following:

- Methodology of jurisprudence (*Usul al-Fiqh*)
- Science of disagreement (*‘Ilm al-khilaf*)
- Etiquette of conversation and debate (*Adab al-bath wa al-munazarah*)

However, the shift at the turn of the last century from the Ottoman MILLET SYSTEM to nation state in the Muslim world brought about a long lasting eclipse of the Islamic diversity management system and led Muslim world into social conflicts.

Thus the Islamic heritage is discontinued today and replaced by extremist secularist nationalism or religious extremism in the service of nation states. Both see diversity as a threat and impose a single national ideology on all citizens.

CONCLUSION

Diversity is the most important and indispensable feature of human

societies at the global and local levels. Attempts to eliminate diversity lead to social conflicts. Likewise, ineffective systems of social diversity also lead to conflict. Therefore diversity should be taken as given and should be accommodated.

However, the structure of diversity and the relations among diverse social groups may change over time. In these conjectures, we need to accordingly change our diversity management systems as well.

Today, we are experiencing a fundamental change in the structure of social diversity and the relations among diverse social group, which I call open civilization. In this era, we need a very effective diversity management system more than ever because the potential for conflict is greater than ever. Likewise, as part of the paradigm shift I am calling to, we need to turn our focus from conflict resolution to conflict prevention through diversity management.

I argue that the best system of accommodating and managing diversity and preventing conflicts before occurring is through a multiplex worldview. Ottomans applied the multiplex system of diversity management successfully in such areas of Balkans and Middle East. We can learn from this heritage to establish a multiplex diversity management system in the era of open civilization.