

## Investigating the Process of Implementing the Teaching of Islamic Nation (Umma) in Madīna al-Nabī and Madīna al-Waṣī

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(Received: January 4, 2020 ; Revised: April 22, 2021 ; Accepted: May 8, 2021)

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### Abstract

One of the ways to discover the capabilities of the teaching of nation (Umma) is investigating the functions of Islamic nation teaching in a society from which it is originated; this is because a certain social event occurs in its own specific time, place and situation. Madīna al-Nabī and Madīna al-Waṣī is the best proof for the functions of Islamic nation teaching. With a descriptive-analytical method, this study seeks to find a response for this question: what behaviors did the holy Prophet (s) and Imām 'Alī (a) have and what viewpoints did they describe for implementing the concept of Islamic nation? Results show that the concept of nation caused the realization of social justice in Madīna al-Nabī, in the light of the development of public cooperation, absence of emotional stimulation out of Ignorant prejudices, deactivation of social gaps, and transformation of prejudices threat to an opportunity to found human rules and make the extreme class differences fade out. Therefore, Madīna can be deemed as a reflection of founding the nation teaching. Equalization of social privileges in social arena was one of the most important achievements brought about by the nation teaching in the governing time of Imām 'Alī (a) in Madīna al-Waṣī. In doing so, connection of social justice to social balance, the practical renewal of legal and social status of discriminated groups, correction of ethnic-tribal viewpoints of the society to trans-ethnic and trans-religious viewpoints, and social freedom to gain social privileges were the most important arenas for the tangible realization of the nation in that period.

**Keywords:** Nation, Unity, Social equalization, Madīna al-Nabī, Madīna al-Waṣī

### Introduction

The Qur'ānic teaching of "nation" (Umma) is a cited principle that is the social base, context, and ideal for the realization of Islamic civilization, with a level of analysis beyond any region, race and ethnicity. One of the conspicuous advantages of nation compared to other human communities is due to the factor of "admission" of and "obedience" to divine rules. Based on this, the Prophet (s), Imām 'Alī (a), and other rulers are all subordinate to the same rules, and it is not like that power can be interpreted as leaving the circle of servitude and attaining special privileges. Hence, nation in the scope of "politics and society" has constructive functions including servitude, negation of individuals' dominance on each other, intercultural relations, indiscrimination, equalization of social privileges, equality before rules, and mutual destiny regarding the aims.

From the time of the hegira of the Prophet (s) to Yathrib, the concept of nation has been defined with the same aim and belief for the specific social solidarity, and during the history

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of Islam it has always gone through some changes. To manage the differences, consequently, his Holiness attempted to found a proper structure for the realization of Islamic nation in Medina. Through asking the Islamic society for unity and concordance, Imām ‘Alī (a), after the demise of the Prophet (s), practically shows the teaching of nation on the stage of the society. In the new governing period, Imām suddenly is faced with a new theory on the belief in caliphate. During twenty-five years of silence and seclusion, facing the inevitably geographical growth of Islam and the entrance of various nations into the circle of Islamic caliphate and regarding that he was deprived from his governing right, Imām eschewed any act leading to mayhem and violence in the newly established Islamic society. Keeping his right to object and criticize in relation to his usurped rights, Imām tells people, “O’ People! Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension and put off the crowns of pride” (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 5). Hence in this period, his Holiness was an active and cooperative citizen concerning various proper behaviors of governors, and was deemed a brave critic and a big social capacity in criticizing the governing power as to the mischief and mistakes of governors. Also, in five years of governing, he was only seeking to enrich the Islamic, cultural content. The biography and thinking of his Holiness shows he always tried to retain the process of nation, and his role modeling was used to restore the Islamic civilization.

Sporadic examinations have been done in the literature review of this topic, but a proper analysis has not been offered in an independent and systematic way yet. Nonetheless, these sporadic examinations by researchers on research factors include a great number which could offer a bright future on the horizons. In books such as *the strategy of unity in the political thinking of Islam* by Muwaththaqī (1993), *toleration between religions* by Sayyid Ḥusaynī (2005), *Shī‘a Imāms and Islamic unity* by Āqā Nūrī (2009), and *Islamic unity in the view of Ahl al-Bait (a)* by Raḍī (2017), the concept of nation is investigated only from the aspect of religions approximation, and the role of this concept has been ignored in managing social gaps and resolving political disputes, ethnic conflicts, and cultural differences. Payghān (2001) has investigated the unity of Islamic nation with an approach of approximation. By the Unified Nation (Umma) it is meant that in spite of differences, Muslims should empathize, respect each other’s rights, and observe mutual interests. After a very short prelude to introduce the social system of Islam, Nawā’ī (2006) has emphasized mainly on the duties of nation towards Imām and vice versa; this is in a way that no mention is made about the Imāmat of Imām ‘Alī (a). It mentions issues such as removing oppression and repelling the attacks of opponents, promoting the fundamental thoughts of Islam, laying the groundwork for the realization of justice, etc., as the most important duties of Imām regarding the nation. Ismā‘īlī (2009) also, through the use of the conceptual difference between cultural solidarity and other types of solidarity, briefly investigates the role of the concept of the Unified Nation in solidarity. Zārī (2001) has a merely political approach towards the issue of nation and puts an emphasis on the negative consequences of nationalism in the world of Islam. Besides, with the use of nation factors from the view of Qur’ān, ‘Irfān and Bayāt (2014) explain the concept and role of nation in the process of making an Islamic civilization in order to show the capabilities and capacities in cultural productivity and also civilization. Jamāl b. Waḥy et al. (2016) have examined the definition of unity in the life conduct of the Prophet (s) and the Infallibles (a) in order to provide a strategy for its unanimity with the teachings of Qur’ān and the commands of the Prophet (s). Through considering the guidelines of Imām ‘Alī (a), Biḥdār (2018) has investigated the monotheism, Islam, Qur’ān, Prophetic tradition, Imāmat, and just and insightful leadership as the theoretical foundations of Islamic nation unity.

The difference of these studies with the present one is that sometimes, due to addressing some specific aspects of the issue like its traditional, interpretive, and social approach and ignoring some other aspects, the examination of implementing the teaching of nation in

Madīna al-Nabī and Madīna al-Waṣī has not been written out; these studies are a mere reflection of the attitude of a specific field about the concept of nation. This study, with a descriptive-analytical method, attempts to investigate this hypothesis that equalization of social privileges is one of the most important results of implementing the nation teaching in Madīna al-Nabī and Madīna al-Waṣī; the consequence of this is offering a civilization discourse in human and worldly, trans-regional, and trans-tribal scope. Before commencing the main topics, defining the basic concepts seems necessary.

### Definition of concepts

**Nation (Umma):** nation (Umma) is a Qur’ānic and religious word, and is considered a pivotal concept in the Islamic thinking and knowledge. A specific group of followers of a religion is called nation due to similarity in their particular performance and mindset (Gardet, 1973: 286). Nation means special intention and attention and all philologists agree on this meaning. Therefore, the main meaning of this word is having a special intention and attention towards an ideal aim and a direct route (Ibn Manzūr, 1988, vol. 12: 22; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: 28; Muṣṭafawī, 1996, vol. 1: 134). This word idiomatically is used for a collection of like-minded, harmonious, and concordant individuals and groups that move based on the same axis and towards the same destination (Tahānawī, n.d., vol. 1: 91). “Nation, every group of people who are gathered together due to a common goal; these common points can be religion, creed, place, time, and so on”<sup>1</sup> (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: under the entry of nation; Muṣṭafawī, 1996, vol. 1: 146; Ṭabāṭabā’ī, 1984, vol. 7, 72).

From the view of this study, nationalism means the idea of using all abilities of an individual and a society for the realization, stability, continuation, and survival of a nation whose result would be laying the groundwork for the formation of a new civilization; this is because unity leads to social concordance and solidarity, removes disagreements, and uses all abilities for the rigidity of the nation.

**Unity (Waḥdat):** it is the gerund form of Waḥda which is the opposite of Kithra (plurality); unity literally means to become unique— uniqueness and oneness (Jawharī, 1987, vol. 2: 547; Farāhīdī, 1985, vol. 3: 280; Fīrūzābādī, 1995: 1384; Dihkhudā, 1969: under the entry of unity). “Wāhid (one) means Aḥad (unique), and the tittle of the word Aḥad is a substitute for the ‘W’ of the word Wāhid in Arabic” (Zabīdī, n.d., vol. 5: 298). Idiomatically, it means solidarity and accompaniment on the same path to reach the same destination (Jamshīdī, 2005, 52). Wāhid (one) is something that contains no part (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1992: 857).

Unity and solidarity within the Islamic society is one of the important characteristics of an ideal society from the view of noble Qur’ān. The most essential factor for social unity and connection is the movement of people on the particular path which is chosen towards a certain destination in an informed way; this type of social unity and connection necessitates a joint leadership. To create and keep unity, there exists a “joint spirit” that guarantees the continuance of all those factors and elements and makes their healthy relationships possible. This joint spirit in the body of the nation is the institution of Imāmat, which creates a goal-oriented and developed society. Therefore, of the main indicators for the realization of relationship between nation and Imām and their oneness in the configuration of the religious society are forming social integrity and concordance among the individuals of a society in spite of varieties and differences and following the common, major goals and interests (Jawādī Āmulī, 2007: 24).

**Social privileges:** idiomatically in sociology, social privilege is an advantage, priority, or portion considered for humans or things from a social point of view, and the owner of the right takes a special role in tandem with that privilege. Due to the validity of this right, others

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1. As God says, “Every time a new people enters, it curses its sister-people (that went before),” (Qur’ān 7:38)

should deem this role and its status reverently for the owner of the right when putting it into practice and implementing justice, and stop others from violating it. This is the meaning of right from the social viewpoint in defining justice (Lakzā'ī, 2009: 60; Kātūziyān, 1998: 370).

### *The concept of nation and its process from the viewpoint of Qur'ān*

Through keeping its original and literal meaning, the word nation in Qur'ān has various applications and, as a result, has certain meanings based on different registers.<sup>1</sup> The concept of nation (Umma) is fundamentally different from the meanings of “society”, “people”, “country”, and “homeland” because the criterion in these cases is of racial, geographical, and national features; nevertheless, in Islamic nation, the main criterion is ideological and cultural unity and religious worldview.

This word is from Arabic language which has a plural form of “Umam” (nations). Totally, this word in its singular and plural forms and noun forms governing the genitive cases is used 64 times in 62 verses of 25 chapters, from which 47 times are used in Meccan chapters and 17 times in Medinan chapters. However, it is not meant to have just one meaning in all cases. Generally, nation in noble Qur'ān is used with three main meanings<sup>2</sup> and twelve instances<sup>3</sup>. In Encyclopedia Islamica, which is expected to enumerate precisely, its application is mentioned to be 65 times (Encyclopedia Islamica, 1991, vol. 10: 192).

Nation as one of the most important words in the social literature of noble Qur'ān has a special status, which is close to some of the contemporary concepts of social studies. Toshihiko Izutsu holds, “The word nation (Umma) is a key for everything related to Islamic culture; the creation of this word has a great importance in the history of Islam. In Arabia, until that time, the principle of social and political organization was essentially of tribal type, and blood relation was the most decisive element in the view and perception of Ignorant Arabs for social unity. In opposition to this revered, long-held perception, Qur'ān offered and developed a new thought for the social unity which was not based on familial and blood relations, but rather it originated from a joint, religious belief” (Izutsu, 1982: 96).

Based on Islamic teachings, regarding the lack of meaning and use of tribal system as an instance of Ignorance culture, Qur'ān replaced the “social structure of Ignorance culture” with the pattern of nation through engineering the social behavior of Muslims. Qur'ān represented the pattern of social changes in the form of the teaching of nation. This pattern is in a form that moves humans from an Ignorance society towards an ideal one, and guides it to felicity and transformation in values, norms, and behaviors (‘Irfān, 2016: 91 & 107).

### *The process of implementing and realizing the teaching of nation in Madīna al-Nabī*

One of the strategies to direct Islamic societies towards the convergence<sup>4</sup> of Muslims is to

1. Based on classic terminology of Qur'ān interpretation and knowledge, many qur'ānic words have various aspects in their meanings. In classification of meaning in semantics, we may name synonymy, polysemy, incompatibility, hyponymy, and entailment (Farāhīdī, 1985, vol. 3: 1809).
2. Meaning usage of nation includes various species of living creatures, religion and conviction, and time length.
3. These instances are prophet Ibrāhīm (a) and his monotheist offspring (Qur'ān 2:128 & 140-141), people of each prophet (a) (Qur'ān 40:5), every one of twelve tribes of Israelites (Qur'ān 7:160), the neglectful Jews of “Ila” known as Companions of Sabbath, scattered Jews in different parts of the world (Qur'ān 7:168), the guiding section of the people of Moses (a) (Qur'ān 7:159), inviting band of people to good things from the nation of Islam (Qur'ān 3:104), the moderate section of the people of the Book (Qur'ān 5:66), companions of the Fire including men and jinn (Qur'ān 7:38), followers of the Prophet Muḥammad (s) (Qur'ān 2:143), and all divine virtues and values, righteous believers, and the portion enjoying the good from the people of the Book (Qur'ān 3:113-114).
4. The process of religious convergence is some attempt to move towards the concept of unified nation and to organize the factors of its creation and maintenance.

show approximating viewpoints and approaches of Islamic scholars. The first convergence in the history of Islam that paved the way for the formation of nation can be found in the valley of Abū Ṭālib from 616 to 619 (Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 2: 377; Ibn Sa‘d, n.d., vol. 1: 210) and then in the first and second pledges of ‘Aqaba in 621 and 622 in Mecca in the presence of the dignitaries of Banū Aws and Banū Khazraj (Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 1: 303).

Prophet’s hegira to Yathrib was to make this city a society away from Ignorance tensions; however, this aim could not be attained without fixing some structures and providing new mechanisms. It should be accepted that most of the individuals’ activism in the society is done within its structural frameworks; therefore, his Holiness attempted to establish a proper structure for the realization of nation teaching in Madīna al-Nabī in order to control differences. In doing so, after the hegira of the Prophet (s) to Madīna al-Nabī, the word nation got a broader coverage and became the pivotal center for the political organization of Islam. Through having pledges<sup>1</sup> with Meccan emigrants and different tribes of Aws and Khazraj (Ṭūsī, n.d., vol. 2: 546) and Jews and the pledges of fraternity (religious-brotherly fraternity concord) in the first year of Hegira recommended by the Prophet (s) (Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 1: 73-90; Qāsim b. Sallām, 1988: 202; Feyraḥī, 2007: 130), the way was paved for the formation of Islamic nation and the establishment of Islamic government (Ibn Sa‘d, n.d., vol. 1: 219; Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 2: 555). Pledges created consolidated social unity and a firm social and citizenry cooperation and collaboration system (Ḥasan Ibrāhīm, 1967, vol. 1: 102; Petrushevsky, 1975: 30).

After founding the Islamic government, the first political process of nation was realized in the unity of Medina tribes, Meccan emigrants, and the people of the Book in the interior political page of the Islamic government in the luminous Madīna. After conquering Mecca and collapsing the authority of Quraysh, the way was paved for the tribes of Peninsula to surrender.<sup>2</sup> In 9 Hegira, gradually the tribes of the south and the north of Peninsula sent delegates and surrendered themselves to the Prophet (s). They were 27 delegates from the northern tribes and 44 delegates from the southern ones that entered into the luminous Madīna (Muntazar al-Qā‘im, 2007, 229). In so doing, nation found its practical realization and application after the conquest of Mecca and the ‘Ām al-Wūfūd (the year of delegates) for the creation of new civilization; this was because, in the light of the political system made by the teaching of nation, Meccan emigrants, Prophet’s Medinan supporters, non-Arabs, Arabs, and new Muslims, regardless of their identity in converting to Islam, were based on “joint identity structures” about whom the Prophet of Islam talked with the title of “Islamic nation.” Therefore, identity in Islamic nation in

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1. With referring to the concord or the Constitution of Medina (Ṣaḥīfa al-Nabī) that the Prophet (s) signed at the beginning of his hegira to Yathrib between various tribes of Yathrib and the tribes present there (Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 1: 148), some have propounded a political understanding, not doctrinal, from the concept of nation which was beyond the belief commonalities and interests of Muslims, was based on social contract, and involved Jewish tribes and their partners and even the polytheists mentioned in Ṣaḥīfa. Based on this Ṣaḥīfa, Jews and polytheists of Medina, in spite of their belief differences, were considered a part of the nation concept and had some political and civil rights (Fīraḥī, 2007: 118). Some deem this concord as the “first written Constitution of the world.” Therefore, Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh who has written a book on this topic has named his book “The first written constitution.”
  2. Although the Prophet (s) himself, his family, and his companions, in the years after his Divine Mission and his invitation to Islam going public, were harassed and tortured a lot by the polytheists of Mecca and Quraysh, at the day of Mecca conquest, in order to spread mercy, forgiveness, and brotherhood among Muslims and also to eschew war, tumult, disturbance, and blood-shed, his Holiness named the day of Mecca conquest as the day of forgiveness and absolved the polytheists from their sins and mistakes (Ibn Athīr, 1989, vol. 4: 20; Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 2: 406; Ibn ‘Abd al-Bir, 1992, vol. 2: 162). About making attachment, friendship, unity, and brotherhood among Muslims by the Prophet (s), Imām ‘Alī says, “The Prophet of Islam made public what he had been commanded to communicate, and conveyed his God’s messages. He changed the social gaps to unity and removed the distances and made union among relatives after that the fire of hostilities and kindled rancor made their way into the hearts” (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 231).

Madīna al-Nabī was doctrinal, and not political, geographical, or tribal. The most important goal of the government was to defend and keep the Islamic beliefs. In this trans-national and trans-governmental system, there was a collection of individuals within the Islamic society that all were deemed members of the Islamic nation with their belief in the religion of Islam and that they formed a coherent society ('Irfān, 2016: 131).

The social attempt of the Prophet (s) to establish the teaching of nation in Madīna al-Nabī included the removal of social gaps of different regions especially of Mecca and Medina [forming a new pledge with the name of "fraternity concord"<sup>1</sup> between Meccan emigrants and the Prophet's Medinan supports, and making blood relations for the consolidation of social relations and the solidarity among Muslims through their marriage with unequal social classes<sup>2</sup>] (Ibn Sa'd, n.d., vol. 1: 219; Petrushevsky, 1975; 30; Balādhurī, 1997, vol. 2: 67; 'Alī, 1996, vol. 1: 87; Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 2: 303); impartial division of social-political activities between Aws and Khazraj tribes (Prophet's Medinan supporters); negation of tribal superiority, Ignorance prejudices, and the originality of tribal relations [sending off Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr to preach the religion of Islam and teach the noble Qur'ān to the tribes of Aws and Khazraj, and buying a piece of land for a mosque in Medina and entering all groups and tribes into partnership for building it and naming it "Masjid al-Nabī" the same as his Holiness' name]; and rejecting the determination of indemnity based on the status of a tribe (Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī, 1995, vol. 6: 98; Ibn Athīr, 1989, vol. 4: 20; Haythamī, 1995, vol. 2: 10; Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 1: 31). Besides, the presence of Salmān Fārsī next to the Prophet (s) and his role in the changes in Medina, Bilāl Ḥabashī and his companionship of the Prophet, the appointment of 'Attāb b. Asīd Umawī as the governor of Mecca (Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 2: 959), the selection of Mu'ādh b. Jabal for introducing the new Muslims to Islamic rules (Ibn 'Abd al-Bir, 1992, vol. 3: 403), and even the appointment of Usāma b. Zayd as the army commander for guarding against the likely attack of Romans in the last days of his life all originate from the trans-tribal, trans-racial, and trans-class characteristics of Madīna al-Nabī (Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 3: 118).

Prophet (s) negated the tribal zeal and shattered the mental barriers which were formed between various tribes, and created the nation of Islam from the combination, fusion, and integration of various tribes of Muslims and made every member of the nation the sole responsible for his or her acts. Also, the avoidance of the Prophet (s) from the emotional stimulation, made by the Ignorance prejudices, was to strike a balance between social contradictions and fade out the separations. In the light of political support of his own Islamic government, his Holiness created collective unity and nation solidarity. Prejudice, revenge, simmering tribal zeal, and the authority of the system of tribal eldership were controlled under the management of his Holiness and the instructions of Islam, and the wars between tribes and the futile killings of Ayyām al-'Arab were ended. Theocracy replaced the tribe-centrism, and the scattered tribes under the reign of different elders gathered around the same axis of leadership; the mien of the society was established based on two pivots of nation and family. This was due to the reformations of the Messenger of God (s) by which the familial values and relations and also the respect towards parents and spouse were consolidated and the social connections, union, brotherhood, and social unity were fortified in the nation. In doing so, the

1. By fraternity accord, it is meant the formation of an intellectual and doctrinal association (Petrushevsky, 1975; 31).

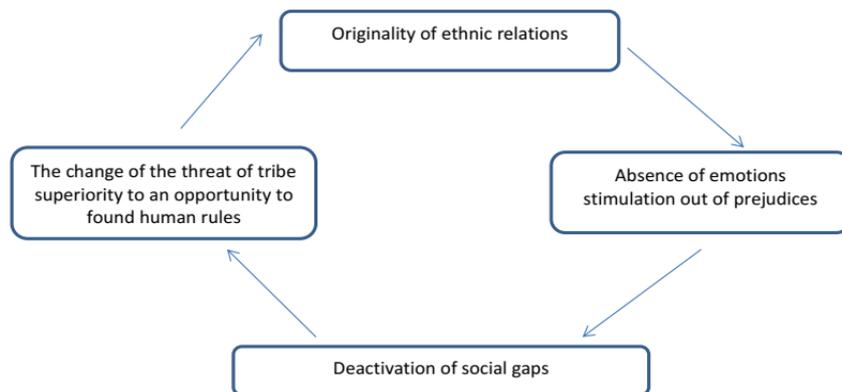
2. Although the Prophet (s) considered the cultural teaching of "equality" in the issue of marriage and promoted it, he introduced piety and faith as the criterion of equality and acted based on "The believer is equal to the believer" and called his companions for it, as in the suiting of Juwaybir from Zulfā, Prophet (s) mentioned this to the father of Zulfā who deemed this suiting below the dignity of his family (Balādhurī, 1997, vol. 2: 67). Recommending the Companions and Muslims to do this, the Prophet (s) himself took the first step and concluded the marriage between his cousin, Zaynab bt. Jahsh, and Zayd b. Ḥāritha who was a freed slave ('Alī, 1996, vol. 1: 87).

formation of one nation based on faith was established just against the tribal system and its values, i.e. hostility and revenge.

Of the strategies of his Holiness to fade out differentiations was to arrange martial affairs and try not to stimulate Ignorance prejudices in war. Accordingly, he gathered all individuals akin in Medina around the “Flag of Aws” and the “Flag of Khazraj”, and with another attempt he hoisted the “Flag of Supporters” for the Medinan supporters and the “Flag of Emigrants” for the Meccan emigrants (Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 2: 407). The importance of this issue is that, based on Ignorance prejudices, flags in war were formed in line with Ignorance biases which in turn was a factor for creating gaps and differentiations (‘Irfān, 2016: 140).

Also, the Messenger of God (s) removed the social gaps with the people of the Book residing in the Arabian Peninsula, and behaved towards them with complete tolerance and lenience and did not coerce them to change their religion. He recognized their social rights and did not burden them with serious obligations. His Holiness put Christians under his protection, did not charge them heavily, had no disgust towards them, had a good relationship with them, and never changed his opinion of them inasmuch as he formed some concords around Tabūk with the Christians of Najrān, Ayla, Jarbā‘, Azruḥ, and Dawma al-Jandal (Ibn Hishām, 1956, vol. 2: 525; Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 3: 1030). Due to this proper behavior, the Christian elder of Kalb tribe converted to Islam and many others from that tribe became Muslim following him (Ibn Sa‘d, n.d., vol. 2: 89). Hence, Medina can be deemed as the reflection of founding the thought institution for the teaching of nation.<sup>1</sup>

“Nation in Madīna al-Nabī, within which the power relations are present, goes beyond the tribe and prevails in all of the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, but does not revoke the structure of the tribe. [Therefore in Islam] not only did the dissolution of tribes was not a preliminary step to found nation, but also tribes were imbedded into the Islamic civilization and all the abilities and hidden vigor in the pattern of tribes were used with no clash for the advancement of nation. To be more precise, in Madīna al-Nabī, in addition to shifting the preference from lineage to belief and faith, the pattern of tribes’ lives was preserved in the concept of nation (Feyrahī, 2007: 138-140).



**Figure 1.** The process of the teaching of nation in Madīna al-Nabī

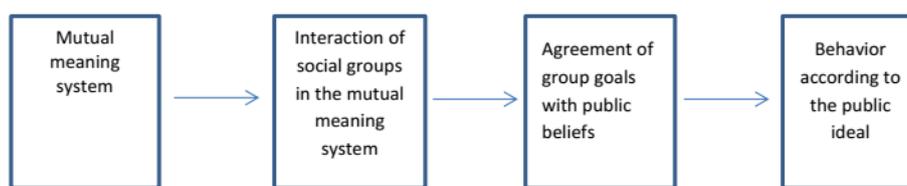
1. Madina al-Nabī had role modeling capabilities in the scope of realizing the teaching of nation. One of the effective prerequisites is for a model to be real and not to be mystical. Due to being unreal, myths have hyperbole, exaggeration, and doings beyond human capacity. This causes them to be unbelievable and incompatible with the present conditions, dramatically reducing their cultural impact. On the other hand, Madina al-Nabī is accepted by most of the Muslim community and this point helps this city in its practical function for being a role model for Muslims; this is because one of the prerequisites for an efficient role model is its being accepted by most of the society. If a part of the society accepts this model and the other part does not, the impact of the model will be decreased and it will lose its function due to the opposites’ criticisms. The other prerequisite for an efficient model is its consistency with the beliefs and cultures of the society. If a model from another culture and religion pervades the society even with a temporary impact, it will be transformed and will lose its function (‘Irfān, 2016: 129).

With a short glance at the biography of Prophet (s), it becomes apparent that undoubtedly, in his political philosophy, nationalization is deeper than the concept of nation in the new political thinking. Due to this, the interpretation of nation is the basis for the formation of Islamic nation in Madīna al-Nabī. In order to organize and promote divine rules and religious rites, Prophet (s) assigned some tasks to various individuals and groups pertaining to the configuration of social forces to develop the policy of public cooperation as well as to keep the balance of status and rank among all clans and groups. This was because there was the possibility for the former conflicts to be reactivated in new forms ('Irfān, 2016: 138).

In a nutshell, plans, procedures, biography, preaching and social approaches of Prophet (s), and the descended rules in the form of Medinan chapters all indicate the goal of Prophet (s) to establish a social system (Zargarīnizhād, 1997: 319). However, after the demise of his Holiness, prejudices were more or less activated due to some policies, and continued at least until the end of Umayyad era in the form of local, regional, and even religious rivalries and biases.

### *The process of implementing and realizing the teaching of nation in Madīna al-Waṣī<sup>1</sup>*

It is not possible to study a human society sociologically without considering concepts such as class, stratification, social distance, social discrimination, cohesiveness, homogeneity, renewal, social justice, consolidation, and so on. In order to realize nation, ethnic-tribal, regional, class, and economic gaps should be removed as much as possible so that Islamic norms could be internalized. For this, the way to control and manage social gaps in the process of realizing the teaching of nation is through convicting or penetrating into the depth of humans' beliefs, transforming their worldview, and affecting it. With affecting the doctrinal, ideological, and thinking world of the members of the society or groups, not only can this approach make every member of the group believe its accepted norms and values, but also it can make the members watch and protect those accepted norms and values (Larana, 2008: 225). In Islamic society, not only is this issue conceivable on the outward and in the social arena, but also the condition for the realization of nation is to internalize the spiritual values of Islam in the mind and conscience of Muslims.



**Figure 2.** The process of controlling and managing social gaps through the implementation of nation teaching

### *The nationalization of Imām 'Alī at the era of Vicegerents*

During twenty-five years, his Holiness had no diversion with the Vicegerents and always was a harbinger for cooperation, unity, and consolidation of the nation. This was as he said in

1. "Although historically Madina al-Waṣī is limited to Kūfa, in the utopian philosophy of Islam it is focused on Prophetic teachings, and everywhere the successor of the Prophet (s) were present and ruler with the same doctrinal, behavioral, and ethical coordination, Madina al-Nabī would be propounded with his presence and be executed with his ruling ('Irfān, 2016: 147).

Shaqshaqiyya sermon, “I found that endurance thereon was wiser. So I adopted patience although there was pricking in the eye and suffocation (of mortification) in the throat. I watched the plundering of my inheritance...” (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 3). He also said, “I swear to God that if there had not been the dread of separation and disunion among Muslims, the return of blasphemy, and the overturn of Islam, we would act differently from the way we have acted so far” (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1959, vol. 1: 307).

Imām had well recognized the critical situation of Islam and its enemies’ peril. Due to this, after the demise of Lady Fāṭima, his beloved wife, when the false prophets appeared and some Arabs apostatized, ‘Uthmān came to him and said, “Oh my cousin! If you do not swear the oath of allegiance, no one would fight this enemy.” ‘Uthmān took him to Abū bakr and ‘Alī swore the oath of allegiance to him; Muslims became pleased and endeavored to fight apostates, and the army was sent off (Balādhurī, 1997, vol. 2: 270). Imām asked for the political sovereignty to execute Islamic rules and implement monotheism, Islamic ruling, and justice. Therefore, how could he ask for political power in exchange for the demolition of the Islam itself? This was as some Arabs revolted against Islam so that they would destroy the religion of God. At this time, he feared that if he did not help Islam, there would be a split in Islam which could overturn it, and this calamity would be direr than usurping the caliphate (Thaqafī Kūfī, 1987: 202). In a letter to the people of Egypt, he has mentioned the reasons for his silence in avoidance of renegading in which if he had not helped Islam and Muslims, a split would have been formed in religion whose calamity would have been direr than the loss of sovereignty (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: letter 62). More than anybody else, his Holiness knew that he should be heedful of Islam consolidation, and the fear of incongruity, split, devastation of religion, and the return of blasphemy made him unavoidably silent. Contrary to seeing himself entitled to caliphate, he in practice proved that he was the greatest herald of Muslims’ unity so that his approach would be a role model for all Islamic denominations.

At the era of vicegerents, his Holiness participated in their consultation meetings and cooperated fully with them. This was to the point that more than anything else vicegerents used the knowledge of ‘Alī about conquests, judiciary affairs, and financial issues. This was as once the second vicegerent said, “My Lord! I take refuge in you in solving problems for which ‘Alī is not available.” In addition, he addressed ‘Alī the best of judges (Ibn Sa’d, n.d., vol. 3: 339).

### *The nationalization of Imām ‘Alī (a) at the era of caliphate*

The governing time of Imām ‘Alī (a) is one of the critical periods of Shī‘a history. Probing this part of the history of political, social, and civilization changes could bring about valuable lessons for discovering and understanding the dynamism dominant in the society. Imām ‘Alī (a) is the unity model and, according to some of the Sunnī authors, is the “founder of approximation among denominations<sup>1</sup>” (Bī Āzār Shīrāzī, 2008: 219). During twenty-five years of silence, the biggest social and doctrinal responsibility of Imām was to avoid the shift of the overall path of Islamic nation towards ignorance so that the quiddity of this religion would not go under fundamental changes. After witnessing the huge social gap, indiscrimination in social privileges, institutionalized and devastative policies, and the

1. Taqrīb (approximation) is from the root of “Qarraba,” the opposite of Bu’d (far), and means Dunuw in Arabic which literally means to approximate in English. It is done by the followers of Islamic denominations for getting familiar with and knowing about each other so that they could attain attachment, brotherhood, and religious understanding based on definite, mutual Islamic principles (Ibn Manzūr, 1988, Bāb al-Qāf). Approximation of denominations idiomatically means to remove religious disputes and create cooperation among leaders and followers of Islamic denominations based on the principle of being Muslim and following Qur’ān and tradition. This expression is a coinage in present time, and in historical research it is used as a modern concept to probe the historical past (Shafā‘ī, 2011: 90).

deviations being made in the thoughts and beliefs of people, Imām accepted to be a vicegerent out of people's great homage paying and vast presence so that he could execute justice and manage social gaps<sup>1</sup> through changing the active opposites to inert ones.

His Holiness became a vicegerent after a period in which the society returned to traditions of the highborn of Ignorance, suffering some deviations from the Qur'ānic and Prophetic traditions, discrimination, and affluenza. Therefore, returning the society to the former condition was a very difficult and demanding task. Since the relations between various groups in the governing time of Imām 'Alī (a) had a social and cultural, not political, quiddity, the approach of "equalizing the social privileges" was chosen by Imām so that he could put into practice the implementation of nation teaching, while facing myriads of social gaps and in parallel with the continuation of meaning-oriented approach and doctrinal diligence for the renewal of Prophetic tradition. This was because this outlook puts an emphasis on the role of social justice in forming the process of behavior and public belief genesis, which occurs through the process of sense making and also designing the unity framework. A society based on the teaching of nation means creating another society in which individuals interact differently, creating a new society out of this interaction.

Madīna al-Waṣī like Madīna al-Nabī has capabilities for role modeling in the scope of realizing the nation teaching because it is accepted by most of the Muslim society as a utopia of Islam, and this helps the functional role of Madīna al-Waṣī in being a model for Muslims. In the light of the political system resulting from the teaching of nation, Meccan emigrants, Medinan supporters, non-Arabs, Arabs, and new Muslims –with every type of identity converting to Islam –all were based on the "joint identity structures", which Imām 'Alī (a) like the Prophet (s) always cited them as the "Islamic nation." During five years of governing, the proof for the success of Imām in the scope of realizing the teaching of nation is clear for the reason that the continuation of conflicts, ethnic identity and tribalism, social gap, and social stratification of non-Arabs and Arabs all made it impossible or at least very difficult to found Madīna al-Waṣī in such a short time ('Irfān, 2016: 150).

The nationalistic viewpoint of Imām 'Alī (a) caused him to see himself as the most passionate person for the Islamic unity and to mention his being pioneer in this regard openly, "Know no one is more eager than me for the unity of the nation of Muḥammad (s). In this I want good reward and return to good station" (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 113).

One of the fundamental reformations of Imām 'Alī (a) was the execution of social justice. From the viewpoint of Imām 'Alī (a), the issue of social justice is so important that he sees it as the base for the health of the society in the execution of social discipline (Muṭahharī, 1990: 113). Social justice in a general form contains all dimensions of justice that, in the view of Imām 'Alī (a), causes social balance in the society and its classes; this is because justice in the light of Qur'ān and Prophetic tradition places every and each of the stratum of the society in their specific and deserved station (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: letter 53). In a balanced society in which the individuals merit important social values such as wealth, power, and social status equally based on the values and norms approved by Islam, there is an internal and informed relationship, brotherhood spirit, and unity between the individuals. This is as Imām 'Alī (a) says, "Justice is pleasant and the cause of attachment (Tamīmī Āmudī, 1987, vol. 1: 395).

From the view of Imām 'Alī (a), there is a close relationship between unity and justice that can be attained only through justice. This is as his Holiness says, "If the ruled fulfill the rights

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1. The phenomenon of social conflicts that lead to disintegration happens if socializing people in a society does not happen appropriately; if in a social system there is no way to reduce displeasures; if the social system is not congruent with the milieu; if all members do not have the possibility to attain the determined goals when the goals of the system are defined; if there is not sufficient relationship between various groups in the society; or finally if the bases of different individuals in the society are not in agreement, pressuring them in various ways (Bashīriyya, 2001: 99-100).

of the ruler and the ruler fulfills their rights, then right attains the position of honor among them, the ways of religion become established, signs of justice become fixed and the tradition gains currency. In this way time will improve, the continuance of government will be expected, and the aims of the enemies will be frustrated. But if the ruled gain sway over the ruler or the ruler oppresses the rule, then difference crops up in every word, signs of oppression appear, mischief enters religion and the ways of tradition are forsaken. Then desires are acted upon, the commands (of religion) are discarded, diseases of the spirit become numerous ...” (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 216).

Emphasis on the implementation of social justice naturally brought about dissatisfaction of some Companions and even of close friends of his Holiness. After the command of his Holiness, ‘Ubaydullāh b. Abī Rāfi‘ divided the money left in Muslims public treasury among Arabs and non-Arabs equally (three dinars for each person). When Sahl b. Ḥunayf protested and said, “This person that was considered equal to me was my slave in the near past”, Imām ‘Alī (a) said, “Yes, I shall give him from the public treasury as much as I give to you, and if this possession were mine, I would divide it equally between you two” (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1959, vol. 7: 37). After accepting Islam and becoming members of Islamic nation, without considering historical, lingual, and national differences, individuals gained social privileges equally.

Imām ‘Alī (a) negated ethnic and racial zeal, and shattered the mental barriers that were formed between various people in the society; therefore, his Holiness formed the Islamic nation with much diligence for equality and the realization of human dignity of various sections of Islamic society, and made every member of the nation the sole responsible for his or her doings. The earnestness of Imām ‘Alī (a) in observing justice among Muslims made some of them propose a new plan to Imām so that they, based on their own opinion, could show their informed expediency. Some of the Companions went to Imām and said, “Oh the Commander of the Faithful! Grant these possessions to the highborn of Arabs and Quraysh and those that you fear they may defy and run away towards Mu‘āwīya, and prefer them over non-Arabs.” The Companions suggested this idea based on a policy that Mu‘āwīya had to attract persons. Imām ‘Alī (a) said, “Do you suggest me to attain victory with oppression? (Should I sacrifice justice for expediency?) I swear to sublime God that until the sun shines and the stars illuminate the sky, I would not do so; even if these assets had been my own possessions, I would have divided them equally among them, let alone these belong to the public treasury” (Mufid, 1995: 175).

Based on many narrations, from the very first days of vicegerents’ ruling, against the discriminating behavior of the government, Imām ‘Alī (a) always had a stand of advocating justice and fighting against discrimination, and as to various issues he suggested vicegerents to observe justice and the rules for social freedoms<sup>1</sup> among all social strata<sup>2</sup>. One of the essential concepts of Imām ‘Alī (a), which he propounded much before his taking caliphate, was shifting from ethnic-tribal discriminations in the society to a trans-ethnic and trans-religious viewpoint and going towards equal justice for Arabs and non-Arabs and also Quraysh and non-Quraysh (Ṭabarī, 2000, vol. 4: 328). This viewpoint originated from the spirit of Islam and the lifestyle of the Prophet (s) because the basics of Islam were to negate ethnic and tribal values and attitudes and to replace these matters with social rights of all sections of the society. His Holiness negated racism and the attention paid to ethnic and tribal

1. Do not be a slave to others when God has created you free (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: letter 31).

2. Imām Sādiq narrated from Imām ‘Alī (a) who had said to the second vicegerent, “If you take care of three issues and put them into practice, they will suffice you and if you quit them, other issues will not be useful to you. The second vicegerent asked of them and his Holiness said, “Execution of legal punishments on everybody; ruling based on the book of sublime God in happiness and anger; and fair division between white and black people (Kulaynī, 1987, vol. 8: 163).

values and saw them as the approach of Ignorance and the source of grudge (Sharīf Raḍī, 1999: sermon 216). He deemed the right of dignity and freedom for the followers of other religions to the point that he recommended his commandants not to oppress the people of the Book (Ya'qūbī, n.d., vol. 2: 111). Contrary to previous vicegerents, he, in his governing time, paid more attention to new Muslims of Iran and, therefore, was objected by the highborn of tribes in the Friday prayer (Thaqafī Kūfī, 1987: 134; Wāqidī, 1989, vol. 1: 170; Minqarī, 1990, 14); however, he planted the seeds of fond of the offspring of the Prophet (s) in the hearts of those new Muslims through social reformations and manifestations of social freedoms. This was as Maytham Tammār and Rushayd Hajarī reached the station of companionship and friendship of his Holiness (Mufīd, 1993: 323 & 327). Buying and freeing thousands of Arab and non-Arab slaves are also a proof for this claim. This was as 'Umar b. Khattāb, in the last days of his life, made a will that only Arab captives who were then captured be bought and freed with the money of public treasury (Mas'ūdī, 1989, vol. 10: 421).

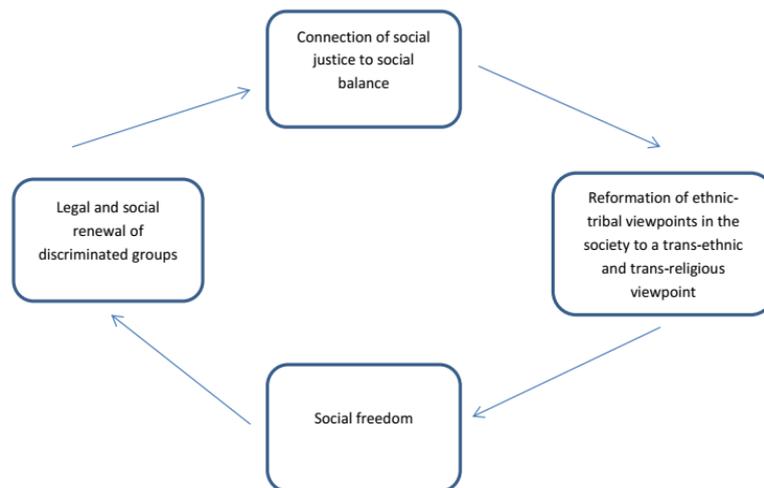
Discrimination in social privileges had the most dramatic impact on the unfair division of public treasury. Imām 'Alī (a) said to 'Umar b. Khattāb, "Every year, divide among people everything that comes to you from stuffs and do not spare anything." Contrary to the approach of Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa and the recommendation of Imām 'Alī (a), the second vicegerent considered some preferences (Balādhurī, 1978, 238). In his ruling time as a vicegerent in order to make fundamental changes and social reformations in the society, Imām 'Alī (a) refuted all discriminations and monopolies of Umayyad and the highborn of tribes, which in the past were based on blood, race, language, land, and etc.; that is, people got together with no consideration of racial, lingual, national, and cultural differences. Hence, the word Umma (nation) creates commitment for people, and commitment is one of the important principles for being a citizen. This means that people are committed to follow the same leadership. In the second day after people's oath swearing to allegiance, his Holiness said in a sermon in Masjid al-Nabī, "Oh people! Everybody who thinks he or she is preferred over the others due to accompanying the Prophet (s) should know that true superiority and its reward is with God. Every human that has retorted positively to the voice of God and His messenger, has chosen Islam, and has turned to our Qibla is equal to others in Islamic rights and limits... You the Servants of God and also possessions belong to God and these properties will be divided among you equally and no one has an advantage over the others, and God willing come to me tomorrow so that I could divide among you the possession which is with me (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1959, vol. 7: 37).

His holiness equalized people in giving, preferred nobody to others, and granted Arabs and non-Arabs the same (Ya'qūbī, n.d., vol. 2: 183). Once he gave to an Arab woman and a non-Arab one twenty-five dirhams and some wheat equally. The Arab woman objected. His Holiness said, "In public properties, I see no privilege for the offspring of Ismail over the offspring of Isaac" (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, 1959, vol. 2: 200; Thaqafī Kūfī, 1987: 46).

The issue of removing discrimination from public properties and equalizing all people in the society is one of the most important items to equalize social privileges for the realization of the teaching of nation in the Islamic society. This is because membership in the Islamic nation means absolute following and simultaneously the Islamization of life, thoughts, and deeds of the Muslim (Holt, 2004, vol. 2: 1566).

It is not surprising that the managers of reactionary regime who were trying to return the society to the Ignorance Era –which was based on tribal highborn structures– could not tolerate the social justice and reformations of Imām 'Alī (a) at all; this was because basically their discourse and thinking view point were based on jealousy, tribal malice and zeal, racism and fanaticism, totalitarianism, secularism and deviation, ignorance, corruption and disturbance. Through implementing the teaching of nation then, Imām 'Alī (a) attempted to deepen the thought of this teaching –in the light of opposing the sentiments arising from

Ignorance prejudices and tribal and ethnic gaps and conflicts of Arabs– and provide a practical model for everybody. His Holiness assigned the execution of divine rules to various persons and groups with regard to the configuration of social forces which, in addition to developing the approach of public participation, avoided bands and groups from seeing themselves as having a unique and exclusive privilege; this was because there was the possibility for the previous contradictions to be reactivated in new forms. For example, he avoided appointing his relatives and friends to posts, and the agents of his Holiness were from all strata of Meccan emigrants and Medinan supporters.



**Figure 3.** The implementation and application process of the teaching of nation in Madīna al-Waṣī

To oppose diversions and challenges with which individuals were entangled, Imām ‘Alī (a) staged the teaching of nation practically through connecting social justice to social balance, renewing practically the legal and social status of Qur’ānic and Prophetic traditions and the discriminated groups, reforming ethnic-tribal viewpoints in the society to trans-ethnic and trans-religious viewpoints, and granting social freedoms to religions in order to gain social privileges. His Holiness propounded and applied the theory of nationalism in his lifestyle in order to preserve the unity and convergence of the nation. The nationalism plan by Imām ‘Alī (a) has in it the social process and the role-playing capability for the trend of Islamic civilization on the axis of political, social, and cultural systematization. It should be noted that the results of implementing the teaching of Islamic nation in the governing time of Imām ‘Alī (a) should not be looked for on the outward civilization; rather, in that era the thinking foundation, dominant atmosphere, and civilization orientation were all established to implement the teaching of Islamic nation.

## Conclusion

The general plan of the theory of nation and convergence is for the realization of ideal and value-based unity of Islamic nation. Islam was the cause for the cohesion of citizens in Madīna al-Nabī, and nation was the base for the creation of Islamic system in Medina. The essential attempt of the Prophet (s) for the establishment of nation was to negate ethnic-tribal identity and the originality of ethnic relations. In Madīna al-Nabī, the pivotal role of nation made extreme differentiations fade out with the development of public cooperation, absence of emotions stimulation out of Ignorance prejudices, deactivation of social gaps, and the shift of the threat of biases to an opportunity for founding human rules.

Madīna al-Waṣī had an essential difference from Madīna al-Nabī: in addition to having various tribes, it contained different races such as the Arab, the Persian, the Syriac, and the

Coptic. Therefore, an attempt was made to probe the output for the implementation of nation teaching in Madīna al-Waṣī. From the viewpoint of Imām 'Alī (a), the central thought of nation brings about identity for Muslims and causes the era of Mission and the life of nation to continue. During twenty-five years of three vicegerents' ruling time, his Holiness witnessed diversions, challenges, ethnic-tribal conflicts, and institutionalized clashes. These reactionary challenges, tribalism, and highborn privileges in comparison with people were in need of a practical idea and behavior. His Holiness, during twenty-five years of vicegerents' ruling time, never showed any diversion and always was the harbinger of nation's cooperation, unity, and solidarity. Imām 'Alī (a) proposed the idea of nationalism and equalization of social privileges, which was of the most important achievements brought about by the teaching of nation at the governing time of Imām 'Alī (a). Equalization of social privileges for filling the extant fissures and the joint configuration of nation teaching against social gaps made Imām 'Alī (a) take steps for the realization of the teaching of nation and the renewal of Prophetic tradition through the connection of social justice to social balance, practical renewal of the legal and social status of discriminated groups, reformation of ethnic-tribal viewpoints to a trans-ethnic and trans-religious viewpoint, and social freedom of all religions for the attainment of social privileges.

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