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ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER:
DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

MODULE ONE

ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER: DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 STRUCTURE OF THE MODULE

This manual for the teachers is a didactic package in which the following theme is handled: 'Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity'. This package has been developed for the age group of 12 to 18 years old and offers the teacher or supervisor of a learning group the opportunity to develop this theme at the level of their own class group.

In this manual, the teacher can work on various topics that are consistent with the overarching theme 'Encounter with the other : dealing with diversity'. Based on impulses and didactic suggestions, it is possible to approach this theme from different perspectives. Impulses are elements that the teacher can bring into the classroom to start the conversation. This manual contains a variety of impulses with different levels of difficulty. These impulses aim to contribute to the learning process and exist in various forms. It is not the intention to use all impulses. The teacher can select the most appropriate impulses based on (the initial situation in) his learning group. The didactic suggestions are concrete proposals to work with the impulses and are aimed at philosophical reflection and communication. This ensures that the teacher can approach in a varied way the different impulses that match the own learning group.

This manual makes a distinction between 'basic material' and 'deepening'. The basic subject matter is standard in the manual for the students and takes two hours to complete. In addition, the teacher has the choice to deepen the students' knowledge by means of the extra chapters with accompanying impulses and didactic suggestions, which are provided in this manual.

- First, there is a general historical outline of the Quran. The context in which the Quran has been established is an important base for the learning group to consider verse 51 in Sura Al-Mā'idah, ("Enmity between Muslims and other believers") to better understand and interpret. This chapter except 3.4. The society of the Arabian Peninsula and 3.5. The religious life in the Arabian Peninsula is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- Secondly, the rules of interpretation of the Quran are being discussed. How can we interpret the Quran? Which interpretation principles are important to understand the Quran properly? This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The third chapter of this manual takes a closer look at roles of Prophet Mohammed. In this chapter, students will learn more about the importance of distinguishing between the various roles of the prophet. This chapter is part of the basic learning material for the students.
- The last chapter addresses the question of polarization and depolarization. This section (based on the polarization model of the philosopher Brandsma) examines the meaning of the term polarization (in our society) and the dynamic of polarization. Then the model applies to the discourse of Muslim extremists as to that of right-wing extremists. This is an in-depth chapter.

In conclusion, this manual contains a glossary in which all difficult concepts are succinctly explained at the level of the student, Followed by a bibliography.

1.1.2 CONTENT OF THE MANUAL

This didactic package deals with the theme: "Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity". The chosen starting point for this manual is verse 51 Sura Al-Mā'idah: "O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies, they are allies of each other. And if one of you takes them as an "ally, then he certainly belongs to them. Surely Allah does not lead the unrighteous people."

The starting point of this manual is an video clip in which a possible real situation sketch from the daily life of the students is presented. This fragment is a general introduction of the theme 'diversity' for the learning group, from which the teacher can start to further develop this theme with one or more impulses and didactic suggestions from this manual.

After viewing this image fragment, the teacher can get started with one or more impulses of this didactic package that match the level of the own learning group.

1.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT: QURAN IN HISTORY

The Quran has a very important place within the Islamic intellectual and religious tradition.

More than a billion Muslims consider the Quran as the word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad. It is important to understand the context of the tribal Arab or *ma'ud al'rab*¹ and the period in which the Quran was revealed to understand the Quran properly².

1.2.1 INTRODUCTION

The international situation

Mecca was located in the Arabian Peninsula. At that time, the Arabian Peninsula was surrounded by two major empires that both wanted to rule the entire Near East. On one hand you had the Christian Byzantine Empire. On the other hand, there was the Sassanid empire in Persia. There was tension between the two empires because both wanted to expand their powers of domination. This was the context in which the Prophet received the Quran.

It is important to keep the tribal society of Arabs in an international context in mind. In order to discover the wisdom of the Quran, it is essential to understand the Arab civilization of that specific time period. This means you have to understand their customs, culture, philosophy and language affinity, poetry etc. 'Abdallāh Ibn 'Abbās made a statement to a companion of the Prophet: *"Poetry is the tradition of the Arabs, so if there is a word for us in the Quran that Allah has revealed in the language of the Arabs that is not clear, then we return to their poetry."*³ The International context and the Arab civilization / period or *ma'ud al'rab* as the theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shātibī puts it, are very important to understand the verses and stories in the Quran.



Figure 1.1
Source: © kstudija /
Adobe Stock

¹ This is a term used by the great theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shātibī to emphasize the spirit of the Arabs during the time of revelation. With this he means that the knowledge of the habits and the way of life of the Arabs is an important fact to understand the Quran. The Muslim theologian Asshāfī has the same opinion.

M. IBN IDRIS ASSHAFI', Arrisala, Beiroet, Dar Al-Marefah, 2004, volume 1, p. 376.

² I. IBN IBRAHIM ASSHATIBI, Almuwafaqat Fi Usul Ashari'a, Beiroet, Dar Al-Koutboub Al'Imiya, 2005, p. 59.

³ J. ABD ARRAHMANE ASSOUYOUTI, Alitqaan fi 'Ium Alquraan, Medina, Majma' Malik Fahd, 2002, p. 449.

1.2.2 THE ENVIRONMENT OF MUHAMMAD: WHERE DID HE LIVE?

Figure 1.2
Arab bedouin
Source: © aarstudio /
Adobe Stock



Muḥammad was born in the year of the Elephant which corresponds to the year 570 of the Gregorian calendar. He was born to a noble family in Mecca, the tribe of Banū Hāshim. This tribe was highly regarded by other tribes in Mecca and the surrounding areas. Mohammad had lost his father before he was born. He had a dual status for the inhabitants of Mecca. He belonged to an important clan but he was also vulnerable because he was fatherless. The name “Muḥammad” was completely unknown at that time in

the Arabian Peninsula. His mother received the name “Muḥammad” through a vision during her pregnancy. It also announced the birth of the “lord of this people.” During the birth of Muḥammad she mentions: *“I place him under the protection of the only One, from the wickedness of every envious person.”* The Quraish had a special relationship with the nomadic lifestyle of the Arab Bedouin. They entrusted the care of their boys to the Bedouin foster families. The belief was that in the desert, the children would learn more self-discipline, nobility, and freedom. It requires a high level of solidarity and a high level of respect for the appreciation of human value in order to have a successful life in the desert.



Figure 1.3
Source: © frenta /
Adobe Stock

Ḥalīmah and her husband Ḥārith from the Hawāzin tribe came to Mecca in search of an infant to take to the desert. They were the poorest of their clan and could not convince any family belonging to Quraish to entrust them with the care of their child. Āminah, the mother of Muḥammad, was also in a desperate situation. She could not find a Bedouin foster home to care for Muḥammad. The ones who were looking for foster children rejected Muḥammad because he was an orphan. Ḥalīmah realized that a young widow like Āminah couldn’t afford her services. However, she agreed to take Muḥammad with her because she did not want to return to her people empty-handed. Even if it did not bring her material gains, Ḥalīmah thought that their generosity might bring them other blessings.

1.2.3 SOCIETY OF THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

Pre-Islamic society was made up of tribes. In the pre-Islamic society every person belonged to a certain tribe. The major civilizations in the south of the Arabian Peninsula (now Yemen). During this period the country had many riches. Due to natural disasters and political conflicts the situation in the region started to weaken. Many Arab tribes moved to the North of the Arabian Peninsula. Continuous wars and conflicts took place between the Arab tribes, mainly for economic and social reasons. They had conflicts over fertile land, water resources, honor, etc. The smaller tribes always lost from the larger powerful tribes. The only thing the smaller and weaker tribes could do was to team up with their enemies against a common larger enemy.



Figure 1.4
Petra, Jordan
Source: © dzain /
Adobe Stock

Arabs can be classified into three different categories:

1. The Destructive Arabs
2. The Pure Arabs
3. The Arabized Arabs

The Destructive Arabs are considered to be the descendants of prophet Nūḥ. This group includes the ancient tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd. The Quran refers to them several times (al A'rāf 7: 73-79 and Hūd 11: 50-68 and al-Aḥqāf 46: 21-25). Surah Fuṣṣilat (41: 15-18) describes how both tribes perished because they did not listen to the message of God.

The Pure Arabs are also known as the Qahtanian Arabs and lived in Yemen. They founded the empire of Sheba (Saba') in 2500 BC. The queen who ruled the empire is mentioned in Surah An-Naml when Prophet Sulaymān's messenger returned to his settlement to describe the Arabs of Yemen.



Figure 1.5
Sanā (current Yemen), in
the south of the Arabic
Peninsula
Source: © munett /
Adobe Stock

The Arabized Arabs are considered to be direct descendants of 'Ismā'īl and Prophet Muḥammad. These Arabs are also called the Adnanians. Their story begins with Ibrāhīm, the father of 'Ismā'īl, and the founder of Mecca. In this tribal patriarchal society, the law of the strongest prevailed. That is the main reason why this period had so many wars. It was the only way to survive.

1.2.4 RELIGIOUS LIFE IN THE ARABIAN PENINSULA

This was the context in which the Prophet Muḥammad was exalted and in which he received the Quran. These aspects are essential to keep in mind when reading the Quran.

The Arabian Peninsula had different religions. For example, you had Arabs who followed the religion of Ibrahim. They believed in one God. In addition, there were also Jews and Christians. Most Arabs worshiped different idols. Each tribe had one or more idols which they considered to be their gods. Since Mecca was a large religious center, most of the idols were located there. The Ka'ba was also located in Mecca. This religious center attracted many believers, while promoting trade. Abu Sufyan, one of the greatest idol worshipers said, "Our Gods are both religion and trade."

This was economically in the disadvantage of the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula because they attracted less visitors. Many southern Arabs moved to the north of the Arabian peninsula. A second Ka'ba was built in the south to prevent the southern Arabs from moving to the north.

The Southern Ka'ba continued to exist until the 18th century. At the beginning of the revelation, according to Islamic tradition, more than 360 idols, images or statues were present in the Ka'ba. The worshipers were considered to be heathens.

1.2.5 EXERCISES

EXERCISE 1: FILL IN THE BLANK (CONTEXT)

Assignment: The students have to answer the following questions below

1. What is the difference between monotheism and polytheism?

Monotheism = Belief in one god.

Polytheism = Belief in multiple gods.

2. Right or wrong: The Meccans were economically dependent on their gods?

Right.

3. Why did the Quraish entrust their children to the Bedouin foster families?

Because they had a healthier lifestyle.

4. Name the empires that surrounded the Arabian Peninsula?

The Byzantine Empire, which was Christian and the Sassanid empire in Persia.

5. What were the major religions present in the Arabian Peninsula?

Judaism, Christianity, Polytheism, Abrahamites.

6. How did they attempt to prevent people from moving to the North in the South of the Arabian Peninsula?

By building a second Ka'ba.

7. Give two reasons that were the causes of the tribal wars?

Economic and social reasons.

EXERCISE 2: THE LIFE OF THE PROPHET

Assignment: Put the right letter with the associated number

1. The clan or family of the Prophet Muḥammad	A. Christian
2. The tribal Arab or the <i>ma'ud al'rab</i>	B. Mecca
3. Year of birth of the Prophet Muḥammad	C. Term used for the Arab civilization / period when the Quran was revealed
4. Religion of the Byzantine Empire	D. Poetry
5. A cultural tradition of the Arabs	E. Year of the Elephant
6. City of birth of Prophet Muḥammad	F. Banū Hāshim

1	2	3	4	5	6
F	C	E	A	D	B

1.3 INTERPRETATION OF THE QURAN

1.3.1 INTRODUCTION



"O you who believe! Do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people." (Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

Figure 1.6
Source: © BillionPhotos.
com / Adobe Stock

It is important to understand the verses in the Quran in their context of existence. The society in which the Quran originated is a survival society. When reading the Quran it is essential to keep the structure of the Quran and the reason of revelation in mind.

1.3.2 PRINCIPLES OF THE INTERPRETATIONS

1. Society

Studying both the political and the social context in which the Quran is revealed is a prerequisite for understanding the Quran⁴. The Arab society at that period was a tribal society in which various tribes were constantly in war and conflicts.



Figure 1.7
Source: © supanut /
Adobe Stock

2. Structure of the Quran

Exegetes divide the Quran into two parts: Meccan verses and Median verses.

a. Meccan verses are verses revealed before the immigration of the Prophet PBUH from Mecca to Medina. The Meccan period was known for laying the foundations of Islam including attawhied (monotheism). Emphasis are placed on the universal values and norms such as justice, fairness, equality etc. Therefore, you cannot find detailed explanation in those verses.



Figure 1.8
Source: © arapix /
Adobe Stock

b. Medinan verses are more detailed because Medina has a different context than Mecca.

⁴ M. ATTAHAR IBN ASSHOUR, Maqasid Assharia Al-Islamiya, Amman, Dar Annafa-is, 2002, p. 153.

Important condition: Medinan verses must be understood in light of the Meccan verses!

3. The reason of revelation of sabāb an-nuzūl

Asbāb an-nuzūl (pl.) means the reasons why a verse was revealed. This is related to events that occurred during the time of the prophet upon which the Quran responded with an answer.



Figure 1.9
Source: © oraziopuccio /
Adobe Stock

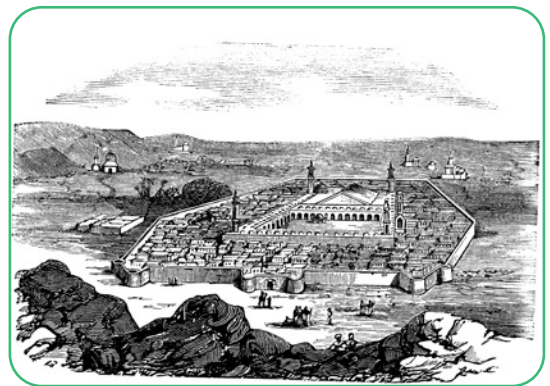
1.3.3 APPLICATION OF THE PRINCIPLES

Now let's apply those three aspects to the following verse:

"O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people."
(Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

1. The Arab society

This verse was revealed in Medina. The societies of Mecca and Medina differ from each other. Mecca was a city of trading and Medina was a rural society. Medina consisted of a series of hamlets inhabited by different ethnic groups. Medina was surrounded by volcanic rocks that were not fertile. Most residents were farmers who got their living



from dates, palm groves and arable farming. So they were not fully dependent on trade like the people of Mecca. They were more hostile towards other ethnic groups. They also felt inferior towards the Jewish tribes in the oasis. The Jewish tribes were pioneers in agricultural development.

Figure 1.0
Medina
Source: © Morphart /
Adobe Stock

The Aws and Khazraj are two tribes that played an important role in the arrival of the prophet Muḥammad in Medina. They were able to settle in Medina, especially in places that were not yet fertile. They were under the protection of the Jewish tribes. So they had a subordinate position.

The three largest Jewish tribes in Medina were the Qaynuqa', de Qurayzah en de an-Naḍīr. The Jewish tribes formed separate alliances with the Arab groups and were often at war with one another. In addition, the constant battle between the Aws and Khazraj created tension in the city.

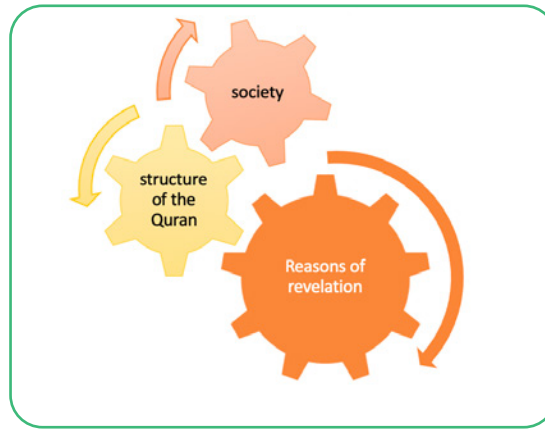
2. Structure of the Quran

Considering what we explained earlier in part 1 (Arab society), verse 51 in Surat Mā'idah is a Medinian verse. Medinian verses, as previously explained, are more detailed. In other words, this verse should not be understood out of context and should be placed in the light of Meccan verses, which emphasize justice.

1.3.4 EXERCISES

Exercise 1: Schedule

Assignment: Fill in as a class the schedule about the principles of the interpretation of the Quran.



Principles of the interpretation of the Quran

3.The reason of revelation of sabāb an-nuzūl

At-Ṭabarī, a high-ranking Quran exegete, believed that this verse provides an answer to a war situation in which some Muslims, Jews and Christians took allies. At-Ṭabarī mentions the following: “The correct view is that Allah forbids Muslims to take Jews and Christians as allies against the people of faith in Allah and His Messenger”.

Jewish tribes in Medina had broken their pact with the Prophet PBUH. The pact includes the defense of the city of Medina from Meccan attacks. This caused Jewish tribes to be at odds with the Muslims of Medina. There were some Muslims who sought their refuge in Jewish tribes. They feared that they would suffer a defeat. This is forbidden by the Quran because it weakened the Islamic community that was in its infancy. Knowing that at the time a weak community in the Arabian Peninsula - as mentioned earlier - did not have much chance of survival.

Arab society, which is a tribal society, had no mercy for the weak, so making an alliance with war enemies could spell doom for the young Muslim community. This verse is a Medinan verse and all Medinan verses are context bound and cannot conflict with Meccan verses. In other words, Medinan verses have no universal character. Every verse has a reason for revelation (sabāb an-nuzūl). The reason for revelation of Al-Mā'idah verse 51 is that some Muslims took refuge in Jewish tribes who were at odds with the Muslim community after breaking a pact. Finally, it is important to place other passages in the Quran alongside this verse. This way the reader has a general view.

1.3.5 EXERCISES

Exercise 2: Class Discussion

Assignment: Have a class discussion with the students and ask the following questions. The students will think about their understanding of the Quran.

Guiding questions:

- Who do you ask for explanation if you do not understand something from the Quran?
- Is it possible to understand Quran in several ways?
- Do you think it is possible to search for your own answers to your questions about the Quran?

Exercise 3: Brain Storming

The following questions are asked to the students. Have students brainstorm on the board. Afterwards, review as a class.

Guiding questions:

- Why is it important to know the principles of interpretation?
- What is the danger of not viewing the Quran as one big whole?
- What would one mean by interpreting literally and figuratively?
- Can we just understand the language of the Quran?

1.4 PROPHET MUHAMMED'S FUNCTIONS

1.4.1 INTRODUCTION

Muḥammed is an important person and an example for all Muslims. He is the source of morality alongside the Quran. However, it is very important to distinguish between the different functions of Muḥammed. In other words, Prophet Muḥammed acts in various functions. Sometimes he acts as a messenger / prophet or as a leader or as a mufti or as a judge.⁵

1.4.2 THE QUALITY OF A MESSENGER

These different functions of the prophet each have a separate influence on the morality of Islam. Some functions apply to the morality of Islam if they meet certain conditions.

The most common function is the prophet's capacity as a messenger. This means that the message of this function is universal. For example, Muḥammed who proclaims monotheism (*tawḥīd*). This announcement is universal and applies to all Muslims.

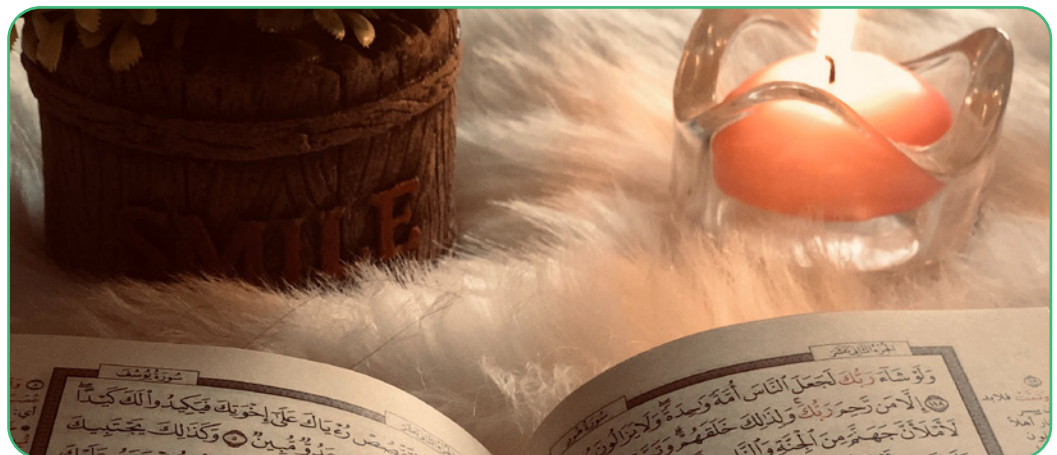


Figure 1.11
Diversity
Source: © Fatemah
Khaled | Pexels

1.4.3 THE QUALITY OF A LEADER

The quality of the Prophet as a leader has an important condition. In particular that the act he performs only relates to leaders or governments. This position is a political function. It only applies to political leaders and is not intended for everyone.



Figure 1.12
The prophet Muḥammad
as a military leader
during a war
Source: © Dezay /
Adobe Stock

⁵ M. ATTAHAR IBN ASSHOUR, *Maqasid Assharia Al-Islamiya*, Amman, Dar Annafa-is, 2002, p. 207-210.

1.4.4 THE QUALITY OF A MUFTI

A mufti is a spiritual religious leader who has the authority to give religious advice regarding certain phenomena. The religious advice of a mufti is called “fatwa” in Arabic. A Fatwa is always context-bound and should in no way be applied in other contexts without taking the customs and tradition into account.



Figure 1.13
Source: © shock /
Adobe Stock

The prophet also issued fatwas, which should also be understood in context.

The capacity of the prophet as a judge also has an important condition. In particular that the act he performs as a judge only concerns judges. This function is therefore a judicial function and only applies to judges and is also not intended for everyone. The Prophet also served as a judge, and his judgments should be understood in context of his specific period.

1.4.5 THE QUALITY OF A JUDGE

In summary: It is very important when one studies Islam to distinguish between those different qualities. Unfortunately, especially among young people, we notice that they mix up the different functions of prophet Muḥammed with often drastic consequences.



Figure 1.14
Source: © New Africa /
Adobe Stock

If we return to verse 51 of surah Al-Mā'idah⁶, then we can distract that what we have seen earlier in the principles of interpretation, the prophet acted as a judge. This matter is a competence of leaders / theologians and not the task of a layperson.

1.4.6 APPLICATION OF THE QUALITIES TO VERSE 51 SURAH AL-MĀ'IDAH

The Muslims who, as previously quoted lived at odds with Jewish tribes due to a breach of contract and not based on faith. The Quran and the Prophet forbade taking Jews as allies for that specific reason.

⁶ "O you who believe! do not take the Jews and the Christians for friends; they are friends of each other; and whoever amongst you takes them for a friend, then surely he is one of them; surely Allah does not guide the unjust people." (Al-Mā'idah verse 51)

Exercise 1

Let the students fill in the type of leadership that applies to the Hadith:

Military leader - religious leader - mufti – judge

HADĪTH	Type of leadership
Khabab Ibn Mundhir was on the day of Badr critical of the Prophet's military strategy. When he understood that the strategy was an opinion of the prophet and was not divinely inspired, he proposed a different approach to the prophet. The Prophet chose Khabab's proposal because he believed it was better. That was the Prophet's philosophy, he consulted the Companions and considered their opinions to be very important. The companions, in turn, were able to distinguish between the human contribution (profane) and the Divine.	Military Leader
Treaty of Ḥudaybiyah "In your name, O God! This is the peace treaty between Muḥammad ibn Abdallāh and Suhayl ibn" Amr. They have agreed to rest their arms for ten years. During this time, each party will be safe, and neither will the other be injured; no secret damage will be done, but honesty and honor prevail between them. Whoever wants to enter into a treaty or covenant with Muḥammad in Arabia can do this, and whoever wants to enter into a treaty or covenant with the Quraish can do this. And if a Quraishite comes without the permission of his guardian to Muḥammad, he will be delivered to the Quraish; but if, on the other hand, one of Muḥammad's people comes to the Quraish, he is not delivered to Muḥammad. This year, Muḥammad, with his companions, must withdraw from Mecca, but next year, he can come to Mecca and stay for three days, but without their weapons except those of a traveler and the swords still in their sheaths . "	Political leader
Ḥadīth of the five pillars: You will encounter people of the book, teach them the taḥwīd first. If they understand / accept this concept then tell them that Allah has put out five prayers a day. If they have understood / accepted this concept tell them that Allah has prescribed zakat and this means in concrete terms that part of their wealth is given to the poor	Religious leader
"A person from the Ansar (native of Medina) asked the Prophet Muḥammad for advice regarding a disagreement with Zubayr (a migrant from Mecca) about the fertilization of soil. The Prophet asked Zubayr to fertilize half of his soil - although he is entitled to more - and then let the water flow to the Ansari's soil. The Ansari got angry and said to the prophet, "It is because he is a relative of yours." The prophet also got angry and said to Zubayr, "Fertilize your soil completely and then let the water flow."	Judge
Ḥadīth from Hind bint "Utba and her husband Abū Sufyān:" Hind said to the prophet: Abū Sufyān is a miserly person. He does not give me and my children enough maintenance money, except what I take without his knowledge. The prophet replied, "Take from his money what is enough to cover your costs and those of your children.	Mufti
Mugīth was madly in love with his wife Barirah. But Barirah did not like him and wanted to divorce him. The Prophet tried to intercede, "The Prophet said to Barirah," Will you come back to Mugīth, he is the father of your children! " Barirah (with all respect she had for the prophet) said honestly, "O messenger of God, is this an order you ask me to carry out?". The prophet replied: No, I am only a mediator. She replies without any embarrassment: "No messenger from God, I don't want it"	Mediator

1.5 POLARIZATION

1.5.1 DOES THE QURAN (DE) POLARIZE?

"The we-they differences are presented as factual truths. Facts have only a limited effect on polarization. This is because it is pre-eminently an emotional dynamic. Polarization is not a rational, but an emotional process that responds to feelings.

Polarization is a universal dynamic. Everyone-including you- subdivides people in groups. There is nothing wrong with that. Binary thinking is even as old as humans. It was a way of estimating whether an environment was safe or not. This way of thinking has made us who we are today. By thinking in 'we-terms' we confirm our identity. And identity offers security and guidance.



Figure 1.15
Source: © Jürgen Fälchle
Adobe Stock

It becomes problematic when the we-group opposes the (supposed) identity of the side group. This ensures an increasing mutual tension. People move further apart. More and more people feel the pressure to choose one of the two parties. In this way, a reinforcing process of alienation ensues that can eventually lead to aggression or even war".⁷

Verse 51 of surat Al- Mā'idah may give the reader the impression that the Quran is polarizing, for the verse divides the Arabian Peninsula into religious groups, namely Jews and Christians on the one side and Muslims on the other. The Quran prohibits Muslims from taking Jews and Christians as allies.

1.5.2 WE-THEY AND CONNECT



Figure 1.16
Diversity
Source: © vector_s/
Adobe Stock

At the time, Muslims and Jews were at odds with breach of contract and the Quran gave legitimacy to the Prophet as a leader to apply it. The capacity of the prophet as a leader should not simply be applied by everyone (see Chapter 3).

Unfortunately, Muslim extremists use this verse - by taking it out of context to polarize. This is called "the pushers" by the philosopher Brandsma. Those "pushers" use the verse and make extreme statements using absolute terms: All Jews are enemies, all Christians are enemies. While the Jews in

⁷ Polarisation, Polarisation uitgelegd; <https://wij-zij.be/polarisatie-uitgelegd/> (access 03.04.2020).

the verse were the Jews of the Arabian Peninsula who violated the pact with the Prophet PBUH. Therefore, those absolute terms are totally out of place.

But according to the polarization model of philosopher Brandsma, there are always two pushers who compete in the public arena: a “pusher” in one camp will always find a counterpart in the other camp. The opposite in our story is the Islamophobic who use exactly the same verse as the Muslim extremists to polarize. They also use general terms: All Muslims are anti-Semites.

Then you have the joiners who support the pushers, those who have chosen camp under pressure from the pusher. They usually follow the pushers out of ignorance.

Last but not least you have the silent group. A large, heterogeneous group that does not choose a camp. Because some are indifferent, and others because they want to be very involved and nuanced, and then you have others because their profession requires them not to choose sides. Typical of this “silent” middle group is that they are invisible in the public debate. That is why today we usually hear statements such as: “Where are the moderate Muslims?” “Why don’t moderate Muslims make their voices heard?” The question we may have to ask is: “Do Muslims get a podium?”.

The bridge builder should focus more on the silent group and try to convince them. Then he may not put any energy into the pushers. However, they do not realize that they are fueling in this way: they adopt the terms of the pushers and actually offer the pushers a forum to contrast their monologue. In this way, their way of working is often counterproductive. It’s not up to the middle. Therefore, they must give the silent group the context of the verse in the Quran with all the nuances. The pushers recruit their joiners into the silent group, as is the case with many young people who have left for Syria.

1.5.3 EXERCISES

STATEMENT	YES	NO
The following verse from the Quran is central to the message of Imam Benhaddou. <i>"And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge."</i> (Quran 30:22)	x	
Diversity is something natural	x	
Despite the good intention to connect, there are bottlenecks	x	
Connecting should not be constructive		x
Sharing experiences is not important to prevent polarization.		x
Education can make a preventive effort by combating segregation	x	
There is little segregation in our education		x
The media give a positive picture about Islam		x

Exercise 1: Reading Text Imam Khalid Benhaddou And Song Sami Yusuf

Assignment:

This fragment is in line with the following quote from Imam Benhaddou

Students read the text as a class or individually.

Afterwards they watch and listen to the song of the singer Sami Yusuf "Forgotten Promises" on YouTube. The students then have to solve the questions associated with the song. Afterwards, the link between the reading text of Khalid Benhaddou and the message of the song is discussed.

See Appendix for the lyrics of the song

Quote imam Khalid Benhaddou

"Islam and other religions invite engagements beyond their own philosophical boundaries.

I am thinking of commitments that benefit society in the public interest.

Then I think: **Poverty that we as a society can fight together**, standing up for the weak and etc. These are all commitments that can connect us as a society. And where we can partly **depolarize** because it puts a common goal first and not focus on what your roots is.."

Sami Yusuf is a Muslim and British singer with Azerbaijani-Iranian roots. Sami Yusuf's music is spiritual and religious. They contain an Islamic message about connecting people, God, the prophet Moḥammed, diversity, values and norms ...Those who listen carefully will find a universal message.

He uses his fame to perform humanitarian work. He is an ambassador to the United Nations. (Global Ambassador Against Hunger and Elite Ambassador "for the UN World Interfaith Harmony Week).

1. Clapping with hands and flashing with fingers is a symbol in the video. What do you think the singer would mean with this symbol?

To wake up humanity.

2. What does he mean with "the promise we have made as humanity"?

That we have a duty to take care of each other as humans. That we are all one.

3. What does he mean "sisters side by side", "brothers side by side".

He is referring to brotherhood and that all people must stand side by side.

APPENDIX: SONG LYRICS

SAMI YUSUF - FORGOTTEN PROMISES

Song lyrics in English

*Tonight the world will sleep
But hunger will not wait
For promises we made
We share one soul
We share one land
We have one time to understand
We are one humankind
Brothers side by side
We'll have no regret
We will not forget
We are one humankind
Sisters side by side
We'll have no regret
We will not forget
Samiḥna ya allāh
Wa irrḥamna ya Rabbah
Wa imnaḥ rizqaka lil-'afwah
Wa abi'd anha kul al-aah
Our words must count
Hunger will not wait
For promises we made
We share one soul
We share one land
We have one time to understand
We are one humankind
Brothers side by side
We'll have no regret...
Samiḥna ya allāh
Wa irrḥamna ya Rabbah
Wa imnaḥ rizqaka lil-'afwah
Wa abi'd anha kul al-aah
Our words must count
Hunger will not wait
For promises we made*

1.5 GLOSSARY

Ma'ud al'rab

This is a term used by the great theologian Abū Ishāq al-Shāṭibī to emphasize the spirit of the Arabs during the time of revelation. With this he means that the knowledge of the habits and the way of life of the Arabs is an important fact to understand the Quran.

The Destructive Arabs

Are considered to be the descendants of the prophet Nūḥ.

The Pure Arabs

Also known as the Qahtanian Arabs, they resided in Yemen.

The Arabized Arabs

Are considered to be direct descendants of 'Ismā'īl and Prophet Muḥammed.

Meccan verses

Are verses revealed before the immigration of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina.

The reason of revelation or sabāb an-nuzūl:

Asbāb an-nuzūl (pl.) .) means the reasons why a verse was revealed. This is related to events that occurred during the time of the prophet upon which the Quran responded with an answer.

Pushers

Groups that make extreme statements about the (identity of the) other, loud and visible. Pushers are 100% convinced they are right. They express themselves in absolute terms: all, nobody, always, never, everyone... There are always two pushers who compete in the public arena: a pusher in one camp will always find a counterpart in the other.

Joiners

The joiners are the supporters of the pushers, those who have chosen camp under pressure from the pusher. The joiner is less extreme than the pusher but openly chooses color.

Silentgroup

A large, heterogeneous group that does not choose a camp. Some because they are indifferent, others because they just want to be very involved and nuanced, and still others because their profession requires them not to choose sides. These are the professional neutrals: teachers, police officers, judges, etc. Typical of this 'silent' middle group is that they are invisible in the public debate.



Photo: © Annie Spratt | Unsplash

1.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

We see kids playing, talking amongst each other like any normal day at school. Then we see a group of 3 kids pushing around 2 smaller kids, Ahmed and Pieter-Jan, who are being bullied.

Bully 1: Here they are again the goodie-good shoes...

The bully pushes Ahmed on the floor and we see him getting angry.

Bully 1: Oh no watch out!! he might use his math-head to do some calculations... hahaha

Pieter-Jan: Just leave us alone!

Bully 1: Oh noo...what are you going to do?

The bully is going towards Pieter-Jan, intimidating him

Pieter-Jan: euh... my friend here has a black belt in karate!

Bully 1: Ah seriously? (turns towards Ahmed again) hahaha why don't you show it then... come on!

Ahmed stands up and the bully pushes him back down...

Bully 1: wow... a black belt? hahaha

We hear the school bell ringing!

Bully 1: aah saved by the bell it seems!

The bully backs down.

He puts his fingers to his eyes and then pointing to Ahmed. Then he turns around and walks away...

Pieter-Jan turns to his friend.

Pieter-Jan: I know how hard you would have liked to show your black belt in karate to those guys... So why didn't you?

Ahmed: Yeah I know... but the principal would kick me out of school if that would have happened...

We see cars being assembled in a factory. Haroon a 40-year-old Muslim is working at the assembly line with 2 white colleagues. Then the director (who is a beautiful woman) walks passed. Both white colleagues turn their head when she passes and when she is gone, they turn to one another.

Colleague 1: Sigh... What a woman! I want to ask her out so badly!

Colleague 2: Euhm, last I checked you were still married?

Colleague 1: Ah yeah... But I could convert to Islam and take a second one, no... hahaha

(turns to Haroon): Hey Haroon, how many wives do you guys get?

Haroon looks to his colleagues and is a bit perplexed.

Haroon: guys, there are conditions to take a second wife in our belief. I only have one for instance.

The Colleagues don't even listen to his answer and walk away. Colleague 1 (not listening to what Haroon says): I would at least take 3: one for cleaning the house, one for cooking and one for...

Colleague 2: hahaha, you dog...

We see Haroon getting frustrated by the situation and things the colleagues are saying but he refrains from saying anything.

We see Haroon arriving at his house.

We see Ahmed and his family (his father, Haroon, his mother, Fatima and his sister, Zeynep) at the dinner table together. It is quite silent as Haroon and Ahmed both had a very bad day. The mom of the family tries to open a conversation.

Fatima: So how was everybody's day?

Nobody answers.

Zeynep: Ahmed got picked on again in school today!

Haroon's eyes open up widely and we see he is getting furious.

Fatima: Ahmed, is this true?

Ahmed: Sighs... yes mother... but I didn't get into a fight!

Fatima: Thank Allah!

Haroon (screams): I can't take this any longer!!! These people think they are so much better than us! (swears in Arabic:)

Haroon leaves the room and everyone left behind is in shock

Fatima: Let him cool down a bit, I'll go talk to him.

Fatima gets up and leaves as well.

Haroon is sitting behind his computer in his room. He is clicking angrily on his pc. The door opens and Fatima enters.

Fatima: Haroon, are you ok? You have been acting so strangely the last couple of months! You changed your clothes, you don't want to see Karim anymore, (stresses) your best friend! And you keep up late every night surfing on the internet and...

Haroon: I need time to think!

Fatima: Dear, please let's talk! And why don't you call me by my name anymore, we have been married for 16 years now!

Haroon: Fatima leaves disappointed. We see Haroon locking the door.

He puts himself back into his chair and puts on his headphones. We then hear the pc:

Computer: And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion.

Haroon repeats: Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the only guidance.

Computer: "You who believe! Take not the Jews and the Christians for friends. They are friends one to another and who takes them as friends is indeed one of them. Verily, Allah guides not the unjust people. If you were to follow their desires after this knowledge has come to you, you would be against Allah and have no protector nor helper."

The scene ends on Haroon's eyes who are completely mesmerized. Then there is a transition on Haroon waking up and walking towards the kitchen for breakfast.

The family is eating together. Haroon arrives last, looking very tired. He sits down silently.

Fatima: Do you feel better dear?

Haroon: Not at all...I hate my work; I hate living here. I don't speak the language, I'm the only person at the workplace who isn't Christian. And they make fun of us and our religion. The only thing we can do is protect ourselves.

Ahmed: Father, what are you saying?

Haroon: Son, we are Muslims and our religion does not allow us to mingle with unbelievers like Christian, or any non-Muslims people.

Everyone: what?!

Haroon: We can't be friends with them. The Koran forbids it. Do you understand?? We are different and they want to make us like them.

Ahmed: Uhm... and what about my classmates and my best friend Pieter-Jan?

Haroon stands up will putting his fist on the table!

Haroon: Show some respect to your parents or you will find yourself without a home! Our religion is never wrong! You can't be friends with Pieter-Jan anymore!! Do you understand?!"

Ahmed looks down and is silent while closing his eyes...

Classroom

The clock ticks towards 4PM. We see the end of the day at school. All kids jump up when hearing the school bell.

Kids: yeeey!!

Teacher: So don't forget to read page 42 up until 55 for tomorrow!

We see the kids walking out. Pieter-Jan approaches Ahmed.

Pieter-Jan: Hey Ahmed, my mom said it's ok for Friday! You know... our sleepover! We can finally take a shot at our high score!

Ahmed: euhm... sorry... Pieter-Jan I can't... I have other things to do...

Pieter-Jan: but you promised?

Ahmed:.. I'm sorry... It's my dad, he went completely nuts saying he doesn't want us to be friends anymore because you are not a Muslim... I'll have to listen to him until this blows over...

Pieter-Jan: But that is ridiculous!

Ahmed: I know but I have to show respect to my father... I have no choice!

Ahmed silently walks away leaving Pieter-Jan shocked. He walks to a car.

Ahmed's father is waiting in the car to pick up his son. Ahmed steps into the backseat and his father drives off...

Haroon: Who was that you were talking to?

Ahmed: sighs... That was Pieter-Jan...

Haroon (gets angry): This is unacceptable! Wasn't I clear when I forbade you to have contact with him! Stay away from Christians and Jews and all other infidels!

Ahmed: But Father,...

Haroon: There are no buts... This is your last warning!! Or you are no longer a son of mine...

Ahmed looks down and is clearly very sad

Ahmed: okay father...

We see Fatima gets a message:

Karim: Fatima, I'm at the door, I came as soon as I could

We see Fatima going to the door while watching through the window. She opens the door and Karim is standing there.

Fatima: Thank you so much for coming Karim.

Karim: No worries, Fatima, he is my best friend. Where is he?

Fatima: He is upstairs again. Please go talk to him.

We see Karim going up.

Samir is visiting Harun

We see Haroon behind his computer watching the same video as before.

Then someone knocks on the door.

Haroon: I'm busy now.

The door opens and Haroon looks to the door and is surprised.

Harun: "Salaam Karim."

Karim: "Aleykoum Salam. It's been a long time since we've seen each other."

Harun: "Indeed my friend, come in."

Karim: "Harun, you have been acting very distant. Are you trying to avoid me?"

Harun: "It has nothing to do with you. I don't feel well. I'm very frustrated. I don't like this country anymore. I don't feel comfortable living here as a Muslim." My friend you have a lot of knowledge about islam. I reflected a lot about surah Al-Maidah, verse 51:

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the

Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

Karim: "Harun my dear brother, if you want to understand the Quran and the meaning of religious verses you have to understand the context, because these texts usually emerged as answers to problems that occurred within the social contexts of that time. Taking a single verse out of its context can result in a misinterpretation of the purpose and essence of those verses.

Harun: "What do you mean?"

Karim: "At that time, the newly emerged Muslim community was persecuted by Arab, Jewish and Christian tribes. They broke a charter and tried to outnumber the weak Muslim community. This war was a very specific situation with specific tribes. Before and after the war, the Prophet Muhammad established love, tolerance and coexistence between different communities and tribes, regardless their religion. The constitution of Medina is an example.

Harun: "Really... interesting..."

Samir: "Yes my friend, we have to avoid the misguided use of sacred texts, we have to understand the context in which the texts appeared the first time.

Harun: "I really missed our dialogues my friend."

Harun: "Ahmed, listen to the wise words of your uncle Samir. You will learn a lot."

Pieter-Jan

We see the 2 kids playing on a videogame.

Pieter-Jan: I'm so glad your dad changed his mind!

Ahmed: Oh believe me... me too!

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