



## PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S (PBUH) DIPLOMACY WITH THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

**1- Muhammad Mudasir Nawaz**

Email: [mudasir.mughal@usindh.edu.pk](mailto:mudasir.mughal@usindh.edu.pk)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-7340-9264>

Assistant Professor, Dept of Muslim History, University of Sindh Jamshoro, Pakistan

**2-Farzana solangi**

Email: [farzana.samad.solangi@gmail.com](mailto:farzana.samad.solangi@gmail.com)

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7060-3770>

Lecturer, Department of Muslim history, University of Sindh, Pakistan

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## **PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S (PBUH) DIPLOMACY WITH THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AND THE PERSIAN EMPIRE**

Muhammad Mudasir Nawaz, Farzana solangi

### **ABSTRACT:**

The research article explores the diplomatic relationships that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had with Byzantine and Persian empires in the 7th century, which was the time when there was a high level of geopolitical rivalry. It discusses his style of leadership based on spiritual leadership and political strategy which was grounded on peaceful communication as promoted in the Quran. The paper compares the themes and the result of the letters addressed to Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium and Shah Khosrow II of Persia, with the responses being noticeably different- Byzantium's fearful deference compared to the haughty refusal of Persia. The paper puts the diplomatic interactions into context in the overall fall and changes of the two empires. Finally, it claims that the diplomacy of the Prophet also established a fundamental basis on which Islam would relate with other world powers and integrate religious universalism with statecraft. The lessons include strategic patience and respectful dialogue, which were noted through the findings and are still applicable in the present day Islamic world in the context of diplomatic relations.

### **KEYWORDS:**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Diplomacy, Byzantine Empire, Persian Empire, Heraclius, Khosrow, Arabia, Prophetic Letters, Peace, International Relations, Islamic Statecraft, Sassanian decline, Byzantine-Islamic relations.

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## **I. Introduction:**

### **Background:**

The 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabian geopolitical situation was characterized by emergence of multiple powerful empires with Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire) and Sassanian Empire (Persia) controlling the region. Arabia, being a place of cross roads of these two empires was a strategic position, acting as a buffer zone and as a nexus of trade. When the Prophet Muhammad received his mission, the two empires already had their grip on large portions of territory. The Byzantine Empire was a stronghold of Christianity, where Zoroastrian religion ruled the Eastern Mediterranean, whereas the Sassanian Empire, which comprised modern-day Iran and Iraq, was a stronghold of Christianity, the Eastern powderhouse of ancient times<sup>1</sup>.

Even at this time Arabian Peninsula as such was a diverse place with a multiplicity of tribal societies that were politically diffused yet rich with cultural and religious diversity. The initial experiences of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in this context played a vital role in influencing the Islam world in terms of its overall relations with other nations. The Prophet (PBUH) by introducing Islam did not only form a religious nation but also the basis of a politically savvy state, which would be able to negotiate with the empires that existed during that period, which were very powerful at that period<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 26.

<sup>2</sup>Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 80.

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### **Byzantium Position of Persia and Byzantium as Superpowers of the Time:**

Both Byzantine and Sassanian empires were the highest levels of power in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. Under Emperor Heraclius Byzantium had just received an important military and political makeover to become an influential Christian presence in the Mediterranean. It extended its borders to North Africa and Anatolia and its capital, Constantinople, was a center of political and ecclesiastical activities<sup>3</sup>.

On the contrary, Sassanian Empire, having its magnificent capital Ctesiphon, controlled the huge territory of Persia and Mesopotamia. In constant warfare with Byzantium, Persia was able to maintain its strength due to a strongly developed aristocracy and Zoroastrian religious system that had a significant impact on its political thought. This balance of power predetermined the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) being brought into contact with both empires that would play a critical role in the further course of Islam in future<sup>4</sup>.

### **Diplomacy and its significance in Prophetic Mission:**

One of the elements of the Prophet Muhammad mission (PBUH) was diplomacy not just in the propagation of Islam but also in politics. Quran talks of peace and value of dialogue since it is written: Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best (Qur'an 16:125)<sup>5</sup>. This advice is the basis of how the

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<sup>3</sup> John Haldon, *The Byzantine Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Nelson Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Cyrus Press, 1984), 200.

<sup>5</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 678.

Prophet dealt with foreign powers. The Prophet (PBUH) had always tried to find peaceful ways out and had sent invitations to the rulers via letters and emissaries which also highlights his diplomatic skills. His style was a perfect way of combining faith and political wisdom, the concept of peaceful dialogue and preservation of the dignity and independence of the emerging Muslim world.

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) did not only consider himself to be a religious leader but he was a political leader. His policy of diplomacy was inherently associated with the unification of the Islamic state in Medina which needed both internal cohesion and the international acknowledgment. His restraint in his letters to the leaders of Byzantium and Persia, in which he invited them to conversion to Islam, reveals the way the political approach of the Prophet was combined with his missionary work. It was this distinctive blend of diplomacy and religious belief that enabled the Prophet to outreach to these two empires not only to spread Islam to them but also to form Islam as an international organization in the world scene<sup>6</sup>.

**Research Objectives:**

This research is aimed at discussing the diplomatic missions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Byzantine and Sassanian kingdoms. This discussion will be carried out to address two major objectives; first, to examine the character of the diplomatic policy used by the Prophet, and second, to examine how these diplomatic overtures were received by the

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<sup>6</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 45.

Byzantine and Sassanian empires. This paper is going to be based on the particular letters written by the Prophet (PBUH) to the Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium and Shah Khosrow II of Persia, along with the political and religious background within which these diplomatic relations were transpired. In this analysis, the project will illuminate how the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) managed a complicated political environment of his era to be able to balance his religious message with the political nature of empire politics <sup>7</sup>.

**Thesis Statement:**

Diplomatic relations between Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Byzantine and Sassanian empires played a significant role in making Islam a formidable power in the world. The diplomatic activity of the Prophet that was characterized by his insistence upon peaceful negotiations and the respect of the sovereignty of other states provided the basis of the Islam involvement in the global geopolitical life. Letters of the Prophet, as well as his later dealings with the two empires, show an advanced combination of religious mission and political prudence, which set a pattern of the Islamic statecraft and interfaith dialogue. His foreign policy did not only focus on delivering the message of Islam but also aimed at establishing the newly formed Muslim community as a big player in the world political arena<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 223.

<sup>8</sup>F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 223.

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## **II. Historical Context:**

### **Arabia before Islam:**

The Arabian Peninsula was also characterized by a disjointed and mixed socio-political system before the Arabian Peninsula witnessed the emergence of Islam. It consisted mainly of tribal groups that had their traditions, systems of governance and economic structures. The tribes like the Quraysh, Aws and Khazraj were active in the region, and political loyalties would change depending on mutual interests or enmities. These were decentralized tribes but united by a common language, practices and religion which comprised of some animism and polytheism. The leadership of the tribes was often hereditary whereby the elder and leaders of influential tribes exercised great power<sup>9</sup>.

The strategic location of the Arabian Peninsula also led to it being a meeting point where the Byzantine and Sassanian Empire and India and Africa traded. The cities of the region like Mecca and Medina could not have been ignored because they were critical points on the trade routes, which linked the Mediterranean world with the Arabian Sea and consequently, the Indian Ocean. As a sacred city, Mecca also had pilgrims on the regional level. This human movement enhanced cultural movements that made Arabia a pot of ideas, religions and political forces<sup>10</sup>. Although it was at the middle of trade, however, Arabia was not a

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<sup>9</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 28.

<sup>10</sup> F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton University Press, 1994), 210.

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politically dependent state of the two superpowers that ruled the surrounding territories, Byzantium and Persia.

The two empires were very influential in the political affairs of Arabia. Byzantium and Persia tried to subjugate Arabian tribes, trying to establish connections with them by means of diplomatic relationships, tribute, and commerce. An example of such interaction was the Quraysh who had regular contacts with both empires, especially being one of the major tribes of Mecca, which held the Kaaba, a pilgrim and trade destination. Regardless of these encounters, the political presence of both Byzantium and Persia in Arabia was not substantial since the tribal and divided nature of the region and the absence of central authority by the region, that neither the empire could establish itself in the area permanently by either empire<sup>11</sup>.

**Byzantine Empire:**

The eastern part of the Roman Empire was the Byzantine Empire, which was a powerful Christian state and ruled the large territories of Anatolia up to Egypt and North Africa. Byzantine Empire whose Emperor was Heraclius ruled the empire in the 7 th century and had turned the empire into a force to reckon with militarily and religiously. The Byzantine state was closely connected to the Eastern Orthodox Church, and Christianity was already the state religion since the reign of Constantine the Great at the beginning of the 4th century. The unity of Byzantium primarily concerned politics and religion which remained an important way of

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<sup>11</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 92.

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running the empire and conducting military operations<sup>12</sup>.

Under the leadership of Heraclius, Byzantium was involved in incessant military confrontations with Sassanian Empire. It was a series of conflicts which were labeled as Byzantine-Sassanian Wars and neither of these parties secured a conclusive victory over a long period of time. The Byzantines eventually overcame the lost regions and eventually overcame the total domination of the Sassanians in the late 7th century, and a decisive Battle of Nineveh (627 CE) brought the Sassanian menace to the Byzantine Empire to a close. But with this success, Byzantium was weakened and drawn out both militarily and economically, as well as being much exhausted and stretched thin, as a result of this victory, Byzantine was left<sup>13</sup>.

The war that Byzantium was fighting with Persia had a direct effect on Arabia. The influence of the empires on the Arabian Peninsula increased as the empires engaged in a battle to dominate the Middle East region. The Byzantines attempted to establish themselves on the southern Arabian tribes, usually by diplomacy and religious entreaty, in the hope that they would become a source of allies against the Persians. This political and military scenario was delicate to create a balance of power in the region, with which the diplomatic activities of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would shortly have an influence in the region<sup>14</sup>.

#### **Sassanian Dynasty (Persian Empire):**

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<sup>12</sup> John Haldon, *The Byzantine Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 105.

<sup>13</sup> Averil Cameron, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (Random House, 2009), 149.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), 120.

Another powerful empire of the 7<sup>th</sup> century was the Persian Empire under the Sassanian dynasty which dominated a large territory that was spread over Mesopotamia to Central Asia and the Indus Valley. The religion was Zoroastrianism, and the Sassanian kings reigned with unquestioning power whose reign was backed by the mighty aristocracy and military elite. The internal administration was extremely centralized in the Sassanian Empire with the Shah (king) at its core and supported by a stratum of nobility, which governed the extensive empires at the expense of the empire, and not the nobility itself<sup>15</sup>.

Sassanian Empire had remained in war with the Byzantine Empire and these wars defined the political and military situation in the area. Similar to Byzantines, the Sassanians wanted to dominate the Arabian tribes, trying to establish alliances with the help of diplomacy and military campaigns. Nevertheless, even these measures did not make the impact of Persia in the Arabian region very strong because tribal bonds were always rather movable and numerous tribes of Arabia kept their autonomy or took a new direction depending on the current political demand<sup>16</sup>.

During the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, though, the Sassanian Empire started to crumble under the joint influences of the internal conflicts and the external invasion. This got worsened with the emergence of Islam in Arabia. The Persian Empire started to be disintegrated after Shah Khosrow II died and different groups of people started to struggle against the others. This lack of stability internally, and the rapid military buildup of the new

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<sup>15</sup>Richard Nelson Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Cyrus Press, 1984), 195.

<sup>16</sup>William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 299.

Islam state, would eventually culminate in the collapse of the Sassanian Empire, when the Muslims overtook the Persians in the Battle of Qadisiyyah in 636 CE<sup>17</sup>.

**The Geopolitical relevance of Arabia:**

The physical geography of the Arabian Peninsula the zone served as the key to the geographical positioning of Arabian Peninsula that acted as the buffer zone between the two empires. Being at the border of both the Byzantine and Sassanian lands, Arabia was in a strategic position to influence the balance of power in the region. Both empires appreciated the need to ensure that the Arabian tribes were under their alliance especially considering the role played by the trade routes that traversed the peninsula. Furthermore, this religious connotation provided by the Kaaba of Mecca to the geopolitical significance of the region was supplemented by the fact that the Kaaba was the center of pilgrims in the region and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula as well as the world at large<sup>18</sup>.

Although having a peripheral position, the political role of Arabia increased with the emergence of Islam. The merger of the Arabian tribes by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave the new religious and political system the capability of affecting the larger power structure in the region. The message of the Prophet that contained political astuteness and religious leadership spread to the reigns of the Byzantine and Sassanian kingdoms who felt the looming danger of a unified Arab nation. These

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<sup>17</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 59.

<sup>18</sup> Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders* (Dar al-Salam, 1999), 82.

diplomatic advances of the Prophet to these two empires like his letters that invited their rulers to the Islamic religion were all a part of a larger plan to place Islam as a religious movement that carries with it political consequences. This mission to the two empires heralded the involvement of Islam in the international political arena and the rise of the Islamic power outside Arabia was inaugurated<sup>19</sup>.

### **III. The Diplomatic Practice of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH):**

#### **Philosophy of Prophetic Diplomacy:**

Justice, wisdom, and peaceful interaction were the principles that formed the diplomacy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and this has been addressed in the Quran with illustrations in the Sunnah. The diplomacy gave priority to invitation basing on wisdom, as indicated in the verse of the Quran: Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and reason with them in the best way (Qur'an 16:125). It is a verse that emphasizes the necessity of conversation, logic, and treat people that are not Muslims with respect. The diplomacy of the prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was not a violent instrument of conquest but a form of communication that extended an invitation to the rest of the world to join Islam whereby peace was the main goal at the end of every conversation<sup>20</sup>.

In addition, the diplomacy of the Prophet was based on the strategy of peaceful dialogue before going to war. Quran is more than once implored to reconcile, to be peaceful, to be tolerant, particularly when it comes to conflict: "When they tend to peace, then tend to it" (Qur'an 8:61). This is

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<sup>19</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 592.

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 765.

the peace-style that was used when the Prophet dealt with the neighboring empires as he was able to find peaceful solutions before turning to military conflict. The diplomatic approach of peaceful outreach that he used is seen in his letter to the rulers of Byzantium and Persia, where he encourages them to convert to Islam as a way of peace<sup>21</sup>. This is a commendation to the wisdom of the Prophet because he knew that peaceful coexistence of man would save bloodsheds that would otherwise be caused when pursuing the Islamic mission.

#### **Letters to World Leaders:**

The mark of the Prophet diplomacy was that he used formal letters in his communication with the leaders of other empires. Those were not just invitations to get converted, but official requests to rulers to convert to Islam and enter friendly relations with the newly formed Muslim state. The letters of the Prophet to Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium and King Khosrow II of Persia were marked with clear protocols and these protocols were in accordance with the political norms during that period. The seal of the Prophet was applied to these letters, so the authenticity is guaranteed, and the role of the formal character of his diplomatic outreach is strengthened<sup>22</sup>.

The message of the letters was not complicated and strong: Accept Islam and you will be at peace (Sahih al-Bukhari). This message transported the fact that Islam was a universal message and that the invitation was not a

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<sup>21</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 145.

<sup>22</sup> Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders* (Dar al-Salam, 1999), 92.

threat but just a peace message. Defining Islam as the way to peace and salvation, the Prophet (PBUH) set a universal invitation to the rulers of the great empires. The seals with which diplomatic letters were then in use raised the dignity of the letters, and the gravity with which the Prophet treated diplomatic relations still further enhanced the dignity of the letters and emphasized the gravity with which the diplomatic relations were treated by the Prophet himself<sup>23</sup>. The letters were a continuation of a larger plan to make Islam a spiritual religion, but also a formidable political force that was able to interact with other powers of the world.

### **The Strategic Timing:**

The diplomatic mission of the Prophet was made when the Muslim people had concentrated their influence on the Arabian Peninsula. This was notably clear following the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah in 628 CE that signaled an important incidence in the history of Islam. The treaty the Muslims had signed with the Quraysh of Mecca that was initially perceived as a defeat to the Muslims, ended up granting time of peace, during which the Muslims managed to stabilize their political and military positions in Arabia. Previously the Prophet (PBUH) had gone through persecution, however, by the time the treaty was signed his status was much elevated, both at the political level, as well as at the military level<sup>24</sup>.

The unification of Arabia gave the Prophet (PBUH) the stability and security to be able to do international diplomacy. After uniting the Arabian

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<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 51.

<sup>24</sup> F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 165.

tribes, the Prophet began to focus on the spread of the influence of Islam outside the Arabian Peninsula. The time following Hudaibiyyah enabled him to work on the mission of sending envoys and letters to Byzantium and Persian rulers to invite them to take part in Islam. This was a strategic timing, after a few years of peace and consolidation and this was critical in ensuring that the diplomatic efforts of the Prophet would not be taken lightly by the mighty rulers back then <sup>25</sup>.

The pragmatism in the application of diplomacy is also evident in the way the Prophet handled things in the statecraft. At this stage, the Muslim community was already a force to reckon with in the region, and the diplomatic mission of the Prophet was one of the methods to arrange the alliances and find peaceful coexistence with the neighboring governments. Simultaneously, the willingness of the Prophet to use military force, when diplomacy will not work, shows the proportion that he managed to reach between non-violent interaction and the safety of the Islamic state.

The diplomacy strategy used by prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was marked with wisdom, peaceful negotiation, and timing. Based on the premises of the Quran, his diplomacy was both an invitation to people to convert to the Islamic religion and a sign of his belief in peace and justice. His letters to world leaders were official, respectful and straight forward with the message that Islam was the universal way to peace. The timely nature of such diplomatic undertakings especially following the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, enabled the Prophet to have extended an invitation to the mighty empires of that era where the Islamic religion could be viewed as a

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<sup>25</sup>Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 88.

political and religious entity that did not intend on the battlefronts. The diplomatic model of the Prophet is one of the main sources of studying the nexus of religion and politics in the Islamic statecraft.

#### **IV. As a result, diplomacy with the Byzantine Empire:**

##### **Eastern Roman Emperor, Heraclius: Letter to him:**

The most notable example of the diplomatic contact of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Byzantine Empire is the letter addressed to Emperor Heraclius and one of the most significant diplomatic works of the early Islamic era. The letter was written to the emperor, and remains in a number of early Islamic sources, such as Sahih Bukhari, Sirat Rasul Allah by Ibn Ishaq and the History by al-Tabari. These sources contain extensive descriptions of the content of the letter and the events that ensued its delivery<sup>26</sup>

The letter as such was a plain and simple message but with a deep meaning. It welcomed Heraclius to convert to Islam, making it quite obvious that such a conversion would both grant him peace and salvation. The letter was as follows: In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. Between Muhammad, who was the servant of Allah and the Messenger of Allah, and Heraclius, who was the ruler of Byzantium. May the blessings of peace be on the followers. I offer you Islam; and by turning Islam as also shall you be secure, and Allah shall reward thee twice. But should you refuse this invitation then shall the sin of the people be upon thee. And I recommend that you become Muslims<sup>27</sup>. It reacts to

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<sup>26</sup>Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders* (Dar al-Salam, 1999), 103.

<sup>27</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust,

the normal diplomatic strategy of the Prophet (PBUH) which was to give peace and respect and to issue the call to Islam that was to be made explicit and not indirect.

Dihyah ibn Khalifah al-Kalbi, who was an emissary of the Prophet, was the one who delivered the letter, and his duty was a significant one, namely, to convey the message to the Byzantine emperor. Dihyah ibn Khalifah was an important selection; he was a venerable ally and messenger, whom they selected in his diplomacy and tact. This is an indicator of the formalism of the diplomacy of the Prophet, who underlines the significance of protocol and respect when conveying his message<sup>28</sup>.

#### **Heraclius' Response:**

On the release of the letter, Emperor Heraclius had consultations with his courtiers and religious advisors. His answer, *adm prudentia*, was that of fear. As it goes in history, Heraclius was aware of certain indicators which might be used to measure the authenticity of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as a prophet. Specifically, his advisors emphasized the fact that the mission of the Prophet was comparable to other Abrahamic religions, in particular, Christianity. Nevertheless, the reaction of Heraclius was rather politically safe than religiously tolerant. At one of the more crucial scenes he is quoted to have said, "unless I knew that I could meet him I would speed to him"<sup>29</sup>.

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1980), 61.

<sup>28</sup>Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 144.

<sup>29</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford University Press, 1955), 231.

The fact that Heraclius realized the prophethood signs, however, did not lead to immediate politics. The Byzantine Empire was politically and militarily unstable due to decades of military conflicts with Persia. Any movement towards Islam and more so at such an initial stage, would have caused internal unrest in the empire and even the position of Heraclius was not safe. Consequently, Heraclius was reluctant to express his conversion to Islam or to directly take the political initiative to interact with the Muslims. This is characteristic of the Byzantine tradition of treating foreign danger, in which the political policy frequently, indeed nearly, was more important than the religion<sup>30</sup>.

Another anecdote, which also shows the inner struggle of Heraclius, is his dialogue with Abu Sufyan, leader of Quraysh, who had not yet converted to Islam at that time. During his tours in Syria, Abu Sufyan met with Heraclius and was questioned about Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Sahih Bukhari and Ibn Ishaq have quoted Abu Sufyan saying Muhammad (PBUH) was a man of good nature, but his people had resisted him. Although this encounter did not yield any evident verdict, it signified that Heraclius had realized the good qualities of the Prophet (PBUH) and did not want to face Islam directly in a tough battle<sup>31</sup>.

#### **Influence on Byzantine-Arab Relations:**

The wary nature of Heraclius in accepting the invitation of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had a long term effect on the relations between Byzantine and Arab conditions. Although Heraclius never legally

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<sup>30</sup>Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 182.

<sup>31</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari, *Hadith Collection*, Volume 1, Book 1, Hadith 7.

embraced Islam, in recognizing the Prophet (PBUH), he paved the way to further relations of the two powers. The Byzantines started by pursuing a course of cautious neutrality, never becoming engaged with the Muslims directly, or even openly opposing them. This impartiality would be put to the test not long afterwards, especially in the wake of the Battle of Mu'tah (629 CE) as well as the 630 CE Tabuk expedition<sup>32</sup>.

Mu'tah was a battle between the Byzantine-supported forces and the Muslims and it took place in Jordan today. Although they did not defeat the Muslims, the fight proved their military power and their willingness to fight against the Byzantine Empire. This was to be followed by the marching of the Prophet (PBUH) to the Byzantine frontier at Tabuk in 630 CE, a war campaign aimed at establishing the power of Muslims in the land. Although the face-to-face conflict was not held, the campaign turned out to be a landmark move in defending Islam as existing in regions that bordered on Byzantine Empire<sup>33</sup>.

These confrontations did not qualify to be outright wars but were the forerunners of Byzantine-Islamic encounters in the future. The activities of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with the Byzantine Empire were not purely military ones, but they were also part of a bigger diplomatic policy that would experience more relations between the Islamic and Byzantine powers in the future, particularly in the Caliphates that were to be seen after the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH) had ended<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup>Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders*, 106.

<sup>33</sup> F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 218.

<sup>34</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (University of Chicago Press,

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### **Byzantine Reception Analysis:**

The reaction of Heraclius to the diplomatic overtures of the Prophet (PBUH) is an indication of a wider predicament to the Byzantine Empire. On the one hand, Heraclius was very sensitized to the religious and political potential of Islam. Alternatively, the empire was weak politically following several decades of military conflicts with Persia and civil conflicts. The identification of the signs of prophesy, yet the unwillingness to take action reflects the conflicting nature of faith and politics that dominated most of the Byzantine foreign policy. Heraclius was not simply reluctant to become a Muslim because his decision was too closely connected with the political situation in the Byzantine Empire which had just resulted in the end of the long and exhausting struggle with the Sassanian Empire. Byzantium was not ready then to risk the political stability by making unstable political choices <sup>35</sup>.

This political hesitation ended up defining Byzantine-Islamic in years to come. Although Heraclius was reluctant, the diplomatic approach of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) had prepared the ground to the engagement in the future providing the foundation to the possible war and mutual collaboration. The acknowledgment of Islam as an emerging power although with a political caution would eventually yield to an array of military and diplomacy involving activities which would finally lead to the ultimate acceptance of the Islamic state as a global political and military community by the Byzantines.

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1988), 95.

<sup>35</sup> John Haldon, *The Byzantine Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 182.

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## **V. Diplomacy with the Persian Empire:**

### **Epistle to Khosrow II (Shah of Persia):**

The relations between the Prophet Muhammad and the Persian Empire were also characterized by the diplomatic letter that was sent to Khosrow II, the Sassanian Shah (king) of Persia. The letter, which was written in 628 CE, was in the same format as the one written to Heraclius, the Byzantine Emperor, and its message was very respectful and forceful in its invitation to Islam. The message of the letter was focused on peace and Khosrow was given an opportunity to follow the conversion to Islam and in the process gain peace and reward in heaven, besides being advised about what was to happen when he declined the offer. This is what was written in the letter:

“In the name of Allah, the most gracious, the most merciful. Since Muhammad, who served Allah, and was the Messenger, to Khosrow, the King of Persia. May peace be upon the followers of the advice. I am inviting you to Islam and you will have peace in case you accept. Should you reject it, Magians will be sinned against you.”<sup>36</sup>

This is similar to the other letters that the Prophet (PBUH) sent to people, the letter highlighted the universal invitation of Islam that was given as a peaceful way and path towards spiritual salvation. The formal protocol which was used by the Prophet such as the seal of the Messenger indicated the diplomatic protocol which was in use at that time. The wording of the

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<sup>36</sup> Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders* (Dar al-Salam, 1999), 114.

letter was computed so that Khosser could interpret the religious and political meaning of the message, meaning that Islam is not only a spiritual way but a valid political force as well. It is the confidence of the Prophet in the emerging Muslim state and his wish to convey the message of peaceful intentions and widest reach of Islam that made him address the Sassanian king in such a straightforward manner<sup>37</sup>.

The messenger that bore the letter was the envoy Abdullah ibn Hudhafa al-Sahmi, a close companion of the Prophet (PBUH), who was assigned the role of ensuring that the letter arrived at Khosrow and relayed the message in the right formalities. This is the diplomatic style that gave the Prophet (PBUH) emphasis on the selection of skilled and respected people as his emissaries in his diplomatic missions<sup>38</sup>.

**Khosrow's Reaction:**

Khosrow II responded to the letter that the Prophet sent to him with contempt and presumption. When Khosser was given the letter, he supposedly tore up the letter symbolically in his act of rejection, which portrays his disdain to the message. The Islamic tradition held that when Khosser tore the letter he had insulted not only the Prophet (PBUH) but also the entire Islam. This reaction typified the insolence of the imperial authority whereby Khosser, who had long been used to governing such a vast and powerful empire thought that his status was beyond doubt,

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<sup>37</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 65.

<sup>38</sup> F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 202.

politically and spiritually. The dissection of the letter was symbolic of the rejection of the Sassanian dynasty of the newly emerged political and religious movement in Arabia because they did not feel the need to interact with such a new political and religious movement in Arabia<sup>39</sup>.

The reaction was also a direct expression of the pride of the Sassanian Empire by Koshir. Persians had been in control of the region since time immemorial, and they were unwary and suspicious of any form of threat to their control. The fact that Khosrow ordered the arrest of the envoy of the Prophet, Abdullah ibn Hudhafa, is another indication of how the Shah refused to even consider that Islam could be a serious political and religious formation. This response highlights the deep-rooted imperial pride that made the Sassanian leaders refuse any offers to the external world and, in particular, one of the growing power, such as the Muslims<sup>40</sup>.

#### **The Politics instability in Persia:**

The denial delivered by Khosrow II on the diplomatic invitation of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was soon followed by the major internal instability in the Sassanian Empire. Khosrow's arrogance and dictatorship grew unpopular in the court and in 628 CE, the Shah had been assassinated by his own son, Kavad II. This was a radical change in leadership that brought with it the onset of a phase of swift political unsteadiness that would taint the Sassanian Empire. The short period of the reign of Kavad

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<sup>39</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford University Press, 1955), 237.

<sup>40</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 156.

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II was characterized by internal opposition and external forces and this was the incidence that the empire started a downward spiral soon after the assassination of Khosrow<sup>41</sup>.

The assassination of Khosrow II can be regarded as the logical extension of his inability to adjust to the evolving political environment, in particular, his rejection of Islam. The Persian Empire, which used to be a great and united entity started to crumble under the pressure of internal feuds and foreign invasions. The Sassanian Empire would be reduced to ruins by the approaching Islamic forces within several years, and the Battle of Qadisiyyah in 636 CE literally destroyed the rule of the Sassanian dynasty<sup>42</sup>.

**Prophetic Prediction:**

The reply that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave to the rejection by Khosrow was an astonishingly visionary and prophetic response. The Prophet (PBUH) is quoted saying in one of the most famous hadiths: His empire will be torn apart as what he tore away my letter"<sup>43</sup>[(8)] . This prophecy does not only show the Prophet (PBUH) knowledge of the political situation of the era but also shows his spiritual knowledge of what happens to those who denounce the divine message. The Sassanian Empire would actually disintegrate within twenty years after Khosrow denied the invitation of the Prophet, as prophesied. The very speed of the loss of

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Nelson Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Cyrus Press, 1984), 208.

<sup>42</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 134.

<sup>43</sup> Sahih al-Bukhari, *Hadith Collection*, Volume 4, Book 56, Hadith 818.

power of the Persians following the assassination of Khosser and in aftermath the military conquest of the latter by the Muslim forces is a dramatic fulfillment of the words of the Prophet<sup>44</sup>.

The collapse of the Sassanian Empire, which was one of the strongest empires of the world, is traditionally considered as a divine retribution of the arrogance of Khosser and his denial of the truth about Islam in Islamic historiography. The Muslims led by Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab would continue conquering Persia and adding it to the fast spreading Islamic state. This conquest was more than a military triumph because this was the prophecy that was fulfilled and shows the force of the will of God in history during this period<sup>45</sup>.

#### **Persian Reception Analysis:**

The reaction of the Persians towards the message of the Prophet (PBUH) is a complete contrast to the Byzantine. Where the Byzantines showed a polygraph of curiosity, reservations, and subsequent interest, the reaction of the Persians was one of disdain, and cynicism. Even the imperial Sassanian Empire could not imagine that they could face a threat posed by the Arabs, who were traditionally considered a politically and militarily insignificant nation. This pomp and instability of the rule of Khosser allowed the Persians not to acknowledge the importance of Islam as a spiritual and political movement<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> John Haldon, *The Byzantine Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 183.

<sup>45</sup> Muhammad Asad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Dar Al-Andalus, 1980), 650.

<sup>46</sup> Bernard Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (University of Chicago Press, 1988), 125.

It is the Persian denial caused by imperial pride and political unrest that eventually toiled the destiny of the Sassanian Empire. Unlike the Byzantine Empire, which in any case, was willing to engage in some dialog, the Persians did not recognize the significance of the diplomatic work of the Prophet (PBUH). This rejection however did not in any way reduce the larger meaning of the Prophet outreach but on the contrary it increased the rift between the two empires and the new force, Islam which was soon to rise as a powerful force in the region<sup>47</sup>.

#### **VI. Comparison of Diplomatic Action:**

Prophetic Approach: There are similarities between the Prophetic Approach.

The diplomatic missions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to the Byzantine and the Persian Empires had a number of fundamental principles, which were based on his overall mission of propagating the Islamic message and encouraging peaceful coexistence. One of the motifs in the diplomatic policy of the Prophet was the message of faith and peace to all. An identical invitation to Islam, as a way out of strife, could be found in his letters to Emperor Heraclius of Byzantium, and Shah Khosrow II of Persia. The highlight was excessively concise and subtle, which stated that a person would become peaceful once they accepted Islam (Sahih al-Bukhari). This impartiality of voice helped to stress that the Islam message was not a message of significant conquest and division, rather a message of spiritual salvation and that it brought peace to those

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<sup>47</sup> William H. McNeill, *The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), 320

who believed it. This consistency is indicative of how the Prophet was devoted to peace and this was at the center of his diplomatic efforts<sup>48</sup>.

The other similarity in the diplomatic strategy of the Prophet was that he used envoys and written letters in order to get in touch with the great rulers of that era. The Prophet (PBUH) also saw the need of being formal and observing protocol during negotiations and this is shown through his choice of envoys like Dihyah ibn Khalifah al-Kalbi and Abdullah ibn Hudhafa al-Sahmi. These messengers were commissioned to deliver official letters which were usually sealed as a sign of the gravity of what was being communicated. Not only did the act of sending written message especially using the services of the trusted emissaries provide evidence of how the Prophet strategically employed the use of diplomacy, but also enabled the spread of the message of Islam across the geographical borders of tribal Arabia to the empires of Byzantium and Persia<sup>49</sup>.

All these practices were based on the teachings of the Quran according to which believers are encouraged to engage in wisdom and good counsel in the workings with other people: Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Qur'an 16:125). By following these principles, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) aimed at promoting peace by means of dialogue, but on the other hand, he performed the assertion of the divine authority of his mission.

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<sup>48</sup> Muhammad al-Mubarak, *Prophet Muhammad's Letters to World Leaders* (Dar al-Salam, 1999), 120.

<sup>49</sup> Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 72.

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### **Differences in Responses:**

Regardless of the similar approach, the reactions of Byzantine and Persian empires were quite dissimilar. The Byzantine Empire in its turn, led by Emperor Heraclius, was responding with amazed admiration and suspicion. The fact that Heraclius knew that there were certain prophetic signs and that the message had a religious connotation made him willing to talk but unwilling to take action politically, because of the dynamics of his own empire and its stability. He talked to his religious advisors and his courtiers, some of whom showed some interest in the message of Islamic, but he did not act upon this immediately. Universidad Caramoan, Quezon, and Pangas are among the contributors to the message of Islam, who later became known as the Apostles of Islam, although not at that time<sup>50</sup>. His answer was that of reserved involvement characterized by respect of the role of the Prophet (PBUH) but unwillingness to officially profess Islam because of political and religious issues. This indecisiveness was indicative of the internal complications of the Byzantine Empire, the political actions of the emperor were in many ways limited by the interests of the church and the state.

The Persian reaction, in sharp contrast, was that of the rejection and the arrogance. When Shah Khosser II gets the letter of Prophet, he is said to have shredded it in a gesture of contempt. His refusal was political rather than based on anything but the Persian feeling of imperial pride and a reluctance to face a threat to their rule. Khosser was arrogant and this was expressed in the way he treated the envoy of the Prophet Abdullah ibn

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<sup>50</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 81.

Hudhafa who he ordered to be arrested. This arrogance of dismissal, combined with the arrogant feeling of impregnability, of the Sassanian Empire, was, upon the contrary, greeted by the Byzantine feeling of wary curiosity<sup>51</sup>.

It is possible to attribute the rejection by Persia to the political instability of the empire, as well as to the fact that the rulers of the Sassanian empire failed to predict the consequences of Islam as an emerging global force. As Byzantium sought to weigh the seriousness of Islam as a possible political reality, Persia simply refused it, the differences between the futures of the two empires were established.

**Long-term Consequences:**

The consequences of these various reactions to the diplomatic overture of the Prophet were long-term and determined the course of the two empires in the next centuries. Even the Byzantine Empire, which was initially reluctant, would remain engaged in constant war with the emerging Islamic force. The wars that ensued like the Battle of Mu'tah (629 CE) and the Tabuk expedition (630 CE) were indications of the tension between the Muslim army and the Byzantine Empire. Although not full military clashes, these relationships still preconditioned the further contacts of the two worlds, the Byzantine and the Islamic ones. In the course of time, though, the relations between the Byzantine and Arab began to change, as the Byzantine Empire started to adopt the policy of careful interaction with Islamic state. This contact, which was usually confrontational, also gave rise to cultural exchange, especially in the fields of art, science and

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<sup>51</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *Sirat Rasul Allah*, trans. A. Guillaume (Oxford University Press, 1955), 239.

philosophy. It is the history of the Byzantine Empire that would lead to its ultimate downfall in the 15 th century and some of it would be due to its prior experience with Islam<sup>52</sup>.

The refusal of the message of the Prophet by the Persian Empire, in contrast, affected it much more directly and disastrously. This is due to the overconfidence of Khosrow as well as the resulting political instability in the Sassanian Empire that led to the fall of the empire. The assassination of Khosrow II, the decline of the power of the Sassanian monarchy, the rapid conquest of Persia by the Muslim armies, in the month of Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab. This was a turning point in the conquest, and the final downfall of the Sassanian Empire and the inclusion of Persia into the Islamic state was due to the Battle of Qadisiyyah (636 CE). Persian Empire that was once the powerful state in the area was absorbed into the Islamic culture and the Persian culture would be one of the main factors contributing to the future of the Islamic world. This sudden fall was a striking contrast to the less abrupt fall of Byzantium<sup>53</sup>.

#### **Lessons in Statecraft:**

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) diplomatic interaction with the Byzantine and Persian empires bring some important lessons regarding the statecraft. Among the lessons learned is that strategic patience and foresight are important. The diplomacy of the Prophet (PBUH) was not the direct move to convert or to engage in war, it was the calculated move toward long term peace and the creation of Islam as a political power. His forbearance

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<sup>52</sup> F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 211.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Nelson Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* (Cyrus Press, 1984), 250.

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in invitations, his astuteness in despatching ambassadors, his dependence on diplomacy, preceding war, show a thorough knowledge of the facts in political affairs. It is a wisdom based on the Quranic teachings of peace and justice on how to conduct statecraft, particularly in the event of war with a powerful opponent<sup>54</sup>.

Moreover, the diplomatic policy of the Prophet (PBUH) was the basis of the relations of Islam with the wider world in the future. His adherence to the protocol, his clear explanation of the message of Islam and his capability to interact with mighty empires created a precedent to Islamic diplomacy in the centuries to come. Diplomatic lessons that had been initiated during the days of the Prophet (PBUH) would still persist in the Islamic Caliphates that would follow him with both Christian and Persian cultures joining forces with each other in the country<sup>55</sup>.

To conclude, the diplomatic policy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) against the Byzantine and Persian Empires demonstrates the level of strategic thinking and adherence to a peaceful policy of engagement. Although the reactions of two empires were quite different, the development of the further course of the history was determined by the results of interactions of these states during the long period, because Byzantium was the powerful opponent to be considered during the centuries, and the state of Persia split into the fragments under the impact of the internal and external factors. The diplomatic approach of the Prophet has a lot of lessons on how to conduct international relationship

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<sup>54</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 148.

<sup>55</sup> John Haldon, *The Byzantine Empire* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 200.

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with wisdom, patience and a commitment to the idea of peace that cannot be compromised.

## **VII. Greater Consequences of Prophetic Diplomacy:**

### **Religious Dimension:**

The universalism of the message of Islam was one of the greatest consequences of the diplomacy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). His foreign relations with the Byzantine and the Persian Empires was the continuation of the Islamic core value that the message of Quran was not to the Arabian Peninsula, but rather to all humanity. The letters of the Prophet to the leaders of these enormous empires were explicit requests to convert to Islam, thus making the religion inclusive and universal. His diplomatic work echoes the Quranic central message which is "And We have not sent thee [O Muhammad] except as a message of mercy to the worlds" (Qur'an 21:107) because he needed to convey the message that Islam was not a regional or tribal religion, but a message of peace and submission to the one God.

The Prophet (PBUH) in his letters recognized the existence of the past Abrahamic traditions, in that of Judaism and Christianity, as being on the wider spectrum of divine revelation. His style acknowledged the common origins of monotheism and forged a dialogue on the basis of these similarities. The identification of these preceding traditions did not only make the message of Islam more acceptable to the leaders of the Byzantine and Persian empires, who had their own religious traditions, but also established Islam as the ultimate religion of the previous Abrahamic religions. This feeling of continuity as opposed to a competition showed the tact of diplomacy that the Prophet (PBUH) showed in making Islam fit

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in the broader religious environment of the period<sup>56</sup>.

**Political Dimension:**

One of the most important features of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) diplomacy is likely the political one as far as his interaction with the Byzantine and Persian empires is concerned. By the time of his diplomatic overture, Islam had developed beyond a local religion movement into an embryonic political entity whose army was developing and their government was unified. The Prophet (PBUH) saw the need of finding political legitimacy in the international arena, especially that of the two powerful nations in the region; Byzantium and Persia. His letters to Heraclius as well as Khosrow were tactical actions at establishing the increasing power of Islam not only as a religion but also politically. Through the invitation of these empires to embrace Islam, the Prophet aimed at making Islam a valid political entity that would be able to participate in diplomatic affairs at the same level as the then mighty powers.

Besides, the Prophet (PBUH) knew the fine line that existed between peace and military readiness. His diplomatic advancements were not mere gestures of goodwill, but in a far wider policy of not wanting to engage in unnecessary war when anticipating a military counteraction should it be necessary. The example of this balance was the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah (628 CE) in which peace was secured between the Muslims and the Quraysh while the Prophet (PBUH) and his disciples consolidated their power and got ready to enter into conflict with other forces. This incidence

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<sup>56</sup>Muhammad Hamidullah, *The Muslim Conduct of State* (Islamic Book Trust, 1980), 73.

highlighted how the Prophet (PBUH) perceived statecraft to be, to pursue peace where feasible, but to be ready to go to war where there was need. The diplomacy of the Prophet was a tactical act of balancing both the non forceful spreading of Islam and the protection of the Muslim people against outside attacks<sup>57</sup>.

**Civilizational Dimension:**

Diplomacy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was also noted to have played a role in the future of the Islamic world in the civilizational dimension of Islam. His contact with the Byzantine and Persian empires was not only about the political legitimacy but also opening the doors to the cultural, intellectual and economic relations. His acknowledgment of these empires with their sophisticated civilizations, by the Prophet (PBUH) preconditioned future interactions between cultures. The Muslim conquering of Persia and Byzantine parts in the following decades in the past led to the introduction of the Persian government and the Byzantine architectural designs along with the Greek philosophy to the Islamic world. The Islamic civilization was strengthened through these interactions as it led to improvements on science, mathematics, philosophy and art.

More so, the diplomatic approach of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) served as the model to the subsequent Islamic empires, including Umayyads and Abbasids. These dynasties that followed the leadership of the Prophet (PBUH) opened up the Muslim world and acted as diplomats with other civilizations (Byzantine and Sassanian ruins) and other rising

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<sup>57</sup> Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Harvard University Press, 2010), 146.

powers in Asia and Africa. The practice of diplomacy, which was initiated by the Prophet (PBUH), remained to shape the Islamic rule, in which diplomacy was not only a political instrument but also the way to create permanent cultural and intellectual connections. As an example, the Abbasid Caliphate that had its seat in Baghdad turned into a seat of learning, absorbing both Greek, Persian and Indian knowledge and translating it into the lingua franca of intellectual study across the Islamic states<sup>58</sup>.

The fact that the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was capable of building peaceful relations with the rest of the world, at the same time preparing to defend the fledgling Islamic state meant that Islam would not only be expanded in terms of territory but also in terms of culture and intellectual wealth. It is through his diplomatic activities that the Islamic civilization was fertilized and would go on to shape the world over the centuries still to come<sup>59</sup>.

Finally, the implications of the diplomacy of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) were very broad, both in terms of religion, politics and the civilization. His doctrine of peace and faith which was universal together with his awareness to the traditions of Abrahamism before him enabled Islam to get a stronghold on the international scene. In politics, the Prophet (PBUH) was able to combine diplomacy and military readiness, which led to the survival and growth of the Muslim world. Diplomatically, his

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<sup>58</sup> Karen Armstrong, *Muhammad: Prophet for Our Time* (HarperCollins, 2006), 212.

<sup>59</sup> F. E. Peters, *Muhammad and the Origins of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1994), 225.

openness to the civic world allowed the openness of the future cultural, intellectual and economic relations, making the Islamic world richer through generations. These diplomatic policies preconditioned the creation of the Islamic Golden Age and left a pattern of statecraft that would serve as an example of other Islamic empires in the future. The diplomacy of the Prophet (PBUH) did not only give a form to the early Islamic state, but also contributed to the future prosperity of Islamic civilization in the future.

### **VIII. Conclusion:**

#### **Summary of Findings:**

The foreign policies of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) towards the Byzantine Empire and the Persian Empire are manifestations of a subtle and strategic strategy based on wisdom, patience and universalism of the message of Islam. In his letters to Heraclius of Byzantium and Khosrow II of Persia, the invitation to convert to Islam was made clear because he was inviting them to peace and spiritual salvation. The Prophet (PBUH) never used force, but he depended on dialogue and respectful communication, which stresses on the significance of peace in the presence of war. The fact that he used formal envoys, gave forthright and direct messages and followed protocol underscored the fact that he was politically savvy and committed to making Islam not just a religious movement but also an emerging political force.

Although the reactions of the Byzantine and Persian empires were very different, the interactions depicted both the depth of interaction with the powerful states. Byzantium was cautiously respectful in response, accepting the validity of the prophetic message of the Prophet, but it was held back in political considerations. Persia on the other hand replied scornfully and proudly and declined the message. These responses varied,

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which preconditioned the relationship that followed between the Islamic state and these empires in the context of the overall geopolitical processes of that time.

**Historical Significance:**

The diplomacy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) played a significant role in history by making Islam a valid power in the international arena. His experiences with Byzantium and Persia did not only concern preaching the word of Islam; it also initiated the involvement of Islam with the major world empires and put Islam in the position of an emergent political and religious movement. His model of diplomacy from the beginning of his rule marked the direction of the subsequent Islamic statecraft especially in the way the Umayyads and Abbasids would interact with their neighbors. Having made Islam a recognized figure in the international arena by peaceful talks, the Prophet (PBUH) preconditioned the cultural, political, and intellectual growth that would mark the Islamic world throughout centuries.

The diplomacy of the Prophet (PBUH) was also critical in defining the course of the Islamic governance. His prudent mix of peace and military readiness combined with an excellent knowledge of the political realities of his era gave a framework on which Islamic rulers could make decisions in the future regarding how to approach their neighbors as well as the rest of the world. His move towards strategic patience and long-term thinking in foreign policy shaped the political ideology of subsequent Islamic realm, and showed that religious and political institutions could be integrated to achieve long-term goals of the Muslim community.

**Contemporary Relevance:**

The teachings of the diplomacy of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) are very pertinent in the modern world especially to the present day Islamic

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societies. His case of respectful conversation when it comes to political power struggle can contribute to understanding how to cope in the modern world of intricate international relations. With the current levels of political polarization, conflicts, and power struggles, the Prophet approach gives an example of how Islamic societies can interact with the global powers using diplomacy, yet maintain its religious and political principles. The focus on dialogue, peace, and patience is a crucial message to keep in mind that effective diplomacy is never about power only but about the ability to build mutual respect and understanding.

To contemporary Islamic nations, diplomatic activities of the Prophet (PBUH) can be used to provide a model on how to remain sovereign and at the same time with dignity whilst interacting with the mighty world powers. With the modern-day geopolitical challenges, dialogue, premised on mutual respect, wisdom, and shared values, continues to be a pillar in good diplomacy. With the changing and evolving global power dynamics, the role model of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) of diplomatic involvement remains to be good lessons of how to strike the right balance between politics and religion.



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