On Prophetic Decolonization During the Roman Empire

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Abstract

This study examines the decolonization in the prophetic period of Muhammad SAW. Different analyses occur among historians, with some viewing Islam as supportive of colonialism and others as anti-colonialism. This study aims to answer how decolonization was practiced in the prophetic period. The study's objective is to demonstrate that Prophet Muhammad SAW laid out the foundations of thoughts and actions of decolonization. The colonial enterprises undertaken during the subsequent caliphates, which some historians such as Philip K. Hitt assumed, differ fundamentally from the principles of governance in the prophetic era. This study employs a qualitative historical approach, utilizing the discourse analysis method to prove that the wars against the Eastern Romans waged by the Prophet Muhammad were for decolonization. The existing historical sources are collected from literary studies and then subjected to Michael Onyebuchi Eze's theory, which asserts decolonization as an idea and practice transcending history. The study's findings are as follows: (1) Roman colonialism in the Arabian Peninsula led to protracted conflicts between Arab tribes and transformed it into a theatre of proxy warfare against the Persian empire; (2) Prophet Muhammad SAW was a pivotal figure in decolonizing Roman influences on Arab(s). Prophet paved two primary steps, which were to unify the Arabs and to wrest control of the Arabian peninsula from Eastern Rome; and (3) the military campaigns led either directly or indirectly by Muhammad SAW were indisputable evidence of the prophetic practice and thought of decolonization.

Keywords: Decolonization; Prophetic Era; Roman Empire.

Introduction

Prophet Muhammad SAW is widely regarded as the foundational figure of Muslim society in the 7th century A.D. His primary endeavor was to unify the numerous tribes of Arabia, which were historically prone to conflict (Abd & Ali, 2024). Prophet Muhammad successfully unites the Arab populace, despite their diverse religious affiliations, including Judaism and Christianity (Jusoh, Nawi, Embong, &

Rahmat, 2024). This unification was driven by the imperative of da'wah and the Arab geopolitical context, marked by the Roman colonization of the peninsula (Ahmad B., 2024).

Roman colonialists occupied and established the Arabian Peninsula as the most profitable imperial province. They also utilized the peninsula as a proxy battlefield against the Persian Empire (Boehm, 2024) and served as a stage for Roman political power and Greek culture, leading to the loss of its independence (Cammino, 2024). Subsequently, Prophet Muhammad SAW and His Muslim forces recaptured the fallen territories under Roman dominion, and expelled the imperial forces through a series of battles.

The prophetic anti-colonialist portrayal has frequently been disregarded in the study of Orientalism. Some researchers, such as Philip K. Hitti, intentionally omitted that significant element of Islamic history. This tendency is exemplified by Philip K. Hitti's depiction in his renowned work *History of the Arab Empire,* where he asserts that Islam led to conquest, expansion, and colonization. Philip K. Hitti said that after the death of Prophet Muhammad, the caliphate is the first problem Islam had to face. The death of the Prophet provided the excuse for active refusal. Within some six months, Khalid ibn al-Walid's generalship had reduced the tribes of Central Arabia to submission, such as Thayyi', Asad, Ghathafan, Banu Hanifah in Yamamah, Bahrain, Oman, Hadramaut and Yaman. The peninsula was united under Abu Bakar by the sword of Khalid (Hitti, 1989).

Philip K. Hitti also said that the Arab conquests under the first caliphate demolished the Persian Empire and shook the Byzantine (Eastern Rome) power to its very foundation. The military campaigns of Khalid ibn al-Walid (and 'Amr ibn al-'Ash) wich then ensued in Iraq, Persia, Syria, and Egypt are bear favourable comparison with those of Napoleon, Hannibal, or Alexander (Hitti, 1989). This prevailing orientalist perspective has influenced the subsequent scholarly consciousness, fostering the belief that the Islamic world engaged in neocolonialism, albeit influenced by external factors aligned with Western interests (Sulaiman, Kaura, & Doma, 2024). The historical

evidence of Islamic colonization has been substantiated by very instances of Muslims conquest on European regions (Ali, 2024).

This article argues that Islam is anti-colonial force. Some studies have proved that Islamic decolonization is indisputable, especially in modern society and religious organizations in the 20th century A.D. For instance, Islamic State (IS) in the Middle East (Majozi, 2018), Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jamaat-e-Islami in South Asia (Gani, 2023), Mahdist and Senussi movements in Africa (Abid, Nadir, & Khan, 2024), Khilafat movement in India (Kattiparambil, 2021), Nation of Islam (NOI) in America with its slogan 'Black Lives Matter' (Morgan, 2024), including defending Israeli-occupied Palestine (Nasir, 2025).

Arshad Islam and Ruqaia Taha Al-Alwani made important analyses in studying Islamic anti-colonialism earlier, precisely during the Ottoman caliphate of the 19th century A.D. In cooperation with the Malay Muslim world, Arshad Islam and al-Alwani describe that the Ottomans sought to fight against European imperialism (Islam & Al-Alwani, 2024).

This paper addresses the misrepresentation of Islam's role in decolonization by Orientalist scholars, challenging dominant narratives through historical analysis. In addition, this paper develops an discourse of Islamic anti-colonialism based on historical evidence of the prophetic era. This research is significant in providing an overview of the strong roots of the decolonization project, which can be traced to the early awakening of Islam during the period of Prophet Muhammad SAW. Consequently, the historical events after the prophetic era, such as Hitti's portrayal of Caliphates' colonialism, must not be understood as Islamic but as Muslims' colonization or colonization, as these two terms should not be used interchangeably. The distinction between these concepts (Islamic vs. Islamicate) is rooted in the multifaceted relationship between Islam and its adherents, Muslims (Souaiaia, 2016).

Daniel Pipes clearly distinguished between the concepts of *Islam* and *Islamicate* based on their level of obedience to and expression of the Islamic faith. Daniel Pipes said:

"Islam makes specific demands on its adherents, such as making war only under specified conditions and paying prescribed taxes; fulfilling these requirements "expresses Islam as a faith" and is, therefore, *Islamic*. Other features of public life are not obligatory, do not express Islamic faith, and are thus *Islamicate*; these include the withdrawal of subjects from political and military affairs, weak loyalties to governments, and disdain for Europe" (Pipes, 2009).

The type of research is qualitative (Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025), which relies on historical data and discourse to analyze the primary research points. The approach employed in this study is a historical approach, which involves the analysis of the events within a specific period, either diachronically or synchronously (De Moor, 2021). The analysis began with the conquest of the Arabian Peninsula by the Roman Empire as early evidence of colonization. The Prophet Muhammad SAW, from his appointment as a Messenger of God until his death in 632 AD, taught Islam to unite the Arabs and build enough strength against colonization.

Data was collected from classical and modern historiographies. Classical sources are needed to ascertain historical facts, while modern sources are needed to obtain critical perspectives. The collected data is then analyzed to describe the Roman colonialist's presence in the Arabian Peninsula to the emergence of Islam and Prophetic decolonization of Muhammad SAW. The prophetic military campaigns understood as the decolonizing efforts to expel Roman power.

The data sources utilized include books, journals, and scientific research results. Classic sources include book of *Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah* by Ibn Ishaq, book of *Al-Maghazi* by Al-Waqidi, and book of *Al-Sirah Al-Nabawiyah wa Akhbar al-Khulafa'* by Ibn Hibban. This classic source provides narrative data on the wars waged by Prophet Muhammad and Muslims against the Eastern Romans. Modern sources include *The Third Punic War: The Siege of Carthage* (149-146 BC) by Yann Le Bohec on Roman colonialism, *Islam: The Enemy* by Richard Crandall on the response and international relations of Prophet Muhammad SAW as head of state, and *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500-700* by Peter Sarris which looks at the continuity between the collapse of Rome and the rise of Islam.

The data were analyzed using the decolonization theory of Michael Onyebuchi Eze (Eze, 2024), which asserts that decolonization is an idea and practice transcending history and emphasizes the epistemic disruption of colonial narratives, to analyze the historical events of the prophetic era. Therefore, prophetic decolonization is an epistemic framework of knowledge and actions to disrupt epistemic hegemony that often marginalizes the agents of historical subjects.

Discussion

Roman Colonialism

Michael Onyebuchi Eze defined coloniality as different from colonialism. Colonialism denotes a political and economic relation in which the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on another nation's power, which makes such a nation an empire. Coloniality, instead, refers to long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that defini culture, labour, intersubjecitivy relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administrations. Thus, coloniality survives colonialism (Eze, 2024).

Based on the Onyebuchi Eze definition, we discover how the Eastern Roman Empire produced knowledge and used it as a roadmap for colonialism. The Roman Empire colonization project was initiated as early as the 4th century B.C. by establishing two categories of colonies: *coloniae Latinorum* and *coloniae civium Romanorum.* The formation of *coloniae Latinorum* dates back to 389 BC, while the territory of the *coloniae Romanorum* dates back to 181 BC. The *coloniae Romanorum* colonies are distinguished by their coastal locations, including Minturnae, Sinuessa, Sena Gallica, and Croton. A notable shift occurred in 183 BC when Roman troops from the *Romanorum* were deployed to Mutina, Parma, and Saturnia to subdue the Boii rebellion. In contrast, the army from the *Latinorum* was considered unreliable (Abbott, 1915).

A multifaceted array of motivations and factors drove the Roman colonization project. Before the Second Punic War (218 BC), the colonization efforts were primarily

driven by military objectives. However, an alternative perspective posits that the establishment of these colonies had economic understones, in addition to its military significantce. This assertion is rooted in the Roman Empire grappling with a significant challenge: a substantial population of war veterans were unemployed. This predicament was addressed by allocating former soldiers to the colonies, a decision influenced by the soldiers' previous refusal to continue fighting in the First Macedonian War in 214 BC (Salmon, 1936).

Eastern Roman colonialism had strong roots stemming from social behavior exhibited by the ancient Italians, characterized by their propensity to appropriate the assets of the vanquished. It served as the genesis for the subsequent Roman colonization practices. A notable aspect of this behavior was the establishment of a third of the conquered territory under the governance of their own envoys, a practice that underscores the strategic nature of these endeavors. In warfare involving numerous parties, distributing conquered cities among the contending factions becomes a formidable challenge, if not an unsurmountable task. To address this challenge, a novel solution was devised: to identify a new city that exhibited comparable attributes to the original city and allocate it among the warring parties (MacKendrick, 1952).

The Roman colonization of the Semitic territories commenced with the onset of the First Punic War (264 BC). The Punicians (Latin), also known as the Carthaginians (Greek), were both appellations used to refer to Semitic people. Following three series of wars, the Punicians were vanquished, and Carthage fell (148-146 BC) to the Romans. The Roman Empire established the Province of Africa, with Utica as its capital. The region of Cartoga, known to the Greeks as Chora and to the Romans as Pertica, was designated *ager publicus populi Romani* (Latin) means common property of the Romans. It is noteworthy that Carthage was utterly destroyed (Bohec, 2011). This slogan, *ager publicus populi Romani,* allowed the Romans to expand and conquer other regions, including the Semitic territories.

The expansion of Romans in Semitic territories persisted under Emperor Trajan (53-117 AD), who reigned from 98 to 117 AD, reaching as far as Arabia. Prior to the

arrival of the Romans, the region was under the control of the Nabataean Kingdom, whose territory included Hauran in the north along with the cities of Decapolis (Philadephia, Gerasa, Dium, Adraa), the Negev, the Sinai Peninsula, Petra (Jordan), and Madain Shaleh (Hijaz). The province of Arabia under Roman governance can be regarded as having entirely supplanted the Nabataean Kingdom since its establishment on March 22, 105 AD or 106 AD (Bowersock, 1970).

During the reign of Emperor Hadrian (d. 138 AD), who ruled from 117 AD to 138 AD, Roman military power was stationed in Bostra (Greek) or Busro (Arabic) (Sheldon, 2025). The city of Bostra is a region in Syria about 140 km below Damascus. In previous years, Roman military power in the province of Arabia was headquartered in Jerusalem in 116 AD and Egypt in 119 AD. The strategic selection of Bostra as a military hub was attributed to its perceived status as a province with a civilization predating that of Syria. Its advantageous geographical location positioned it as the nexus of communication for the Gulf of 'Aqaba region (Arabic: *Khalij al-'Aqaba*; Hebrew: *Mifratz Eilat*). Conversely, Petra served as the capital of the province of Arabia due to its historical significance as a former territory of the Nabataean Kingdom (Bowersock, 1970).

To determine attitudes and policies that had to be taken towards the newly conquered territories, the Roman Empire divided the provinces of Arabia into three categories. The first category was *Arabia Petraea* (Rocky Arabia), a region stretching from Greater Syria to the Gulf of 'Aqaba with Petra as its capital. The second category was *Arabia Deserta* (Arabia in the Desert), which included Bostra as the trading center in Hauran. The third category was *Arabia Felix* (Happy Arabia) or Yemen, which included its capital, Mariaba (Ma'rib). The strategic importance of *Arabia Petraea* for the Roman Empire is evidenced by its role as a pivotal trade route, extending from Hadramaut in Yemen to Egypt and Syria. This region served as a conduit for the dissemination of valuable goods, including gold, precious stones, and enslaved people, sourced from *Arabia Felix* to major commercial centers such as Damascus (Syria),

Alexandria (Egypt), and Rome (Italy) via the cities of Petra and Gerasa/Jerash (Kopanski, 1998).

The formidable might of the Roman Empire in the provinces of Arabia incited spirited opposition. In the year 53 C.E., the Jewish populace fractured into disparate factions, with the Zealots, a fundamentalist Jewish group, openly declaring war on the Sadducees. This Jewish religious group had become complicit with the Roman colonial administration. This rift led to the capture and subsequent execution of several Sadducees by the Sicarii, an extremist wing of the Zealots. Concurrently, the Lestai, a group of Pharisaic village guerrillas, engaged in small-scale warfare against the Roman military in Palestine. The Roman governor of Judea also arrested the Zealots (Aramaic: *Qannai*) and Sicarii. Jewish resistance to Roman colonialism persisted in the ensuing years, as evidenced by subsequent conflicts (Kopanski, 1998).

In 132 AD, monotheists once again resisted Roman colonialism, leading to a significant revolt under the leadership of Simeon bar Kohba from Nazareth. Believing in the imminent arrival of the Last Messiah's final Prophet, bar Kohba's revolt aimed to resist Roman rule. However, the revolut ultimately failed, resulting in the complete expulsion of the Jews from Palestine. Those who managed to evade Roman persecution included the Jews, Judeo-Christians, Ebionites, and Nazareth. These fugitives dispersed to various regions, including Mesopotamia, Syria, *Arabia Deserta* (particularly the Khaibar region adjacent to Yathrib or Medina), and *Arabia Felix* (Kopanski, 1998).

The region of *Arabia Deserta* functioned as a refuge for fugitives from the Roman Empire and individuals deemed heretics. A notable example is the Judeo-Christian Ebionites and Nazareth, who believed that Jesus Christ was both man and the Messiah. The emergence of various Christian sects, such as Nestorianism, Eutychianism, Monothelitism, and Pelagianism, further illustrates the diversity of religious thought during this period. Notably, these groups refused to use the term *Theotokos* (the mother of God) when referring to the Virgin Mary, instead adopting *Christotokos* (the mother of Jesus Christ). The theological implications of these concepts were further elaborated by Nestorius, the Bishop of Constantinople, who taught that God was incapable of conceiving a woman, as it was logically impossible for a child to be older than their

mother. This theological controversy led to the exile of Nestorius to Arabia Deserta in AD 435. It was in this locale that Nestorious disseminated his teachings on Nazarene theology (Kopanski, 1998).

Contrary to the political stagnation of *Arabia Deserta*, the political landscape of *Arabia Felix* (Yemen) exhibits greater dynamism. During the reign of the Jewish Arab King of the Himyar kingdom, Dimnos, many Greek and Roman merchants were killed in reprisal for the Roman Empire's discriminatory policies towards Jews. In response, the Roman Emperor Justinian commissioned Andas, the King of Ethiopia, to invade Yemen and assassinate Dimnos. The subsequent reign of Dhu Nuwas (519-520 AD), the new Himyar king, witnessed a series of attacks on Yemeni Christians, particularly in the region of Najran. This historical analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of Arabia Felix, highlighting its role as a site of political upheaval and conflict, extending beyond mere geopgraphical escape and exile (Kopanski, 1998).

The region's geopolitical dynamics were further influenced by the actions of the Roman Empire, which, under the leadership of Emperor Justinian, initiated a diplomatic alliance between Ethiopia and the Yemeni Himyars through the agency of a designated emissary named Julian. This initiative, aimed at fostering peaceful relations between the two parties, was met with enthusiasm by the Ethiopian monarch, Ela Atzbeha, who pledged his support for the Roman Empire in its ongoing conflict with the Persian Empire. Ela Atzbeha further intervened in the conflict between the Arabs, especially *Al-Samayfa* (Atzbeha's followers) and an *amir* of the Mad tribe in Nejed. The Arabian tribes' support for the Romans against the Persians began to wane when the Persians effectively undermined Ethiopia's economy by acquiring all the commodities traded through the Silk Road and transported from Sri Lanka. Concurrently, a former Roman slave named Abraha ascended to atuhority in the wake of Ethiopia's economic collapse. Abraha was designated as the military junta in Yemen by King Ela Atzbeha. Subsequently, to Abraha's rise to power, a Greek priest named Gregentius of Ulpiana arrived in Yemen and drafted a Law on behalf of Abraha. Thereafter, Abraha proceeded to demolish numerous holy sites in Yemen, including Al-Qullays. Notably,

Abraha had also planned to destroy the Kaaba in Makkah. However, he died en route. The attack on Makkah was recorded in historical annals as the Year of the Elephant ('*Aam al-Fil*) in 570/571 AD (Kopanski, 1998).

Prophet Muhammad SAW and the Eastern Roman Colonists (Byzantine)

Michael Onyebuchi Eze defines decolonization as focusing on knowledge production and how neoliberal and imperial temperaments influence what we know, how we should know, and when we know. Eze also proposed a new way of thinking about the epistemology of resistance where decolonization ceases to be a mere performative practice bifurcated between moral outrage and vindictive historicism (Eze, 2024).

Prophet Muhammad SAW understood very well that the city of Makkah as part of *Arabia Deserta* was characterized by the ongoing conflict between the two empires of the time, Rome and Persia. Within this geopolitical landscape, Prophet Muhammad SAW began to disseminate his primary teachings about the unity of the Arabs and the conquest of non-Arab nations ('*Ajam*) so that the people of 'Ajam handed over jizyah to the Arabs. This goal was conveyed directly by the Prophet Muhammad to his uncle, Abu Talib when His teachings were protested by the Quraish tribe at that time (Hibban, 1987). However, the Arabs of Mecca rejected the Islamic teachings because they had Persian support. Persian Emperor Khosrow II's support for the Hijaz pagan people made the Prophet Muhammad's presence in Makkah unacceptable (Cole, 2018).

After more than a decade of teaching Islam in Makkah, Muhammad migrated to Yathrib. He encountered a more pluralistic society consisting of many tribes and religions that conflicted. The Yathrib Jews consist of 10 tribes, the most dominant of which are the Banu Qaynuqa, Banu al-Nadir, and Banu Qurayza. The Jewish population continued nearly half of the city's total population, which by the early 7th century A.D. was estimated to be approximately 10,000 individuals. In contrast, the Arab tribes were organized into 12 tribes, with the tribes of 'Aws and Khazraj holding a dominant position (Yildirim, 2009).

Muhammad's inaugural endeavor following his arrival in Yathrib in 622 AD was establishing a unified code known as the Medina Charter, encompassing 47 Articles. Of these, 23 Articles addressed Muslim immigrants from Makkah and Yathrib Muslims, while 24 Articles were directed towards Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims. The Medina Charter is noteworthy for establishing egalitarian principles, ensuring equal rights and responsibilities for all citizens, irrespective of their religious or other distinctions. This was a crucial measure to foster unity and fortify the newly established homeland (Yildirim, 2009).

This Medina Charter is a testament to the efficacy of Muhammad's strategies in addressing the prevalent discord among the Arabs, who, in pursuing their agendas or service of foreign interests, often became proxies for the Roman or Persian Empires. The Medinian Arabs Banu Aus and Banu Khazraj also clashed with each other. Banu Aus had the Jewish support of Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayza. Meanwhile, Banu Khazraj received support from the Jews of Banu Qaynuqa. As fellow paganists, Banu Aus and Banu Khazraj were in constant conflict until the Prophet Muhammad's arrival in Medina (Maroney, 2010).

Banu Khazraj had a positive relationship with Banu Ghassan, a federate of Constantinople and Eastern Rome. In 622 AD, Banu Khazraj lobbied Prophet Muhammad to be affiliated with Banu Ghassan when Persian dominance over Medina rapidly grew (Cole, 2018). Persian Empire used Banu Nadir and Banu Qurayza to control the Medina oasis (Milani, 2014). In this context, Prophet Muhammad was challenged to be independent by offering the concept of the State of Madina as a rigorous step to break the chain of Roman and European influence on Medina.

Following the establishment of a robust national and state infrastructure characterized by defined sovereignty and territorial boundaries, prophet Muhammad SAW initiated diplomatic engagement with external powers. Muhammad SAW sent letters to kings beyond his domain, inviting them to embrace Islam (Crandall, 2008).

The letters authored by Muhammad SAW were addressed to a diverse array of recipients, including kings, communities, and individuals. The first letter was

addressed to Al-Husayn Abdullah bin Salam (d. 664 AD), a prominent figure in Yathrib's Jewish community renowned for his profound insight and wisdom. Abdullah bin Salam requested an elucidation of Muhammad's prophetic evidence, seeking to understand its implications within the context of Jewish traditional knowledge. The second letter, delivered by Ja'far bin Abi Talib, was addressed to Al-Shamah, a Christian ruler of Abyssinia. This letter requested that the King of Abysinia provide asylum to those had been subjected to violence by the Quraish in Makkah. The third letter, delivered by Dahiyah bin Caliphah al-Kalbi, was addressed to Heraclius, the Byzantine (Western Roman) Emperor, and was received in Heraclius' office in Ilya'.

The fourth letter, delivered by Abdullah bin Hudhafah, was addressed to Parves or Khosrow II, a Persian Emperor, and it also contained a call to embrace Islam. The fifth letter was addressed to the Christians of Najran, who were then under the rule of Byzantine (Ghazali et al., 2019). The sixth letter, delivered by Shuja' bin Wahb al-Asadi, was addressed to Al-Harits bin Abi Syamr al-Ghassani, and another perspective cites Jublah bin al-Ayham al-Ghassani, a judge in Syria and a Roman emissary (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013). The letters Muhammad sent to Byzantine and Persian rulers were invitations to Islam and strategic diplomatic efforts to establish sovereignty independent of imperial influences. Sending letters to the external rulers was the second step of prophetic decolonization after the State of Medina establishment.

Religious power in Fostering (de)Colonization

Michael Onyebuchi Eze also defined decoloniality as rejecting and refusing coloniality of power, knowledge, and being (Eze, 2024). This allows religion to be a force of rejection and then resistance. The Prophet Muhammad taught rejection and resistance to Roman and Persian foreign powers. However, it differed from how the Romans and Persians rejected each other or the way they jointly rejected Islam.

When Islam began to demonstrate its power and influence through diplomatic means in the presence of the Roman Empire, the letter addressed to Heraclius was dated 628 AD, marking the 53rd year of Heraclius' reign, which commenced in 575 and concluded in 641 AD (Al-Jibouri, 2014). Heraclius' response was characterized as

favorable, and he even predicted that the Muslims would soon rule all of Arabia, including Roman territories themselves (Ghazali, et al., 2019). However, a different depiction emerges of Emperor Khosrow II's reaction to the letter's contents, where he is depicted as displaying anger and even instructing his companion Abdullah bin Hudhafah to bow in salute. The emperor's displeasure intensified when he observed Abdullah bin Hudhafah's reluctance to bow, given his belief that only God was worthy of such obeisance (Shammsuddin, 2017).

Considering the answers of Roman and Persian rulers who did not welcome the Islamic invitation, Muslims wanted the same glory for themselves. Muslims want to have glory like the Romans and Persians did. In the year 9 H./630 A.D., Ibn Hibban narrated that one day, Umar bin Khatthab asked Prophet Muhammad to pray to Allah for the success of Muslims like the Romans and Persians. However, the Prophet comforted Umar's heart and advised him not to be discouraged by the Persians and Romans, for their happiness was accelerated in this world alone (Hibban, 1987).

The teaching of Prophet Muhammad to his people is to be more patient. The struggle against the Romans and Persians in the Islamic teachings is not for worldly glory as the Romans and Persians did but for *Jihad fi sabadilla*. Ibn Hibban recounted that after finishing against the Romans in the Battle of Tabuk, some Muslims believed that there would no longer be any obligation to Jihad. However, Prophet Muhammad SAW immediately refuted the companions' words, stating that the Jihad would continue until the Prophet Isa down into the world (Hibban, 1987).

The Prophet Muhammad's view of Jihad is reasonable, considering that the war between Rome and Persia was only about worldly power and victory. The Roman and Persian Empires occupied distinct positions of geopolitical landscape. Beginning in 609/10 A.D., the Persian Empire engaged in a seies of military campaigns against the Roman Empire, marking a period of sustained conflict. The military successes of Khosrow II, which led to the conquest of Mesopotamia, were significant in terms of regional dynamics. This region had previously seen significant investment from Roman Emperors Anastasius, Justin I, and Justinian, who sought to consolidate control over

Mesopotamia (Sarris, 2011). The Persian army's success in expelling the Roman army from the Taurus Mountains is a notable example of the strategic challenges faced by the Roman Empire in the region. During the reign of Emperor Pochas (602-610), Roman power underwent a period of decline, as evidenced by the actions of Heraclius Senior and his son Heraclius, who rebelled in 608 AD. Heraclius senior held the position of Proconsularis governor of Africa, while the Heraclius family possessed significant assets in Cappadocia, a region known for its real estate development. On October 3, 610, a regime shift occurred, with Emperor Pochas relinquishing his authority (Sarris, 2011).

From 614 to 615 AD, Heraclius confronted persistent Persian attacks, demonstrating a readiness to engage in armed conflict and diplomatic negotiations with the Persian Shah. Concurrently, Heraclius leveraged the power of religion to consolidate his authority, galvanizing the Christian populace to endorse the Roman empire. Heraclius transformed the struggle of the Eastern Roman Empire into a sacred war against all those who were deemed anti-Christ. In 629 AD, Heraclius employed Biblical rhetoric to legitimize his reign. In the Law of 629, Heraclius referred to himself as *Basileus*, the Greek term for King, a title previously held by King David and Jesus Christ. In contrast to the Romans, who were supporters of Christianity, the Persia were supported by the Jews. In response, Heraclius ordered the baptism of all the Jews within his empire (Sarris, 2011).

The portrayal of Islamic Jihad varies across two documents: *Doctrina Iacobi* (Jacob's Doctrine) and Syrian history. Jacob, a Roman Jew, had been arrested and imprisoned in Carthage. Following his release, Jacob transcribed his teachings, the Doctrine of Jacob, in 637 A.D. In his writings, Jacob recounted how his brother Abraham, residing in Caesarea, had informed him of the presence of a false prophet among the *Saracens* (Muslim Arabs). The Saracens had murdered a Jew named Sergius. Upon receiving this information, Abraham informed his elders, who subsequently labeled the Prophet a false Prophet, citing that a Prophet would not arrive armed with a sword or chariot (Sarris, 2011).

A similar account is recorded in a Syrian document in 640 AD, which also mentions a figure named Mahmet, a businessman from the lineage of Ismail, who is described as having emerged to teach the truth. He instructed his followers to confess their belief in Lord Abraham SAW, especially given his pssession of knowledge regarding Moses (as). Subsequently, Mahmet began prohibiting his followers from consuming sharp-clawed birds, imbiding wine, not to lie, engaging in falsehood, and committing adultery (Sarris, 2011).

The Prophetic Wars against the Eastern Romans

Based on Michael Onyebuchi Eze's definition of decoloniality as an act of rejection and refusal of coloniality, war is the most obvious act of decolonization. In the month of Rabi'ul Awwal 5 H./July-August 626 AD, Muhammad SAW led a thousand Muslim troops on a five-day journey northward towards Sham (Syria), specifically to Daumatul Jandal (Ishaq, 2004). Daumatul Jandal is a region between Syria and the Hijaz, with which the people of Medina were well-acquainted and served as the initial staging ground for the muslim forces. This expedition marked the initial encounter between Muslim forces in Medina and the Roman powers. The main reason for that expedition was that Arab trade caravans often got disturbed in the Daumatul Jandal market (Hibban, 1987). Prophet Muhammad wanted to secure this trading business.

Daumatul Jandal functioned as a commercial hub for the Quraish, serving as a pivotal source for procuring essential goods by the people of Medina. The mobilization of the Banu Kalb and other tribes in Daumatul Jandal attracted the Roman Empire's attention, as it also became concerned about Medina's economic revitalization (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013). However, Medina troops stopped on the outskirts of Daumatul Jandal and did not enter the city. Prophet Muhammad still worried about provoking an overreaction from the Roman Empire at the time (Al-Waqidi, 1984). The strength of Islamic army was not yet fully commensurate with Romans'.

The expedition of Daumatul Jandal did not have time to erupt. When the news of Muslim army arrival reached the residents of Daumatul Jandal, they fled. The Muslim

forces did not find a single person left. Muslim troops were deployed to check the situation. Everyone reported that they could not find anyone, except for a soldier named Muhammad bin Maslamah who managed to arrest one resident of Daumatul Jandal, and from his statement it was known that the residents of the city had fled since yesterday afternoon (Al-Waqidi, 1984).

In the following years, to ascertain the situation in Daumaul Jandal, Abdurrahman bin 'Auf al-Kalbi led a second expedition in the month of Sha'ban 6 H./November 628 AD. This expedition encountered no resistance at all, and the leader of the Banu Kalb tribe, Al-Ashbagh bin 'Amr al-Kabli, embraced Islam. Abdurrahman bin 'Auf al-Kabli married Al-Ashbagh bin 'Amr al-Kabli's daughter to strengthen familial relations. The third expedition, known as Dzatu Athlah, was led by Ka'b bin 'Umair in Rabi'ul Awwal 8 H./629 AD. This third expedition resulted in significant losses. The army under Ka'b's command, comprised of the troops of 'Umair's mother, consisting of a mere 15 men, all of whom perished in the battle except for a single individual who had sought regure in Medina, a fact that Muhammad SAW was aware of (Hibban, 1987).

In the month of Jumadil Ula 8 H./September 629 A.D., Muhammad SAW dispatched letters to the Roman retainers in Ma'an, Jordan, specifically to Malik bin Ahmad al-Judzami al-'Awfi, Rifa'ah bin Zaid al-Judzami, and Farwah bin 'Amr al-Judzami. The delegation led by Muhammad SAW included Al-Harith bin 'Umair al-Azadi, who was tasked with delivering a letter to the Roman ruler of Bostra. While en route, the Muslim delegations stopped to rest at Wadi al-Qura. There, Al-Harith was arrested and killed by a man named Shurahbil bin 'Umar al-Ghassani, but not with the rest of the delegations. This action was taken in response to Al-Harith's past involvement in battle, the battle of Dzatu Athlah, which had been led by Ka'b bin 'Umair and in which Shurahbil's people had perished (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013).

Following Al-Harith's death, Muhammad SAW dispatched an army of 3,000 (three thousand) men under the leadership of Zaid bin Harithah to the city of Bostra. Zaid's birthplace influenced this decision in Sham. Muslim troops advanced from the direction of the Kalb tribe near Daumatul Jandal. Muhammad SAW also stipulated that

in the event of Zaid's death, he would be succeeded by Ja'far bin Abu Talib; if Ja'far passed away, he would be replaced by Abdullah bin Rawahah; and if Abdullah also died, Muslims are permitted to elect a new leader in accordance with the agreement (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013).

Regarding the enemy, the Romans possessed an army of 200,000 soldiers, including troops from the Lakhm, Judzam, al-Qain, Bahra', and Bali tribes. Notably, one of the Bali tribal leaders was Malik bin Zafilah. The Muslim army could not predict such a combined force due to the distance between the tribes and the site of the battle (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013). The Muslim and Eastern Roman (Byzantine) forces battle occurred in the Jordanian city of Ma'an. After leaving the city of Ma'an, the Muslim troops decided to continue the battle until the city of Mu'tah, Jordan (Ishaq, 2004).

However, the events that happened in the Mu'tah region would prove to be a pivotal moment in the historical trajectory of the conflict. The battle saw the demise of notable figures such as Zaid bin Harithah, Ja'far bin Abi Talib, and Abdullah bin Rawahah. The Muslim troops, initially seeking to retreat from Mu'tah, were thwarted in this endeavor by the actions of Thabit bin Aqram al-Anshari and Khalid bin al-Walid. After the battles unfolding in Mu'tah, Khalid bin al-Walid strategically decided to redirect the Muslim army back to Medina (Watt, 1956).

In the month of Jumadil Akhirah 8 H./October 629, the expedition was once again led by 'Amr bin al-'Ash to engage in combat with the Bali and Qudha'ah tribes, as these two tribes had provided support to the Roman army during the Mu'tah war (Watt, 1956). Alternative opinion has been posited that the Muslims residing in Medina received intelligence regarding a potential offensive coalition comprising the Bali, Qudha'ah, and Roman forces, which had amassed on the outskirts of Medina. The ensuing confrontation transpired in Dzatul Salasil, a territory belonging to the Judzam tribe opposite Wadi al-Qura. Noteworthy is the timing of the war, which commenced during the winter season. Rafi bin Mukaith Juhni was dispatched to Medina to request reinforcements. Muhammad SAW acceded to this request, deploying an additional army of 200 men under the command of Abu 'Ubaidah bin al-Jarrah. This force

included prominent figures such as Abu Bakr al-Shiddiq and Umar bin Khatthab, bringing the Muslim army to 500 soldiers. This historical account refutes the notion that 'Amr bin al-'Ash was able to garner support from the regions he traversed during his journey (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013).

Emperor Heraclius also strategized for a new battle in the economic domain. The Romans sought to impede the economic influence of the Hijaz, as Muhammad SAW aspired to establish Medina as the nexus of economy, politics, and government. This endeavor was undoubtedly hindered by Roman clousure of the trade route between Medina and Gulf of 'Aqaba. However, the Muslim forces, bolstered by the support of the Hawazin, Tsaqif, and other tribes, had been defeated in the Battles of Hunain and Thaif but overcame this economic blockade by waging war against the Romans. The battle of Hunain and Thaif had severely depleted the Roman army, promting Hiraclius to prepare the army for a return to battle. The Roman army enjoyed the support of Arab tribes such as Ghassan, Lakhm, Judzam and other officials in the Balqa' region (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013).

In the month of Rabi'ul Awwal 9 AH, some Arab tribes that had supported the Romans in the Mu'tah War, such as Bali and Lakhm, declared surrender, and some negotiated with Prophet Muhammad. Meanwhile, the Lakhm tribe sent 10 people, namely Hani' bin Habib, Al-Fakih bin Al-Nu'man, Hablah bin Malik, Abu Hind bin Bar, Al-Thayyib bin Bar, Tamim bin Aus, Na'im bin Aus, Yazid bin Qais, 'Urwah bin Malik, and Murrah bin Malik. They gave Khamr to Prophet Muhammad, but Prophet Muhammad refused. The Lakhm tribe forced it by selling the Khamr, and the money was handed over to the Prophet Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad also refused it, saying that it was forbidden to eat it, and it was also forbidden to sell it (Hibban, 1987).

Negotiations between the Lakhm tribe and the Prophet Muhammad did not seem to go successfully. This can be seen from the preparation of Muslims to stage the next battle against the Romans. According to Al-Waqidi, some Muslim merchants who had just arrived in Medina from Syria told the Prophet Muhammad SAW that the Roman Empire was preparing an even larger army. Emperor Heraclius funded the war for one year. Emperor Heraclius gathered Arab tribes such as Lakhm, Judzam, Ghassan, and

'Amilah (Al-Waqidi, 1984). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) responded quickly. After Rajab 9 AH, the Prophet ordered the Muslims to prepare themselves to fight the Romans again. This time the war preparations were more mature, because they also had to face the challenges of hot weather. The rich were ordered to donate their wealth. According to Ibn Ishaq, 'Uthman ibn 'Affan was the Companion who contributed the most (Ishaq, 2004). But according to Al-Waqidi, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq was the first Companion to donate his entire wealth, totaling 4,000 dirhams. Umar bin Khatthab donated half of his wealth. Meanwhile, Ustman bin 'Affan covered one-third of all the needs of the army, so his contribution was the largest. The Muslim army totaled 30,000 men (Al-Waqidi, 1984).

The Muslim army underwent a similar level of preparation, with a force of 30,000 men, 12,000 camels, and 10,000 horses. Muhammad SAW departed from Medina to assume military operations, while the city of Medina was entrusted to Muhammad bin Muslimah, also known as Siba' bin 'Urthifah. Concurrently, the care of Muhammad's family was delegated to Ali bin Abi Talib. The Tabuk region witnessed hostilities on Thursday, Rajab, 9 AH/October 630 AD (Ahmad & Al-Hamīd, 2013).

Conclusion

The history of Prophet Muhammad SAW is the history of thoughts and actions of uniting Arabs with various ethnic, tribal, and religious backgrounds. Prophet made a new force against Roman colonialism, which had colonized the Arabs, and created the Province of Arabia as part of its empire. Meanwhile, the Arabs in the power of Roman colonialism continued to fall into prolonged conflicts such as the Himyar Kingdom which became a proxy for Rome.

The findings of this study enrich the postcolonial discourse by proving that the prophetic era in the 7th century A.D. was the era of decolonization. The weakness of the findings lies in the time limit, namely decolonization in the Prophet's era. Although it succeeded in answering the suspicions of many researchers by describing that Islam and Muslims in the Prophet's era were about decolonization, it could not answer why

the practice of Muslim colonization occurred in the era of the Islamic Caliphate. For this reason, further research is expected to examine the factors, events, and years of the shift more deeply.

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