

Virtualizing the Fundamental Aspects of Wasatiyyah (Islamic Moderation): An Exploratory Revision

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Abstract: This is an exploratory study on the terminological term of ‘al-Wasatiyyah’. It is an attempt to examine the term in a comprehensive and practical manner within the current context. The issue is crucial since the term ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ epitomizes the current Malaysian’s governmental policy where ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ been declared as its socio-political landmark in facing today’s complexities and dynamic changes. The international political and security situation can change dramatically without any warning. The task of managing Foreign policy has become equally difficult. It calls for a more pragmatic, flexible and compromise approach. This can be achieved through analysing its utilization as per its original resources in the Glorious Quran and the Prophetic tradition. The main finding revealed that the term remains an important counterpoint to structural explanation on interpersonal understanding and socio-cultural engagements within human socio-cultural perspective in the form of clear functional characteristics.

Key words: Al-Wasatiyyah, socio-political, socio-cultural, structure, compromise, approach

INTRODUCTION

The Muslim scholars are in the agreement that the terminological concept of ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ is an objective principle within Islamic educational practices. Therefore, it’s absolutely wrong to conclude that ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ as an academic terminology within Islamic educational theory is the one that lead Muslim individual personality to become regressive, unadventurous, incline to a comfort zone and living without initiative toward advancement and productivities. Consequently, they present become nowhere and no place within contemporary global societies. In fact, it should be chosen as a general policy within Muslim community in preparing for a progressive personality, positive actions and reactions. This is observable especially within the contemporary global terrorism attacks and motivated to practice an extreme reaction, be unable to recognize the good standards and outside the border of society ethical wisdom in order to fulfil it’s demands at the cost of innocent lives due to small differences between religious belief or understanding, interpretation and others. Indeed, it is very upset to observe that human being always experiencing various tribulations, challenges, social

conflicts, misunderstandings and miscommunication, even among themselves from time to time without taking any lesson from their previous history.

Are they perceived those passed tribulations are not worthwhile to be learnt? Indeed, history should be studied comprehensively for its own sake. Then, a learner gets to know about the past and understand its due course. Why it happen to be a frustration one or otherwise? What need to be done for better future improvement or avoidance? In this context, a good learner of history obtains an innovative knowledge, novel methods and practical strategies for his humanistic existences and survival. Subsequently, confidence toward expanding his new success experiences for the development of well construct socio-cultural structure. Indeed, these sort of realizations and confidences are not came from scratch but obtained through hard works and scarifies from its early stages, due to the lack of knowledge, experiences, direction and opportunities. In this context, Collingwood (1946) admirable expression toward learning from history when he said that we learn three things from studying the past: “what it is to be a man what it is to be the kind of man you are and what it is to be the kind of man you are and nobody else”. For sure,

by due time it found its conscious application and become well-practiced. These are regular incidences in human civilizations. Their lifespan is occupied with tests and problems which lead some persons to misinterpret the factual connotation of lifecycle as directed by the Holy Quran and been surrounded within several errors and intolerable deeds of action due to their private clarification and overstatement of certain sources of Islamic texts, particularly sectional views of Muslim intellectuals and school of thought. Consequently, this is an attempt to examine the precision of the theoretical notion of the term 'al-Wasatiyyah' as a foundational nature of the Islamic Religious System (IRS). In overall view of the contemporary specialists such as Pecorino (2001) described 'religion' as an organised componential principle of dogmas and social scheme accepted by a communal pattern in which it develop their own world view and existence structure. Within this setting, the term 'IRS', here, formerly denotes to a compilation of ethical understanding and cultural practices accepted by an individual Muslim in his social being. Therefore, as a systematic regulation it must be approved and adapt exactly and surely conferring to the instruction of its revelation commandments.

In this context, the states and situation of contemporary Muslim communities can be regarded as a disappointment in achieving the accurate adaptation of their intended constructed communal identity as in conformity with revelation instruction and commandment. This conclusion can be observed from their set back in obtaining a correct understanding and the true intangible foundation of al-Wasatiyyah as a conceptual terminology with complete standards of Islamic instruction should applies. This is consider a vital conceptual application accurately throughout Muslim lifespan. Thus, once it derives to exercise they might not uninterruptedly be definite of its distinctiveness and impartiality.

Scopes, objectives and significance of the study: In general, the clarification of a terminological word such as 'al-Wasatiyyah' should be obtained by the current status of Muslim community. Let, for example, clarify the different between the term 'al-Wasatiyyah' as a conceptual trade mark and practices for a Muslim people in comparison to the concept of moderation alone within the general understanding and practices. Supposedly, it had been abstracted through comprehensive analysis of the Islamic resources, acknowledged and adapt by the initial Muslim society, since, the prophetic time. For that reason, two important steps should be done appropriately: categorize the practical description of the term al-Wasatiyyah as an academic terminological concept. Consequently, the term should be defined in

agreement to the moot of scientific regulation and principles in which it really sound as such and should be distinctive enough in comparison to a common words usage. Identify it's specific features that describe it's concrete denotation and application.

Therefore, this study is regarded as an effort to precisely designate the basic characteristics of its virtual submission and direction in which its consumption become conceivable and comprehensible within the practice of human communication and developments. This study also will clarify its concept definition as a productive modern standard that ease its user to interpret and apply within Muslim individual behaviors and collective communication engagements.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The foundation of this study is virtuously grounded on a theoretical inquiry for the word 'al-Wasatiyyah' as an exclusive expressions in unfolding the clarity of Islamic moderation as a socio-cultural system and anticipation, especially within contemporary globalized world order or within any multi-racial and religious extremism such as in Malaysia. It is a humanistic issue with due respect of time and space. It needs to be safeguarded in a humanistic approach and constructively in nature.

Dewdney (1992) proposed that this complication regulate the true pattern of the data that obligatory to be established. The data of this study was composed along with considering the relatives among the connotation of the original word meaning for the original form of 'al-Wasatiyyah' and the other words that conveys or demonstrating the comparable conceptual meaning of the term within their appropriate practice. The presence of associations will regulate the conceptual meaning originated from the practice of the Holy Quran and the prophetic tradition which is very much comprehensible and clear representation of the same conceptual experiences or otherwise questionable, vague and astray from the original identical denotation.

In this case, it is not representing the accurate Islamic terminological concept as derived from the usage of the Holy Quran and the Prophetic tradition but rather carrying literal meaning which might change from context to context. All the relevant data to the term 'al-Wasatiyyah' then be recorded in which it became the indicator for the interchangeability and the inter-relatedness of meaning as in accordance to the common contextual usage, especially, from the Holy Quran and Arabic dictionaries. Specifically, these data consists of 20 words. The word 'wasata' for instance used in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:143) of the Holy Quran and been translated to English as 'a just people'. While the word 'Awsa' in Surah al-Maidah,

(5: 89) and been translated as ‘on the average level’. The rest of the data follow the same method as mentioned.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data analysis: As observed from the earlier discussion, the primary data of this study was taken from the application of the term ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ in its original resources. Textual and content analysis methods were used to examine the existence of the multiple variables within the text. Thereafter, a comparative analysis was conducted to identify the differences between the contextual meaning of the term ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ and other related and interchangeable words as shown in Table 1.

As, Krippendorff (2004) suggested that this technique was usually used as a means for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the context of its users. This method also gives an opportunity to look at the ‘functional use of the term under studied’ and also any other signs that explain its specification and applicability such as actively directing the attention of the users to its synonymous terms or partitioning its overlapping meaning and isolating some unwanted attributes or abstracting these attributes and synthesizing them to a brighter form. The concept was viewed and identified not only by isolating one single aspect of the above components but by comprehensively examining the word used as a conceptual meaning and terminological usage together in which it carry its socio-cultural function and development, taking both the content and mode of the world views of the communal perceptions and thought into account. The development of conceptual meaning and terminological function occurred both in the context of the situational specification and the context of the socio-cultural understanding and practices. The conceptual meaning of the related words was analyzed from three different aspects of semantic features for the targeted word. According to Crystal (2011) this approach is used as a means to compare vocabularies from different cultures and as a general framework for the analysis of meaning. By examining the meaning of those words, this study can set up the cognitive indicators for the term ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ starting from its Literal Translation (LT), Originality Level (OL), Redundancy Level (RL) and finally the Accuracy Lever (AL) as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 clearly conveys three inter-related understanding for the Arabic word ‘wasat’; firstly, used as refer to be moderate; then followed by the sense toward a middle and so on so forth; up to the sense of goodness and artistically materialized a sort of wisdom in

Table 1: Inter-related attributes for ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ cognitive Indicators

Arabic translation words	Literal	OL	RL	AL
Wast	Centre	+	-	-
Wasat	Midst	+	+	-
Wasatiyyah	An art of social conduct	+	+	+
Wusat	Specification of time frame	+	-	-
Asat	Most centric	+	+	-
Wasit	Involvement	+	-	-
Tawassut	Specification of function	+	+	-
Wasit	Transitional	+	-	-
Wasitah/Wasitah	Mediator/middling	+	-	-
Mutawassit	Mediator	+	+	-
Adl	Justice	+	+	-
Adil	Honest	+	+	-
‘A’ dal	Most honest	+	+	-
I tidal	Equinoctial	+	+	-
Mutadil	Stability	+	+	-
Muta adil	Effort to balance	+	+	-
Qis	Fairness	+	+	-
Aqsa	More fairer	+	+	-
Qasi	Deviant	-	-	-
Muqsi	Interim justly	+	+	-

making a compromise action, functioning as a mediator and be a fairer and just personality within the circle of a humanistic issue or crises. These are among a few meaning that might be derived for any word originated from the root ‘W’, ‘S’ and ‘T’ in Arabic language. Indeed, the level of their literal authenticity, redundancy and accuracy are obviously not on the same level. Therefore, all these levels should be measured comprehensively in identifying the true meaning of any terminological establishment derived from this root word. For instance, it’s connotation might refer to an extravagancy between over hitting in comparison to calmness and save.

From the above diversity explanations, one might question the enquiry as such what is the actual significance of the word ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ within the context of globalized world today? In other word, the term had been used and applied by the Holy Quran but how can it have been unruliness? Or it is just a general command, suggestion and recommendation to behave in a just manner and become a wise personality?

Certainly, when we refer to the Holy Quran, we understood that Allah (The Most Generous and Merciful) that every single word stated in there should be analyzed comprehensively by every Muslim scholar. The same go to the word ‘Wasat’ within its very special contextual appearances. It supposed denoting to a special indicators and designation. This specialization is representing it status quo and standardization of application, especially in the context of social order and communal functionality. From here, this new nation becomes an exemplary one to other nations in term of personality ethical order and principle wise in inter-communication and inter-mediation processes.

However, some others might seeming the word ‘Al-Tawaasut’ as used in the Holy Quran just as a term to

describe Muslim as an agent in positioning his highest ability to become a reasonable person in whatever matters, in using every single chances or in avoiding any risky track of actions and in making declarations.

So, the existence of the term ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ in Islam is a guidance of conduct for every Muslim. This guidance not supposed to be exaggerated beyond its outer layer limitation and boundaries set aside by the Almighty Allah or to be abandon without full consideration for the application within its boundary of establishment. In this regard, Hassan (2011) highlighted that moderation in Islamic practices should be in accordance to the exemplary practices of the Prophet Muhamad (PBUH).

As observed in Table 1, three fundamental elements of word meaning should be analyzed comprehensively for the word under study to enable its acceptability as a terminological concept. The first one is starting from its solid gradation of profound entrenchment for a scientific concept, then followed by its denotation structure and finally become well establish and acceptance.

By adopting those three fundamental elements, the word under studied signifies not solely a speculative jargon within the context of mass-communication and inter-cultural clash. Consequently, it’s definition should be systematically constructed, precisely bestowed and accurately applied in a practical submission. These conditional features should be considered accordingly throughout its usage. For that purposes, those three fundamental elements are detail out here, as according to Arabic linguistic structural function:

- Regarding its literal denotation it should be detected in accordingly as per its linguistic prescription
- Observing the connotation of its textual usage, particularly its metaphorical tenets and aspects of derivative meaning redundancy such as optimistic in contrast to destructive
- Perceiving the technical aspects of its applicability, especially for the standardization, referencing and accuracy in fulfilling the requirement of a specific scientific knowledge

In this regard, Felber (1980), Picht and Draskau (1985) on behalf of the suppositions of most specialists on the art of scientific terminological construction preached the following principles should be fulfilled in any terminological construct. They are:

- The word form of the term should in conformity with the target language
- The acceptance and satisfaction of its users should be highly convincing

- The specification accomplishment to suite the technicality requirements, especially, in term of conciseness, accuracy, brevity and efficiency to be applied
- The conformation of the word form and pattern should be completely obliged

Obviously, the central circle of our discussion, here is focusing on simplifying ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ understanding and application through systematic validation with concrete foundation. In this activity the stress is engaged on the practical aspects as contrasting to simple theoretical or common meaning. For this reason, the task here did not deliberated in detail the notion of literal meaning for the word itself. For example, the utilization of any single word is highly interdisciplinary in nature. However, clarification of its determining information should be encoded by the word itself within its contextual usage. The overall understanding for a moderate person is not necessary an actual correct moderate. There are the variance of epistemology and theoretical hypothesis.

On the other hand, the word ‘virtual’ in this scholarship revision refers to the presence of particular aspects embodied within the utilization of the term understudied. Frequently, the word ‘virtual’ is referred to designated a person, idea, project, etc., as being more concerned with its concrete aspects or relevant to practices rather than theory. For that reason, three aspects of word’s utilization were considered in identifying the practicality of its terminological meaning. They are:

- Strongly ingrained insight the word to denote its meaning
- Evidently expressing the specific meaning
- Easily applicable within various contextual utilization

In this context, Castellvi (1999) stated that lexicon is a basic language system. It comprises various morphological pattern and syntactical structure to become an effective communication medium in delivering user’s imagination and their referential expression in shaping thought and thinking. consequently, some of its componential elements due certain processes and development transform to a term with a new standard, identification and function.

From the above deliberations, this study proposed the succeeding conclusions and endorsements: the word ‘al-Wasatiyyah’ initially rooted as an ordinary Arabic lexicon used to denote to individual personality approaches or specific behavioral appearances measured as reasonable and well-adjusted. It’s connotation might

refer to individual attitudinal personality in contrast to extravagance or fanaticism. In general understanding, the term 'mainstream' or 'popular' may also use for the same meaning. It's historical ground entrenched in the Holy Quran which designates Muslims as a global nation equipped with special balance features. It's usage should fundamentally refer to social impartiality, dignity and all sorts of equality values. In fact, it's utilization must also refer to the ability in controlling unwhole some features and predis positions such as dangerous principles, carelessness behaviors and nonessential steps in pursuing or preserving an appropriate stand and action. Noticeably, it is fundamental term designed to describe specific meaning and function.

The data of this study provide sufficient evident on the comprehensiveness of the intellectual pointers toward it's terminological attributes in contrast to it's synonymous words. From here, we understand that the term is describing a specific contextual characteristic. Therefore, it is openly coinage and established as an envision objectivities measures. Definitely, it's derivation is simple and common in its form and spirit. Nevertheless, it should be noted that its notion was not created before it was first revealed in the Holy Quran as a direct offer on obvious proof for ruling to avoid radical religious practices. According to Hassan (2011), the likelihood of Islamic moderation comprises mixture of virtues, wide-ranging of fairness, goodness, broadmindedness, collaboration, compliance to the law of order, desiring dialogue, honoring of arrangements and reception of cultural or racial varieties and confidence attitudinal. Therefore, perceiving these values are Muslim's obligatory throughout their social conduct and universal relations.

In this regard, final conclusion can be drawn to endorse the chosen of the term 'virtual Wasatiyyah' as an indicator for the whole argument to described the true picture of this issue. We trust that the word 'virtual' cover the sense of 'essential, specific, technical and practical' in nature. By using the virtualization of 'al-Wasatiyyah' terminological concept, this study captures that the aspect of 'Humanistic Approaches' (HA) should always be emphasized and prioritized especially in dealing with social differences and inter-cultural development. Human, either individually or socially are one. Both cannot be separated or regarded as two different entities.

CONCLUSION

The contemporary social order is very much in need of historical reflection and reference to establish accurate understanding of today facts and reality as a precondition

leading toward future glories in safe. This is part and parcel of Islamic teaching principle as shown in its coinage of various type of terminologies to encounter the requirements of the future generation as observed from the expressive 'Ummah Wasatan' as a unique title given to a unique communal characteristic. The same go to the words such as 'Solat' (Pray), 'Masjid' (Mosque) Eid al-Fitri' (Break fasting carnival day) and Eid al-Adaa' (pilgrimage festivity day). Even though, their attributes of preciseness and structural form are varied in satisfying the necessity of the new community but their existence are evidences for a specific genre of purely Islamic in nature differ from other communities in which its provide specific strategies for Muslim to becoming a successful people in cooperating with chronic socio-cultural complexities or serious communicational dealing, either based on internal categorical in nature or external negotiation in problem solving as a sign of perceiving passed tribulations and using innovative knowledge in pursuing successful future. Obviously, a terminology is a communal asset. It should be virtualized comprehensively with detail indicators and measures. It understanding should also be cultivated from generation to generation and continuously appraised to suit it's initial objectives and functional goal. The cultivation proses itself require metrics specification and closely monitored and evaluated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Taking Sager (1998)'s recommendation for a confirmation in validating any technical term it should be separated from a normal class of the target language lexicon. In fact, it should be evaluated from two main areas; the first one is the diagnosis of its referential meaning and the second one is the identification of its conditional structure. Due to this reason, a terminological report should provide identically all the elementary theoretical denotation description. Furthermore, Valeontis and Mantzari (2006) designated a terminology as word with double sided connotation that: refer to its referential illustration and representation of a specific operational doctrine in describing technical naming and symbolizing instructional indicators. Subsequently, certain vibrant peculiarities were observed among its componential articles that required an operational training and practices, especially in establishing its informational elements with regard to the intellectual illustration of matters, ideas and its working procedures. Refer it's ownership demonstration possesses reflecting the degree of exceptional characteristic of identical scientific measure within the target language.

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