



**GLOBAL  
HEARTBEAT  
MAGAZINE**

UTAH AND UZBEKISTAN

INTERVIEW WITH U.S. AMBASSADOR

GLOBAL ADUCATION, LANGUAGE,  
AND CULTURAL DIPLOMACY

QARAN AND FRIENDSHIP  
AS A MORAL VALUE



**DIPLOMACY OF THE**

# Heart

The Baskerville Institute

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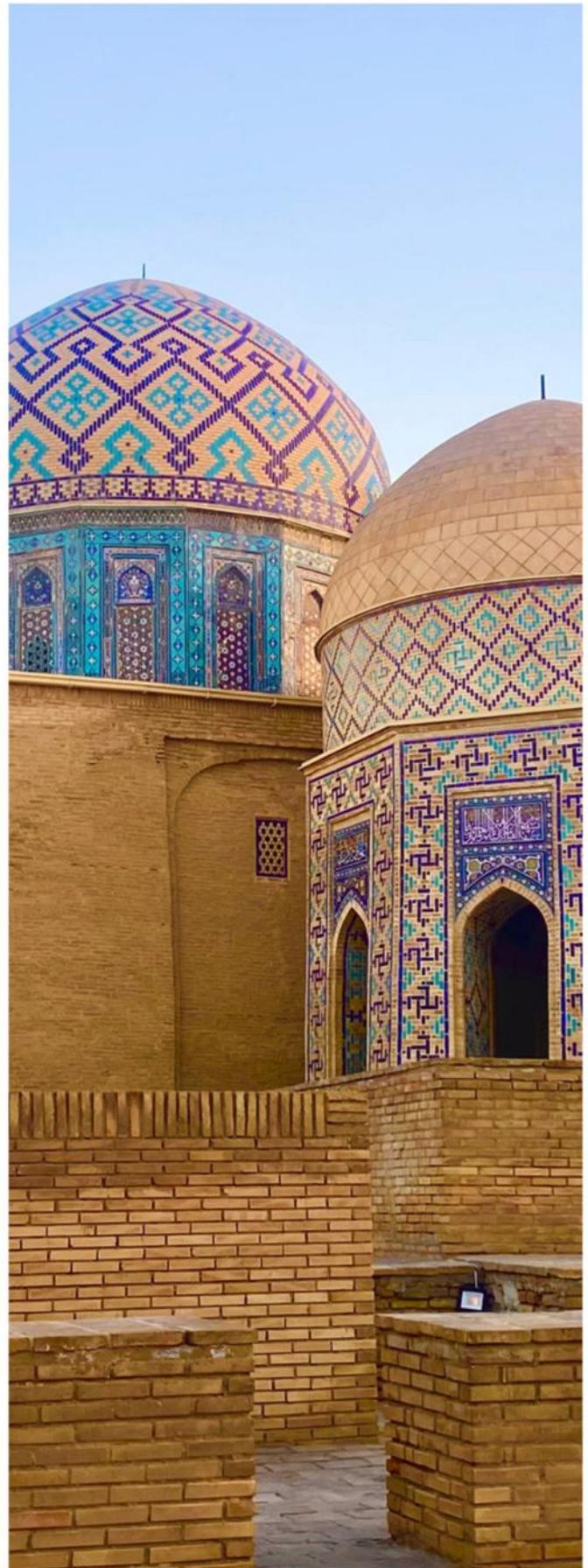


## **The Global Heartbeat Magazine: A Platform for Diplomacy of the Heart**

The Global Heartbeat Magazine is a publication of the Baskerville Institute and its Diplomacy of the Heart initiative. It is dedicated to exploring the transformative power of heart-centered diplomacy—an approach grounded in empathy, mutual respect, and authentic human connection. This magazine features insights, stories, and reflections from scholars, diplomats, and community leaders committed to fostering understanding across cultural, national, and ideological boundaries. As the official publication of the Diplomacy of the Heart conferences, Global Heartbeat serves as a vital platform for sharing diverse perspectives on how diplomacy—guided by the heart—can shape a more compassionate and peaceful world.

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# Why The Global Heartbeat Magazine Is Needed Today

## INTRODUCTION



This November 2025 issue of Global Heartbeat highlights voices and ideas at the heart of one of today's most urgent challenges: how to build bridges of understanding in an increasingly divided world.

Emerging from the the Diplomacy of the Heart conference held earlier this year in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, this issue brings together two thought leaders whose work reflects a deep commitment to peace, dialogue, and the shared values that connect us across cultures:

"Islamic Law & Modern Peacebuilding" by Professor Rakhmanov of Tashkent State University of Law explores how Islamic legal traditions can support peace, human rights, and pluralism in modern societies.

"The Qur'an and Friendship as a Moral Value" by Dr. Mohammad Eslami, Director of Research at the Islamic Science and Culture Academy (ISCA) in Qum, Iran, offers a powerful reflection on the ethical and spiritual significance of friendship as a bridge to peace and mutual understanding.

We also have two interviews: A Conversation with Dr. Bahodir Khalikov, Rector of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, who shares insights into the role of language education in cultural diplomacy and the growing importance of Central Asia in global academic exchange, and an Interview with Ambassador Joey Hood, U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, who

reflects on the value of humility, listening, and human dignity in U.S. diplomatic engagement across the region.

Together, these contributions offer a compelling vision of how the Muslim world—and our global community—can deepen its commitment to human rights, compassion, and peace through education, ethical engagement, and genuine dialogue.

We hope this issue inspires new conversations and continued collaboration toward a more empathetic and connected world.

- **Dr. Bahman Baktiari**,  
*Director of the Baskerville  
Institute*

# Utah and Uzbekistan: Partners in Education, Innovation, and the Diplomacy of the Heart

**BAHMAN BAKTIARI**



Uzbekistan has one of the youngest populations in the world, a powerful source of energy and innovation driving its vision for the future. With 36 million citizens—most under age 30—the nation is rapidly advancing digital literacy and reform. Strategically located at the crossroads of China, Russia, and the Middle East, Uzbekistan stands at the heart of Eurasia's emerging trade networks. Its resource-rich economy, anchored in critical minerals, energy, and logistics, is now guided by a leadership that is pro-investment, reform-minded, and outward-looking.

At the United Nations in New York on September 23, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev made clear that Uzbekistan's era of post-Soviet isolation and "go-it-alone" development is over. Declaring that his top priority is to "fundamentally transform the lives of every family and citizen" and "enhance human dignity and wellbeing," he outlined an agenda of openness, modernization, and partnership. His government's message to investors is direct: Uzbekistan is open for business—but only for partnerships that are win-win, strategic, and fair.

This new approach was on full display during a high-level U.S.–Uzbekistan investment roundtable in New York, attended by senior executives from Boeing, Citigroup, Nvidia, Mastercard, and other major corporations. The discussions underscored growing U.S. business confidence in Uzbekistan and Washington's pivot toward deeper engagement with Central Asia. President Mirziyoyev even announced the creation

of a dedicated Deputy Minister for U.S. Affairs—charged with supporting American investors "24/7"—a move signaling seriousness about transparency and partnership.

## **Why Uzbekistan Matters to Utah**

Uzbekistan's strategic location and youthful demographic make it a natural partner for Utah's globally minded economy. As the country reforms its higher education, digital, and industrial sectors, Utah's expertise in technology, clean energy, and innovation aligns perfectly with Uzbekistan's modernization goals. Its open-door investment policy, supported by a pragmatic government and growing ties with Washington, creates fertile ground for collaboration across education, business, and science.

## **Why Utah Matters to Uzbekistan**

Utah is the innovation capital of the U.S. Intermountain West—a state known for its strong universities, entrepreneurial energy, and civic culture of service. Its institutions lead in research, educational reform, and international cooperation, while its communities embody interfaith understanding and humanitarian outreach. Utah's first-mover advantage in Central Asia allows it to shape a model of state-to-country cooperation rooted in shared values and mutual prosperity.

## **Why Expanding Educational Ties Between Utah and Uzbekistan Matters**

Education is the bridge linking Utah's strengths to Uzbekistan's aspirations. Collaborative degree programs, joint research, and student exchanges can accelerate Uzbekistan's education reforms

while expanding Utah's global footprint. By connecting Utah's universities and Uzbek institutions, both sides can cultivate skilled talent, boost entrepreneurship, and drive innovation. These academic relationships go beyond classrooms—they nurture trust, understanding, and cooperation across generations.

With expanding educational ties, we strengthen the diplomacy of the heart between the people of Uzbekistan and Utah, building lasting friendship and human connection that outlives any single agreement.

## **A Partnership at a Pivotal Moment**

The relationship between Uzbekistan and the United States has entered a new era—one defined by strategic cooperation, shared prosperity, and people-to-people engagement. Utah stands at the forefront of this movement. Over the past two years, Utah delegations have visited Uzbekistan, and Uzbek officials have traveled to Utah to deepen collaboration. Initiatives like the Diplomacy of the Heart conference in Samarkand exemplify how academic and civic exchange can complement national diplomacy.

As Uzbekistan opens its doors wider to global partnership and as Washington increases its engagement in Central Asia, Utah is uniquely positioned to play a bridging role—linking innovation with opportunity, education with empowerment, and commerce with friendship. Together, Utah and Uzbekistan can chart a model for how local leadership and global vision can meet at the intersection of progress and goodwill.

# *Interview with U.S. Ambassador Joey Hood*

## Diplomacy of the Heart: Tunisia and the United States

**RADIO RTCI – AUGUST 27, 2025**



### **Bahman Baktiari, Executive Director**

We are pleased to share excerpts from an insightful conversation with U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, Ambassador Joey Hood, originally aired on Radio RTCI. [The full interview](#) is available, but in this edition of The Global Heartbeat, we highlight key moments that reflect the enduring and heartfelt relationship between Tunisia and the United States.

The history of U.S.–Tunisia relations is a powerful example of what we at the Baskerville Institute call diplomacy of the heart—genuine, people-centered engagement that transcends politics and policy. From Tunisia's early recognition of American independence in the 18th century to today's vibrant partnerships in education, culture, and security cooperation, the relationship has consistently been grounded in mutual respect and shared aspirations.

These connections flourish not just through treaties or state visits, but through the everyday interactions between students, educators, artists, humanitarian workers, and citizens. They resonate in exchange programs, cultural initiatives, and community partnerships that foster understanding and friendship—not only between Tunisians and Americans, but across the broader Muslim world.

As Ambassador Hood reflects in this conversation, these people-to-people bonds are more than historical anecdotes—they are the living fabric of international relations. While policies may evolve, the core values of trust, dignity, and genuine human connection endure, offering a powerful foundation for lasting cooperation.

Together, these reflections reaffirm that diplomacy of the heart is not merely a philosophy—it is a lived practice, embodied through shared experiences and ongoing engagement that continues to bring Tunisians and Americans closer together.

### **Highlights from Ambassador Hood's Interview on Radio RTCI**

#### **History and Early Friendship**

"[This year] we'll be celebrating the 228th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship between our two countries in 1797. Indeed, since the beginning of its existence as an independent country, the United States has always had very important diplomatic and commercial relations with Tunisia, starting with this treaty, of which our second President John Adams said, "Absolutely, it's imperative that we make treaties with countries like Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco."

President Jefferson, our third president, organized the first Iftar at the White House in 1805, in honor of the Tunisian envoy who was the first Muslim ambassador. I mean the first Muslim, not just the first Tunisian, but the first Muslim ambassador to set foot in Washington.

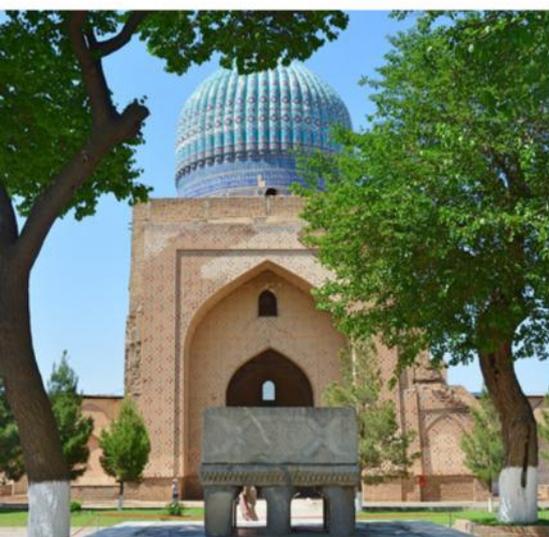
#### **Shared Values**

in 1846, Tunisia officially abolished slavery, the first Muslim country to do so. And this is something that left an intellectual mark on us, because of course we were engaged in a great struggle over this issue that cost many Americans their lives. And so, one of my predecessors questioned the Tunisian authorities to find out: How exactly did you go about it in a conservative country where most of the population still supported slavery? How did you go about abolishing this institution? So of course, a few years later, thankfully, we followed Tunisia's model by abolishing slavery ourselves.

## People-to-People Exchange

There are also thousands of businessmen, athletes like those of the Tunisian soccer club Esperance, for example, artists, scientists, students and researchers from Tunisia who go to the United States to explore, to train, to invest, to put on a show – why not win a soccer match from time to time, as Esperance did in Los Angeles. And of course, this year, as I've already said, we welcomed quite a few Tunisians for the FIFA Club World Cup. And next year, it'll be the World Cup. And then the Summer Olympics in 2028. These are sporting events that make the United States more prosperous.

And of course, Americans also visit Tunisia. This year so far, we've had 23,300 Americans come and discover the country, and that's an increase of almost 50% over 2019. So that's a good number. I think these Americans are discovering something that perhaps your listeners aren't aware of either, which is that Tunisia is also home to important elements of American heritage.



The North African Memorial and Cemetery in Tunis, for example, covers 27 acres and is the resting place of more than 2,800 American souls who fell in the Second World War. Tunisia granted this land; in fact, it was President Habib Bourguiba himself, in perpetuity, without tax or royalty, as part of a treaty between the two countries.

## Education and Partnerships

So, for the past 20 years, we've had a partnership between the State of Wyoming and their National Guard unit and the Tunisian authorities when it comes to defense. The two teams work together in areas such as border security, aviation, firefighting, drought resistance, disaster response and of course counterterrorism too. Because back home, the National Guard is responsible for responding to anything that can happen on a natural or human level. We've had this idea of expanding these relations between Tunisia and Wyoming, why not, to cover education, cooperation in tourism, trade, agriculture, cultural heritage, science, technology, engineering and so on..... that's why representatives from the University of Wyoming visited Tunisia last May to explore all these areas. And it's fabulous: they signed memorandums with six Tunisian universities and institutions to promote these relationships.

## Culture and Heritage

When President Andrew Johnson, in 1865, received the portrait of [Mohammed Sadok], he sent one of my predecessors, Amos Perry, back to Tunis with the portrait of George Washington, painted by John Trumbull, a well-known American artist. And this

painting is currently on display at the Ksar Saïd in Bardo. I recommend all our listeners to go and see it while it's on display, because it...is fabulous. And if you look at the two portraits, you can see that the style is almost identical. It's as if the two artists had collaborated to convey the same message through their paintings. We're proud to help you preserve these cultural assets—to make them safer, more secure, and more accessible to the public. It's Tunisia's heritage, of course, but it's also European, American—it's for everyone.

## The Philosophy of Cooperation

You'll no doubt recall the quote by Abderrahmane Ben Mohammed Al-Khaldoun, better known as Ibn Khaldoun: "The past resembles the future more than one drop of water resembles another." But here's another quote that I've shortened a bit, summarized a bit and translated myself. So, if I've made a mistake, it's my fault. He says: "The power of a single individual is not enough to provide for his own food needs or defense. But through cooperation, we can provide food and defense for a very large number of people." And I think if you look at our past and our present, it's clear that for 228 years, that's exactly the fruit that cooperation has brought us – not only literally food, olive oil for example, dates that are exported to the United States or the powdered milk that was given to Tunisian children in the 1960s, when they needed it – but also defense. As I said, we have a very close relationship and cooperation to protect both countries from any threat. And I'm optimistic that, as the treaty says, our relationship will go from strength to strength.

# Uzbekistan's Voices for Global Education, Language, and Cultural Diplomacy:

## *A Conversation with Rector Bahodir Khalikov*



**Dr. Bahodir Khalikov**, Rector of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, represents a new generation of leadership in Uzbekistan's higher education. Appointed in June 2024 by the Cabinet of Ministers, he has combined academic expertise in linguistics with experience in government service to shape one of the country's most dynamic institutions. Under his leadership, the Institute now serves more than 13,000 students across 8 faculties and 25 departments, partnering with universities in over 20 countries.

With a Ph.D. in Philological Sciences and a career that has spanned teaching, research, and administration, Dr. Khalikov has been at the forefront of advancing language education as a foundation for international cooperation. His vision reflects Uzbekistan's broader ambition to expand academic diplomacy, cultural exchange, and global partnerships.

In the following interview, conducted for Global Heartbeat, Dr. Khalikov shares his views on the role of foreign language education in cultural diplomacy, the challenges and opportunities facing higher education in Uzbekistan, and the importance of building strong partnerships with universities in the United States, including BYU and the University of Utah.

This exclusive interview for Global Heartbeat was conducted in September 2025 by Dr. Bahman Baktiari, Executive Director of the Baskerville Institute. It forms part of our Diplomacy of the Heart initiative, where we bring forward the voices of scholars, leaders, and practitioners of peace.

**Dr. Bahman Baktiari:** Thank you Dr. Khalikov for doing this interview for our Global Heartbeat magazine

**Dr. Khalikov:** It is a pleasure to do this interview

**Dr. Baktiari:** What is your vision for the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages in shaping Uzbekistan's role in global education and diplomacy?

**Dr. Khalikov:** Uzbekistan has always been a land where civilizations meet and dialogue flourishes. Samarkand, one of the ancient centers of the Great Silk Road, has historically been a place of intellectual exchange and cross-cultural understanding. This heritage deeply inspires the mission of our Institute. My vision for the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages (SamSIFL) is to transform it into a leading regional and international hub for foreign language education, research, and diplomacy. We aim to prepare a new generation of professionals who are not only linguistically competent but also globally minded and deeply aware of their role as cultural ambassadors of Uzbekistan. To achieve this, we are integrating innovative teaching methods, modern technologies, and international best practices into our academic system. Our goal is to ensure that every graduate of SamSIFL contributes to building bridges between Uzbekistan and the world, promoting peace, cooperation, and mutual respect. In this way, our Institute will play a vital role in shaping Uzbekistan's position as an active and respected participant in global education and diplomacy.

**Dr. Baktiari:** Why do you believe language learning is central to cultural diplomacy and international understanding?

**Dr. Khalikov:** Language is far more than a tool for communication. It embodies the history, traditions, values, and worldview of a people. When we learn another language, we are not simply memorizing words and grammar; we are entering into a dialogue with another culture. This dialogue fosters empathy, mutual understanding, and trust. In today's complex world, where geopolitical tensions often arise from misunderstanding or lack of communication, cultural diplomacy has never been more essential. Language learning is at the very heart of this process. It enables individuals to engage meaningfully with one another, to see the world through someone else's eyes, and to find common ground despite differences. At SamSIFL, we see every language we teach as a pathway to peace. By equipping our students with linguistic skills and intercultural competencies, we are nurturing future diplomats, journalists, educators, and leaders who will promote dialogue rather than division.

**Dr. Baktiari:** How does Uzbekistan's experience with multilingualism contribute to building bridges across cultures and nations?

**Dr. Khalikov:** Uzbekistan is a naturally multilingual society. In addition to Uzbek as the state language, many of our citizens speak Russian, Tajik, Karakalpak, and other regional languages. In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on learning English, Chinese, Korean, and other international languages. This linguistic diversity is one of our greatest strengths. It reflects a culture of openness and adaptability. Historically, our nation has thrived at the crossroads of East and West, where traders, scholars, and

travelers brought ideas and innovations from across the world. Today, this tradition continues as we embrace multilingualism as a core value. At SamSIFL, we channel this heritage into our educational mission. Our faculty and students are trained to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity not only as an academic pursuit but as a living practice. This positions Uzbekistan as a natural mediator in global dialogue – a country uniquely equipped to connect diverse nations and cultures through understanding and cooperation.

**Dr. Baktiari:** What are the biggest challenges facing higher education in Uzbekistan today, and how is your Institute addressing them?

**Dr. Khalikov:** Higher education in Uzbekistan is currently undergoing a profound transformation aimed at integrating our national system into the global educational landscape. Among the most pressing challenges are aligning curricula with internationally recognized standards, improving the quality and accessibility of education, and creating a sustainable environment for innovation and research. Another challenge is ensuring that higher education institutions remain competitive in an increasingly interconnected world while upholding transparency, academic integrity, and accountability. These reforms require not only internal changes but also external validation through recognized international quality assurance mechanisms. At SamSIFL, we have taken bold steps to meet these challenges through a comprehensive modernization strategy:

- This year, we successfully completed institutional international accreditation according to European standards

through the European Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA). We are proud to announce that SamSIFL has received a five-year accreditation certificate, officially recognizing our compliance with European higher education benchmarks. This milestone is a testament to our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

- We are implementing advanced digital learning platforms (HEMIS) and modernizing administrative processes to create a seamless educational experience for students and faculty, supporting blended and online learning formats.
- Through collaborations with leading universities worldwide, we are introducing joint academic programs (2+2, 1+1), co-developing innovative curricula, and fostering international research initiatives.
- A Key Performance Indicators (KPI) system has been implemented to promote merit-based recognition, encouraging faculty to publish in leading journals, engage in international projects, and advance Uzbekistan's global academic presence.

By combining these efforts, we are transforming SamSIFL into a world-class institution that not only meets international standards but also serves as a model for educational excellence in Uzbekistan and the wider Central Asian region.

**Dr. Baktiari:** How do you see partnerships with U.S. universities, such as BYU and the University of Utah, advancing shared goals in education and research

**Dr. Khalikov:** Collaboration with American universities represents a tremendous opportunity for mutual growth and innovation. Brigham Young University and the University of Utah are renowned for their academic excellence, innovative teaching methods, and strong international outreach. Through these partnerships, we envision:

- Developing programs where students can benefit from the combined expertise of both institutions and earn credentials recognized in both countries.
- Sharing knowledge and methodologies by enabling professors to teach and conduct research at partner universities.
- Launching joint projects in linguistics, tourism and hospitality, journalism, digital education, translation studies, and intercultural communication.
- Leveraging U.S. experience in teacher preparation to raise the quality of language education in Uzbekistan.

These initiatives will not only strengthen academic ties but also promote mutual understanding and long-term cooperation between Uzbekistan and the United States.

**Dr. Baktiari:** What opportunities exist for student and faculty exchanges between Uzbekistan and the United States, and how can these strengthen people-to-people ties?

**Dr. Khalikov:** Student and faculty exchanges are among the most powerful tools for fostering international friendship and cooperation. They provide individuals with first-hand experience of another culture, breaking down stereotypes and building lifelong connections. At SamSIFL, we are actively expanding such opportunities:

- Programs that allow our students to study abroad for a semester or a year, gaining exposure to different academic environments and perspectives.
- Intensive programs where students can immerse themselves in language and culture in a foreign setting.
- Digital platforms that enable cross-border collaboration even when travel is not possible.
- Opportunities for our faculty to conduct joint research and share expertise with American colleagues.

When students and professors return home, they bring with them not only new knowledge but also stories, friendships, and networks. These personal connections create a foundation of trust and mutual respect, which is essential for sustainable international relations. In this way, education becomes a true instrument of diplomacy and peace.

**Dr. Baktiari:** Thank you Dr. Khalikov for sharing your perspectives with Global Heartbeat.

Samarkand has long been a crossroads of civilizations, where cultures, ideas, and languages have flourished. Today, that spirit of exchange lives on at the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages (SamSIFL), where education and diplomacy intersect.

Kholikov Bahadir Alikulovich currently serves as the Rector of the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, appointed by decision of the Cabinet of Ministers in June 2024. He earned his degree in linguistics (English language) from the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages in 2011 and holds a Ph.D. in Philological

Sciences. An associate professor, Dr. Khalikov has built a distinguished career in higher education and government. He has served as a senior researcher at the Uzbekistan State University of World Languages, taught at the National University of Uzbekistan, and held leadership roles at the Tashkent State University of Uzbek Language and Literature, including head of international relations, secretary of the University Council, deputy dean, department head, and vice-rector. Prior to his current position, he worked in the State Language Development Department of the Prime Minister's Secretariat under the Cabinet of Ministers. As rector, he leads an institution that has grown into a major center for language education in Uzbekistan, serving over 13,000 students and partnering with universities across more than 20 countries.

### **About the Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages**

The Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages, established on November 8, 1994, by presidential decree, has grown from its beginnings with 500 students into a leading higher education institution in Uzbekistan, now serving more than 13,000 students across 8 faculties and 25 departments. The Institute offers 20 undergraduate and 15 graduate programs supported by a distinguished academic staff of over 500 faculty members, including professors, associate professors, and PhD holders. Over the years, it has expanded with specialized faculties in English, German, French, Oriental, and Translation Studies, as well as regional branches, reflecting its commitment to advancing foreign language education. The Institute maintains strong international partnerships, collaborating with universities across Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East, positioning itself as a hub for linguistic scholarship, cultural exchange, and global academic cooperation.

# The Evolution of Islamic Law in Central Asia: *The Significance in Modern Peacebuilding*

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## Abstract

This paper explores the historical development of Islamic law in Central Asia, particularly in the region of Movaraunnahr (present-day Uzbekistan and surrounding territories), and its influence on both traditional and modern legal practices. It traces the spread of Islam, the development of the Hanafi school, the role of Sufism, and the contributions of prominent Central Asian Islamic scholars. The paper emphasizes the modern relevance of Islamic law in state policy and peacebuilding in Uzbekistan, especially under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

## Introduction

The historical interplay between Islam and the legal and moral norms of diverse societies in Asia and Africa has profoundly influenced their social structures. Islamic teachings have shaped the socio-legal, familial, and personal lives of millions of individuals across the globe. With approximately two billion adherents, Islam stands as

the world's second-largest religion, encompassing a majority of the population in Uzbekistan.

The significance of studying Uzbekistan within this context is multifaceted. As a historic crossroads of various civilizations and cultures, Uzbekistan's rich tapestry offers invaluable insights into the evolution of Islamic law and its integration into local customs. The country has served as a pivotal center for Islamic scholarship, particularly as the birthplace of notable scholars and religious figures whose contributions have shaped Islamic legal thought. Understanding Uzbekistan's unique perspective is crucial for comprehending the broader dynamics of Islamic jurisprudence and its contemporary applications, especially in peacebuilding and interfaith dialogue.

Uzbekistan's commitment to promoting religious tolerance is particularly notable and exemplified by the 2018 UN General Assembly resolution "Enlightenment and Religious Tolerance," initiated by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. This resolution reinforced Uzbekistan's position as a significant global voice for interfaith harmony, contributing substantially to the advancement of religious tolerance and understanding worldwide.

The historical spread of Islam into Central Asia, which began in the 7th century with pivotal events such as Ubaydullah ibn Ziyad's expedition in 674, marks a significant part of

Uzbekistan's legacy. The introduction of Islam in the region facilitated not only the dissemination of religious beliefs but also the Arabic language, Islamic architecture, and trade networks. Movaraunnahr's integration into the Arab Caliphate was integral to the establishment of an administrative system that enforced Sharia law, ensuring both order and governance under Islamic principles. Under the Samanids (9th–10th centuries), Bukhara emerged as a key intellectual and theological center, further enriching the Islamic legal tradition.

In summary, exploring the evolution of Islamic law in Uzbekistan is essential for understanding how Islamic principles have historically shaped social norms and their contemporary relevance in fostering peace, tolerance, and collaboration in a rapidly changing world. This study highlights the dynamic relationship between tradition and modernity in Uzbekistan, where Islamic values continue to inform contemporary governance and societal development



## The Formation of Islamic Law in Movaraunnahr

Islamic law (Sharia) in Movaraunnahr was profoundly influenced by local realities. Although it adhered to Qur'anic principles, it also absorbed elements of adat—the customary laws of the local populace. The Hanafi mazhab, recognized for its flexibility and reliance on reasoning (ijtihad), became the dominant school of law. Judges (qadis) applied principles such as ar-ra'y (personal judgment), istihsan (juridical preference), and istislah (public interest). This pragmatic approach led to a more humane legal system, evident through the leniencies applied to marginalized individuals.

## Contributions of Central Asian Islamic Scholars

Central Asia has historically produced a wealth of Islamic scholarship that has profoundly influenced legal thought within the broader Islamic world. To understand the foundations of Islamic law and its socio-legal implications today, it is essential to examine the contributions of prominent scholars from this region. Their works not only shaped theological discourse but also set legal precedents that continue to resonate in contemporary legal practices.

**Al-Zamakhshariy**, a towering figure in philology and Quranic commentary, is celebrated as the "teacher of Arabs and non-Arabs." His intellectual contributions to both theology and grammar significantly advanced Islamic scholarship during his prominent tenure at Baghdad's House of Wisdom. By synthesizing complex linguistic and theological concepts, al-Zamakhshariy laid the groundwork for subsequent generations of scholars, thereby enhancing the intellectual rigor of Islamic studies.

**Burkhonuddin al-Marginoniy** further cemented the legal legacy of Central Asia through his monumental text, *Al-Hidayah*. This work synthesized centuries of Hanafi jurisprudence into a coherent and accessible legal manual, making profound contributions to Islamic legal education. Al-Marginoniy's work remains pivotal, as it continues to be a foundational text in learning institutions, addressing legal practitioners' needs while shaping the future of Islamic jurisprudence.

Adding to this profound legacy, **Abu Bakr as-Sarakhsiy** made significant contributions with his works, *al-Mabsut* and *Sharh al-Siyar al-Kabir*. His comprehensive frameworks in both domestic and international law demonstrate remarkable depth and breadth. Notably, much of his work was produced during his imprisonment, reflecting not only his resilience but an unwavering dedication to advancing Islamic legal thought, making him an inspiration for those facing adversity in intellectual pursuits.

**Abu Zayd ad-Dabusiyy** is recognized as the founder of the science of *ilm al-khilaf*, or comparative Islamic jurisprudence. His pioneering insights established essential dialectical frameworks that allowed for systematic comparisons between different schools of Islamic law. By advocating for a nuanced understanding of legal principles, ad-Dabusiyy's work fosters a deeper comprehension of Islamic legal diversity, essential in contemporary multicultural discussions around Islamic jurisprudence.

The illustrious **Imam al-Bukhariy** is renowned for his compilation, *Sahih al-Bukhariy*, regarded as the second most authoritative text in Sunni Islam after the Qur'an. His meticulous methodology in collecting authentic hadiths not only underpins Islamic law but also enriches the spiritual fabric of Muslim communities. Born in Bukhara, his contributions encompass both spiritual and academic dimensions that have shaped religious practice across generations.

Lastly, **At-Termiziyy**, a notable student of Imam al-Bukhariy, left an indelible mark on hadith literature through his comprehensive work, *Al-Jami' al-Kabir*. His critical commentaries provided essential insights that have enhanced the understanding of hadiths, illustrating the importance of scholarly inquiry and the dissemination of knowledge in Islamic tradition.

The significance of recognizing these scholars extends beyond their historical contributions; it lies in their relevance to modern discourse. As Uzbekistan and broader Central Asia navigate contemporary challenges in legal and moral realms, the teachings and frameworks established by these scholars can inform ongoing discussions about the role of Islamic law in a secular state while fostering peace and coexistence in an increasingly interconnected world. By understanding their contributions, we gain valuable perspectives on not only historical Islamic jurisprudence but also its applications in modern governance and cultural identity in Central Asia.





## The Hanafi Mazhab and Legal Norms

With the Islamization of Central Asia, the Hanafi mazhab established itself as a dominant school of Islamic jurisprudence, integrating itself deeply into the legal framework of the region. The Hanafi jurisprudence is notable for its adaptability and reasoned interpretations, which resonate with the diverse sociocultural contexts of its followers. This flexibility has allowed it to serve a wide-ranging population, thereby ensuring its enduring relevance in contemporary legal practices.

Hanafi jurisprudence categorizes Sharia into three distinct yet interconnected areas: **Ibadat**, **Muamalat**, and **Uqubat**. Ibadat, which translates to "ritual obligations," encompasses the acts of worship that are fundamental to a Muslim's faith, including prayer, fasting, and pilgrimage. This category emphasizes the spiritual dimensions of Islamic law, outlining the obligations of believers towards their Creator.

**Muamalat**, on the other hand, pertains to legal and commercial transactions. This category governs interpersonal relations and the conduct of trade, ensuring fairness and ethical behavior within economic exchanges. The principles outlined in this domain serve to enhance social harmony and economic stability, maximizing the welfare of the community through responsible conduct in business and personal dealings.

The third category, **Uqubat**, addresses penal codes and punishments. Here, Hanafi jurisprudence provides a framework for maintaining social order through legal accountability, emphasizing justice and proportionality in legal consequences.

The sources of law within the Hanafi framework consist of the Qur'an, Sunnah, ijma (consensus), qiyas (analogy), and local customs (adat, urf, amal). The Qur'an serves as the primary source, dictating fundamental principles and values, while the Sunnah provides contextual interpretations through the practices and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad. Ijma, or consensus among scholars, reinforces community interpretation, while qiyas employs analogical reasoning to derive rulings for new circumstances that may not have direct textual references. The integration of local customs (adat, urf, amal) enhances the law's relevance, allowing it to reflect the sociocultural realities of the community it governs.

Judges in the Hanafi tradition employ various tools, including **al-ra'y** (personal judgment), **istihsan** (juridical preference), and **istislah** (public interest), to ensure justice and equity in legal rulings. These interpretative methods allow for a more nuanced application of Islamic law, accommodating the complexities of human behavior and societal needs.

Understanding the Hanafi mazhab and its legal norms is essential, as it provides insights into the foundational principles that shape not only the historical context of Islamic law in Central Asia but also its implementation in contemporary legal systems. The adaptability and pragmatism inherent in Hanafi jurisprudence promote social justice, and peacebuilding, and continue to influence the legal landscape in Uzbekistan and beyond.

## Legal and Cultural Reforms in Modern Uzbekistan

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undergone significant legal and cultural reforms, particularly under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. These reforms are pivotal in advocating for an enlightened interpretation of Islam, aiming to balance religious practices with contemporary governance and social development. Recognizing the importance of religious coexistence and cultural heritage, the government has implemented numerous initiatives to foster an environment of tolerance and inclusivity.

One notable achievement is the increased freedom of religion and participation in religious practices. This reform allows individuals greater autonomy in their spiritual observances, contributing to a more vibrant and diverse religious landscape. By facilitating this freedom, the government has sought to reclaim and modernize Uzbekistan's religious identity while ensuring that citizens can engage in their faith without undue restriction.

The establishment of the Center for Islamic Civilization in Tashkent signifies a commitment to promoting a thoughtful understanding of Islamic values within the context of modern society. This center serves as a platform for research, education, and dialogue on Islamic thought and its applications in contemporary life. Through this initiative, the government aims to cultivate a well-rounded perspective of Islam that resonates with both historical traditions and modern societal needs.

Additionally, the expansion of online Islamic education has become an essential component of these reforms. Leveraging digital technology allows for wider access to Islamic knowledge, accommodating various learners regardless of their geographical location. This approach not only supports religious education but also integrates modern educational methodologies to enhance learning outcomes, particularly among the youth. Furthermore, the government has enacted amnesty for religious prisoners, a significant move towards rectifying past injustices related to religious freedoms. This action reflects an acknowledgment of the importance of individuals' rights and the need for restorative justice within society.

In addressing concerns related to security and governance, there has been a reduction of extremism-related detentions. By focusing on rehabilitation rather than punitive measures, the state aims to create a more constructive approach to handling religious extremism, emphasizing prevention through education and community engagement.

The creation of the International Research Center of Imam Bukhari further highlights Uzbekistan's

dedication to Islamic scholarship and heritage. This center not only facilitates academic research but also promotes the study of Imam Bukhari's contributions to Islamic thought, reinforcing the country's historical significance in the development of Islamic scholarship.

The Uzbek Constitution enshrines important principles relating to religious freedom, explicitly guaranteeing freedom of religion in Article 31 and prohibiting discrimination on religious grounds in Article 18. Although Uzbekistan maintains a secular stance in governance, there is a recognition of Islam's essential role in moral and social development, reinforcing the idea that cultural identity and religious values are integral to the nation's progress. In summary, the legal and cultural reforms in modern Uzbekistan represent a strategic effort to harmonize Islamic principles with contemporary societal needs. Through these initiatives, the government seeks to foster a sense of unity that respects both individual freedoms and collective values, ultimately contributing to a more cohesive and stable society. Understanding these reforms is crucial for comprehending the dynamic interplay between religion and modernity in Uzbekistan, as they lay the groundwork for ongoing development and peacebuilding in the region.

### Conclusion

Central Asia, and particularly Uzbekistan, has long been recognized as a cradle of Islamic scholarship and jurisprudence. This rich historical legacy, shaped by the contributions of Central Asian jurists, has significantly influenced the evolution of the Hanafi school of thought, which remains a foundational pillar of Islamic legal discourse today.

The enduring relevance of the Hanafi mazhab underscores the importance of regional interpretations of Islamic law in addressing contemporary legal challenges while maintaining ties to tradition.

Moreover, Sufism has played a vital role in providing a spiritual backbone that not only shapes individual ethical behavior but also fosters community cohesion. Its emphasis on inner purification, moral integrity, and social justice has contributed significantly to the cultural and spiritual identity of Uzbekistan, reinforcing the importance of ethical conduct in both personal and communal life.

In the modern context, the application of Islamic values extends far beyond historical artifacts; these principles serve as foundational elements for future peacebuilding, legal reform, and the assertion of cultural identity in Uzbekistan. As the nation navigates the complexities of contemporary governance and societal dynamics, the integration of these values can promote harmony, tolerance, and mutual respect among diverse groups.

Recognizing this rich legacy and actively applying it with a spirit of tolerance and enlightenment are essential steps toward cultivating a just and inclusive society. By fostering dialogue and understanding between different cultural and religious perspectives, Uzbekistan can continue to build upon its historical strengths, forging a path toward a more equitable and harmonious future. Embracing the teachings of its illustrious past allows Uzbekistan not only to honor its heritage but also to play a vital role in the ongoing discourse surrounding Islamic thought and its applications in modern governance.



# Quran & the Role of Religious Leaders *in Establishing and Maintaining Friendship as a Moral Value*

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## **Abstract**

One of the most fundamental ethical dilemmas in the world today is related to the solutions to avoid hostility and enmity and to establish a culture of friendship in interpersonal and international relations. Since religious leaders can play an irreplaceable role in guiding and encouraging the world's political leaders to move towards friendship, the main question of this article is how the Holy Quran depicts this role and can this Quranic depiction provide guidance for religious leaders of our time so that they can fulfill their important mission in establishing and maintaining global friendships? This article, using two methods of inference and intuition in understanding the meanings of the verses of the Quran, and referring to the intellectual achievements of insightful commentators such as FakhR Razi and Allama Tabataba'i in interpreting the verses related to friendship in the system of the missions of the divine prophets, leads to the conclusion that the Quran, in addition to declaring the precedence and priority of creating an atmosphere free from hostility and strife over other missions of the divine leaders, in verses by recalling the actions of the prophets and religious leaders, reveals their effective roles in implementing this priority.

## **Introduction**

Many contemporary friendship researchers consider friendship to be one of the most influential factors in establishing lasting peace and

preventing and resolving international conflicts in the world. On the other hand, applied ethics researchers have found that turning to religion in the face of many of humanity's moral dilemmas can provide real and normative solutions. For this reason, the present article has attempted to address one of the most important moral dilemmas of humanity by referring to the most important religious text of Islam, the Holy Quran, namely how to eliminate and prevent the grounds for conflict and hostility and create grounds for lasting reconciliation. However, before entering into the main discussion, it is necessary to provide an explanation of the purpose of friendship in this article and the meaning of friendship as a "moral value".

In this article, we mean friendship as a concept opposite to enmity and equivalent to "being in peace" that has various levels or levels: the lowest level or level is avoiding chaos, hostility, and conflict, and the highest level or level is thinking and seeking one's own good in the light of the good and welfare of others. When we talk in this article about the priority of friendship over other missions of religious leaders in the Holy Quran, we do not mean all of its levels, but rather its lowest level and level.

As for the meaning we intend for friendship to be "as a moral value" is that friendship, according to the Holy Quran, is not a moral principle but a moral value. To find the difference between a principle and a moral value, one must refer to the texts of moral

philosophy. In short, some philosophers of ethics apply the principle to a moral act and the value to a moral attribute. In the opinion of these philosophers, principles guide us to morally correct actions; but values are the characteristics and traits that are institutionalized in our personality. Therefore, when we talk about friendship as a value in the existence of religious leaders from the perspective of the Quran, our intention is that the Quran did not limit itself to introducing the prophets as mere agents of the principle of friendship, but rather introduced them as personalities in whom friendship had permeated. You will read a further explanation of this purpose in the article, under the explanation of training moral leaders from the perspective of the Holy Quran. Perhaps all the missions that the Quran has defined for religious leaders can be summarized in three missions, which, in order of priority, are: 1. Helping to establish and maintain friendship by eliminating the grounds for hostility and hostility, 2. Guiding and encouraging moral integrity, and 3. Delivering the divine message in guiding humans to the growth that God desires. According to the teachings of the Holy Quran, the role and influence of religious leaders in eliminating the grounds and conditions for chaos, hostility, and hostility and establishing and maintaining friendship takes precedence over all their other missions. The precedence and priority of one mission over other missions means that prophets and religious leaders can refrain from carrying out other missions when they conflict with it.

## A Qur'anic Framework

Perhaps the framework that the Quran provides for the role of religious leaders in establishing and maintaining friendship can be depicted as a triangle, one side of which is the presentation of a strategy and program that prioritizes resolving conflicts and creating friendships; the second side is the training of forces to implement the said strategy and program. These forces are the prophets or religious leaders who have truly instilled in their souls the love of humanity and all creatures; and the third side is the method of implementing the program, which is stated in the Quran in the form of practical and objective measures that the prophets have taken to eliminate and prevent grounds for hostility and enmity.



Now, for each of these three sides of the triangle, we will provide observations from the Holy Quran:

### The first side: Strategy That Prioritizes Resolving Conflicts and Promoting Friendship

If we conduct an inquiring study of the role of religious leaders in creating grounds for friendship by referring to the verses of the Holy Quran, meaning that we seek the answer to the question of how to fulfill this role from the verses of this divine book, we may arrive at a three-stage or three-level answer, the first level of which is the announcement

of a program that is available to religious leaders, in which the priority is to resolve conflicts and create friendship. For this level of answer, numerous observations can be cited from the Holy Quran, of which we will suffice here with one or two examples:

#### First Example:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ ... (البقرة: 213)

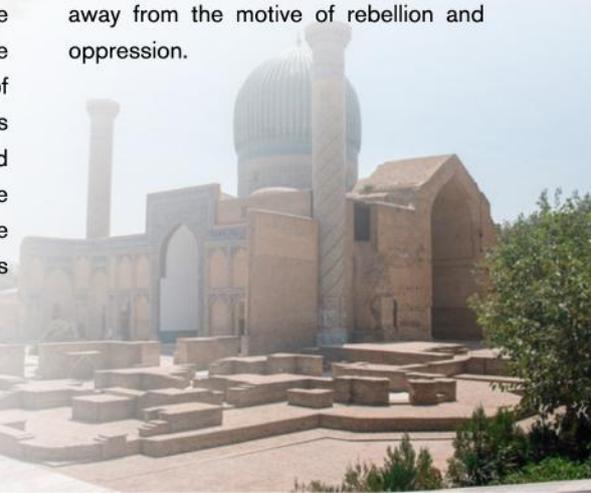
Mankind was one united nation, and Allah sent Messengers with glad tidings and warnings; and with them He sent the Book in truth, to judge between people in matters wherein they differed; but the People of the Book, after the clear Signs came to them, did not differ among themselves, except through selfish contumacy. Allah by His Grace guided the believers to the Truth, concerning that wherein they differed. For Allah guided whom He will to a path that is straight.

(Al-Baqara 2: 213)

It can be understood that in this verse, the philosophy of sending messengers and sending down books is considered to be the solution of human differences. In such a way that if people did not have differences on earth and strived for unity and friendship as God had created them, there would be no need to send prophets and religious leaders, because the origin of this difference has been the distance from the human nature of seeking friendship and the rebellious and domineering struggle over limited worldly gifts and possibilities. In the face of such differences among humans, the main program of religious leaders has been to rebuild human natural

friendships and then teach human obedience and submission to God, the Creator of the worlds.

This interpretation is confirmed by prominent commentators, including Allamah Tabataba'i in his commentary on the Weight of the Scale, where he understands from this verse that the first resolution of differences that occurred among humans was through religion, and other human regulations and laws in this regard were modeled and inspired by religion and religious teachings. However, it should not be overlooked that the above verse speaks of two types of differences: the first difference is the difference that all people are caught up in over the use of worldly gifts and seeking to benefit from them, and the second difference is the difference that, after the revelation of the divine book by the divine prophets, has affected the bearers of religion and those who have knowledge of the book of God. Our witness here is about the first difference, that the solution to resolving that difference was the revelation of friendly guidelines from God to eliminate the grounds for conflict in the use of limited worldly resources by forging just regulations and re-establishing the bonds of friendship between humans. No, the second difference is that the solution to it is for the preachers of religion to refrain from envying each other and for them to stay away from the motive of rebellion and oppression.



### Second Example:

قَالَ يَا هَازُونَ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا (92) أَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ أَ فَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي (93) قَالَ يَا بَنِ أُمَّ لِي تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَ لَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَ لَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي (94) (سوره طه: 20)

He said: " Aaron, what prevented you, when you saw they had strayed (92) from having them follow me? Did you disobey my order?"(93) He said: " My (blood) brother, do not seize me by my beard nor by my head! I dreaded you would say: 'You have brought dissension to the Children of Israel and did not observe what I said.'"(94) (Ta Ha 20:92-94)

These verses are related to the story of the apostasy of the Israelites from the religion of Moses when he returned from Mount Tur and found his people engaged in worshipping the calf. While his brother Aaron, who was also a religious leader and prophet of God, was present among that people. Although Aaron had not remained silent and had warned them of the people's misguidance, he had not done anything more. This is because maintaining the unity of the people and preventing the occurrence of differences and hostility among the people took priority over any other action. In fact, Aaron knew that in the plan that God had laid out for the guidance of mankind, preventing division took priority.

The commentators of the Quran have also confirmed this evidence with various statements. For example, Allamah Tabataba'i has explained the apology of Aaron (AS) in response to the objection of Moses (AS) as follows: If Aaron had wanted to prevent the Children of Israel from worshipping the calf and resisted their action at any cost,

they would not have obeyed him except for a few people, and this would have caused division among them, and this division would have destroyed the unity of their word, and would have turned their apparent unity into division and disagreement, and perhaps even enmity and killing of each other. While Moses himself had previously advised Aaron to be careful about reforming the Children of Israel. That is why Moses accepted Aaron's excuse and prayed for both him and himself, as recorded in Surah Al-A'raf: "My Lord, forgive me and my brother, and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful" (Surah Al-A'raf: 151).

Qurtubi also stated in his commentary:

"The meaning of

إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ is that I feared that if I left them or rebelled against them, some would follow me and some would remain in their worship of the calf, and this situation would perhaps lead to bloodshed and war, and I feared that you would blame me for that conflict and war."

And Fakhr al-Razi, while confirming this point, explains that: "Moses had ordered Aaron to lead the people towards him, provided that this move did not lead to corruption in the people. For this reason, Aaron, in response to Moses' rebuke, says: I was afraid that you would say why you did not heed my words and instructions." Fakhr al-Razi then quotes a statement from Imam Abu al-Qasim al-Ansari who said: Guidance is more beneficial than indication because the magicians in Pharaoh's court were far from faith and did not see except one verse and believed, and after that they endured severe punishment in the world and did not abandon their faith. But the people of Moses, despite seeing the staff turn into a dragon, and seeing it swallow everything the magicians had gathered, and witnessing the magicians confess that

what Moses had done was not magic but was a divine command, and also seeing nine miracles with their own eyes over a long period of time, and then the sea splitting into twelve channels, and how God Almighty saved them from drowning and destroyed their numerous enemies, they saw all of this. Then, with all these circumstances and observations, when they came out of the sea and saw a group worshipping a calf, they asked Moses: "Make for us a god like their god." And when they heard the sound of a calf, they worshipped it. This shows that the intention and the result are not achieved by implication but by guidance.

Although Fakhr al-Razi does not give any explanation about what is meant by guidance which is better than implication, with a little careful consideration of the explanation he gave in the form of an example, it can be seen that in implication there is a kind of imposition of the result on the signified as if it forces him to accept the result; while in guidance, without using any imposition, the ground and context for achieving the result is simply provided for the guided. With this description, it can be seen that guidance is a more friendly method than implication. In this way, this point can also be added to confirm the priority of friendly methods in the guidance programs of prophets and religious leaders.

### Second Side: Prophets as Compassionate and Altruistic Leaders

Referring to the verses of the Quran that describe the personalities of the prophets as the most prominent examples of religious leaders, it shows that the prophets were personalities with the highest benevolent and altruistic qualities and that they were the



best forces trained to carry out the program of friendship throughout the earth. The image that the Quran portrays of the humanitarian and conciliatory ethics of the prophets as religious leaders is very distinguished and unique and in this respect can compete with the image depicted in some sacred texts such as the Torah. In this observation, two examples suffice:

#### First Example:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبَشْرِى قَالُوا  
 سَلَامًا قَالَ سَلَامٌ فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ جَاءَ بِعِجْلٍ حَنِيذٍ  
 (69) فَلَمَّا رَأَى أَيْدِيَهُمْ لَا تَصِلُ إِلَيْهِ نَكِرَهُمْ وَ  
 أَوْجَسَ مِنْهُمْ خِيفَةً قَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى  
 قَوْمٍ لُوطٍ (70) وَ أَمْرَأَتُهُ قَائِمَةٌ فَصَحَّكَتْ  
 فَبَشَّرْنَاهَا بِإِسْحَاقَ وَمِنْ وَرَاءِ إِسْحَاقَ يَعْقُوبَ  
 (71) فَلَمَّا دَهَبَ عَنْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ الرَّوْعُ وَ جَاءَتْهُ  
 الْبَشْرِى يُجَادِلُنَا فِي قَوْمِ لُوطٍ (74) إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ  
 لَخَلِيمٌ أَوَْاهٌ مُنِيبٌ (75) (سوره هود ١١)

Our messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings; **they said, Peace! Peace, he said and presently he brought a roasted calf** (69) And when he saw their hands not reaching towards it, he was suspicious of them and conceived a fear of them They said, Fear not; we have been sent to the people of Lot (70) And his wife was standing by; she laughed, therefore We gave her the glad tidings of Isaac, and, after Isaac, of Jacob (Isaac's son) (71) She said, Woe is me! Shall I bear, being an old woman, and this my husband is an old man? This assuredly is a strange thing (72) They said, what, dost thou marvel at God's Command? The mercy of God and His blessings be upon you, O people of the House! Surely, He is All laudable, All glorious (73) **So, when the awe departed from Abraham and the good tidings came to him, he was disputing with Us concerning the people of Lot (74) Abraham was truly clement compassionate, penitent (75) (Hud 11:69-75)**

The evidence of our words in these verses is noticeable in two places: First, where Abraham, without having sufficient knowledge of the newcomers, welcomes them as his guests and treats them with the best food. This means that in Abraham's moral spirit there was no difference between acquaintances and strangers, and no difference in this regard should be made among human beings.

And second, where when Abraham (peace be upon him) realized that these people were angels and were going to bring punishment on the people of Lot, he began to argue with God so that he could save this misguided people from divine punishment and destruction. This moral characteristic is so valuable that God continues to praise Abraham in this way: Indeed, Abraham is very patient and often sighs and cries to God for the salvation of people and is very kind.

In his commentary on the sixty-ninth verse of this Surah, which is about Abraham (AS) receiving angels who had come to him in the form of unknown persons, Fakhr al-Razi explains: "For fifteen nights, no guest had arrived for Abraham (AS), and he was saddened by this. So when the angels came, he saw them as guests he had never seen before, so he hurriedly prepared a roasted calf for them."

The great commentators of the Quran have considered the seventy-fifth verse of this Surah as the basis for the explanation of the previous verse, which seeks to explain why Abraham (AS) argued about the people of Lot, and this explanation is made with a clear and explicit praise of Abraham (AS) and it is said: "That noble man argued about those people because he was a meek and patient prophet and did not rush the

punishment upon the wrongdoing people. He hoped that God's success would come upon them, that they would reform and be steadfast. He was a prophet who sighed, that is, he suffered greatly from the misguidance of the people and the destruction that would befall them, and he turned to God Almighty for salvation." It is also narrated from Imam Hassan Mujtaba (AS) that he said: I do not see any justification for Abraham's words unless he wanted to do something so that the people of Lot would remain and not be destroyed.

Allama Tabataba'i, in explaining the aforementioned hadith, has quoted Imam Hassan Mujtaba (AS): "In the fact that Imam Hassan (AS) said: 'I do not see any explanation except that he wanted to do something so that the people of Lot would remain and not be destroyed,' the question arises as to where in the story this matter is used?" We may say: The phrase: "Indeed, Abraham was forbearing and forbearing," is used, because this sentence is more appropriate to say that Abraham (peace be upon him) meant by that statement the request for the survival of the people of Lot, not the Prophet Lot himself. In addition, the sentence "They argue with us about the people of Lot" and the sentence "Indeed, they will be given a punishment that will not be returned" speak of the destruction of the people. In the first sentence, Abraham (peace be upon him) argues about the destruction of the people, and in the second sentence, the angels inform about the destruction of the people in the near future, and these two sentences are relevant to the request for the survival of Lot's people.

### Second Example:

فِيمَا رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ وَ لَوْ كُنْتَ فَظًّا غَلِيظَ الْقَلْبِ لَانْفَضُّوا مِنْ حَوْلِكَ فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَ اسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَ شَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ فَإِذَا عَزَمْتَ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَوَكِّلِينَ (159) (سوره آل عمران ٣)

It is by Allah's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely, they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who trust in Him. (159) (Aal-i-Imran 3:159)

This verse refers to the way God trained the Prophet of Islam as the most prominent divine prophet and religious leader, and prepared him for moral virtues that are centered on love and friendship. Such virtues as gentleness and kindness in the face of disobedience and inappropriate protests that were occasionally made by his followers, and for example, due to the sadness they felt from some unfortunate results of some struggles, they attributed those results to the way he managed things and protested to him, saying: You have made us so desperate and miserable. But the Prophet not only did not respond to their impatience and protests with rudeness, but he also consulted with them in important matters. God Almighty also encourages him to continue his same virtue.

### Third Side: Action plan

According to the Quranic accounts, the practical actions of the prophets as religious leaders all indicate that they prioritized building friendships and eliminating enmity over other missions they had. Here, we will suffice with looking at two or three examples:

### First Example:

Prophet Joseph endured the pain of imprisonment, not because Zulaykha's request was simply against the divine commandments, but because Zulaykha's request was an example of treachery and oppression, which are two hostile and unfriendly acts. This meaning shows that avoiding treachery and injustice that ignite the fire of conflict and hostility took precedence over the concern of opposing the divine command in Joseph's (PBUH) plan of action. In response to Zulaykha's false request, without mentioning that God Almighty does not like such an act and has forbidden it, he implicitly teaches Zulaykha that one should never prepare the ground for hostility by committing treachery. This meaning can be understood by looking at the twenty-third verse of Surah Mubarak Yusuf that says:

وَرَأَوْنَهُ الَّتِي هُوَ فِي بَيْتِهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ وَعَلَّقَتِ الْأَبْوَابَ وَقَالَتْ هَيْبْ لَكَ قَالَ مَعَاذَ اللَّهِ إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ

"The woman in whose house he was, solicited him. She closed the doors and said, 'Come!!' He said, 'God forbid! Indeed He is my Lord; He has given me a good abode. Indeed the wrongdoers are not felicitous.'

Most commentators of the Quran have understood the same meaning from this verse, according to which, since the pronoun "Anna" in the sentence "Anna Rabbi Ahsan Mathawai" means "He is the owner of my blessing and has honored me" refers to the Aziz of Egypt, and the word "Lord" is used in its broad sense (which is also used for things other than God), and what is meant is the "Aziz of Egypt" who had respected

and honored Joseph and had advised his wife to "honor his station" meaning to honor his position. It is clear that according to this meaning, the point that we have cited from this verse can be clearly proven that the verse indicates the priority of teaching the avoidance of betrayal and oppression (which are manifestations of hostility) over the other prophetic missions of Prophet Joseph (PBUH).

However, some commentators have preferred that the word "Rab" in the verse means God, because the word "Allah" mentioned next to it causes the pronoun to return to "Allah", and in this case the meaning becomes: "I seek refuge in God, God who is my Lord and has honored my status, and every blessing I have is from Him."

It is worth mentioning that according to this second meaning, the implication that we have inferred from the verse is not ruled out. Because even if Joseph (peace be upon him) declared the reason for his avoidance of betrayal and oppression to be avoidance of disobedience to God, it does not contradict the fact that avoidance of betrayal and oppression has priority in the set of divine commandments over the commandments that command the spiritual elevation of man.

Then, in prison, Joseph (AS) befriends two other prisoners, both of whom were atheists, and he has such a sincere friendship with them that they can share their most private secrets with him and ask him for guidance in interpreting their dreams. This story is described in verse thirty-six of Surah Mubarak Yusuf in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

وَدَخَلَ مَعَهُ السَّجْنَ فَتَيَانِ قَالَ أَحَدُهُمَا إِنِّي  
 أَرَانِي أُعْصِرُ خَمْرًا وَقَالَ الْآخَرُ إِنِّي أَرَانِي أَحْمِلُ  
 فَوْقَ رَأْسِي خُبْرًا تَأْكُلُ الطَّيْرُ مِنْهُ نَبِّئْنَا بِتَأْوِيلِهِ إِنَّا  
 نَرَاكَ مِنَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ

'There entered the prison two youths along with him. One of them said, 'I dreamt that I am pressing grapes.' The other said, 'I dreamt that I am carrying bread on my head from which the birds are eating.' 'Inform us of its interpretation,' [they said], 'for indeed we see you to be a virtuous man.'

In explaining the connection between the request for dream interpretation and Joseph's being a good person, commentators have stated: Because they had seen that Joseph was a pioneer in doing good deeds in prison, visiting their sick and nursing them, comforting their sorrowful ones, and if someone was cramped, he would make room for them, and if he was distraught, he would provide a place for them to gather their thoughts, they realized that he was one of the good people. Since people typically consider good people to have pure hearts and purified souls, they believe that such individuals, due to their inner purity, may understand things that others are unable to understand.

Joseph's behavior towards his atheist comrades in prison shows that this religious leader sought to build friendships with others before anything else and postponed the expression of religious teachings until later.

### Second Example:

The Quran introduces almost all of the divine prophets as brothers of their people. One example is Shu'ayb, who was the brother of the people of Madyan, and he invites them to worship God in such a way that they know that the requirement for worshipping God is to

observe moral considerations and avoid symbols of hostility. Where in the eighty-fifth verse of the blessed Surah Al-A'raf it states:

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا  
 اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ قَدْ جَاءَتْكُمْ بَيِّنَةٌ مِنْ  
 رَبِّكُمْ فَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَالْمِيزَانَ وَلَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ  
 أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا  
 ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

To Midian [ We sent ] **their brother**

Shu, ayb. He said:" My people, worship God [ Alone]! You have no other deity besides Him. A token has come to you from your Lord, so offer full measure and weight, and do not undersell people in their dealings nor spoil things on earth once it has been set right; that will be best for you if you are believers. (85) (Al-Araf 7:85)

In this action, Shu'ayb (AS) calls upon his people to two acts that will build friendship and eliminate enmity: one is to pay the right weight and measure when trading, and the other is to maintain social order, which guarantees the security and stability of the society. From this call, it can be understood that paying the rights and ensuring the stability of the society must be manifested before expressing faith, because it is a sign of the realization of faith, and faith without these manifestations of friendship is not true faith.

### Third Example:

The amazing act of Prophet Lot (peace be upon him) in offering his daughters to his people to marry them so that they would be saved from evil deeds, reformed, and turned towards friendship. The seventy-eighth verse of the blessed Surah Hud describes this act of Lot (PBUH):

وَجَاءَهُ قَوْمُهُ يُهْرَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ وَمِنْ قَبْلُ كَانُوا  
 يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ قَالَ يَا قَوْمِ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي هُنَّ  
 أَطْهَرُ لَكُمْ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلَا تُخْزَوْنَ فِي صَيْفِي  
 أَلَيْسَ مِنْكُمْ رَجُلٌ رَشِيدٌ

His people came hurrying up to him; while just before they had been performing such evil deeds! He said:" My people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. Heed God and do not shame me through my guests. Is there not a normal man among you?"(78) (Hud 11:78)

The story goes that after the divine angels met with Abraham (AS) and informed him of the punishment that was to befall the people of Lot, and he argued with them about not allowing the punishment to come, and that argument did not reach a conclusion, they set off for the house of Lot (AS), while still in the form of humans who had come to the party of Lot (AS) after Abraham (AS). As soon as Lot's people learned of the arrival of the young and strange men, they rushed to Lot's house and intended to sexually harass them. When Lot (AS) saw that the people had all agreed to commit indecent behavior against the guests and that his preaching and harsh words could no longer dissuade them from their work, he decided to offer them his daughters in marriage, in order to prevent them from committing immorality and to fulfill their purpose through lawful means.

The interpretation that we have made of this incident about Prophet Lot not sparing his honor and reputation to correct the grounds of enmity among his people is in accordance with the understanding that the daughters meant the relative and real daughters of the Prophet. Otherwise, if we, like some commentators, understand the

daughters to mean all the daughters and women of the tribe whom the Prophet, in accordance with the custom of the chief of the tribe, referred to as his daughters, our interpretation loses its validity.

The commentators who have considered the daughters to mean the daughters of all the people of Lot have argued that the number of real and relative daughters of Lot (AS) was not more than two or three, and it was practically impossible for him to marry them to all the men who had invaded Lot's (AS) house. Besides, it is unlikely that a person would be willing to offer his daughters to a mob, and this is not befitting of the people of honor, let alone the great prophets of God.

However, this argument, as commentators such as Allamah Tabataba'i have acknowledged, is contrary to the apparent meaning of the verse and is distorted. What is understood from the apparent meaning of the verse is that the daughters meant were the real and relative daughters of Prophet Lot (AS). In response to the argument of the opposing commentators, it can be said: It is not known whether the number of attackers in Lot's house were all men from his tribe, perhaps, as some commentators have suggested, they were only a few men from his tribe. Moreover, was the number of angels who entered Lot's house as guests and the attackers intended for them the same number of attackers, so that the number of Lot's daughters must be equal to their number? According to the narrations, the number of angels was not more than four. Apart from the fact that great commentators such as Allamah Tabataba'i have doubted that the number of daughters of Prophet Lot

(PBUH) was limited to two or three, this is because there is no evidence from the Word of God or any reliable witness from history to prove it, except for the report of the Torah, which is not reliable.

Therefore, our interpretation of the verse seems more correct, and based on that, Lot's suggestion was because he wanted to show his utmost sacrifice here, that he was even willing to marry his daughters to his guests in order to fight against sin and also to preserve their dignity. Perhaps, with this unparalleled sacrifice, their dormant consciences would awaken and they would return to the path of truth, turn to friendship, and eliminate the religion of strife and enmity.

As for the answer to the question of how it is possible that Lot (AS) offered his pure and faithful daughters to a group of thugs, it is that in fact, his offer was not an unconditional offer, but rather it was conditional on the people's faith and acceptance of the path of friendship and guidance, and with this offer, he wanted to show his utmost interest in guiding them.

Just as the offering of daughters was not unconditional, but rather was bound and conditioned by marriage, and this condition is understood from the fact that in the verse, the sentence "These are the ones you will marry" is bound by the clause "This is pure for you," so that, as Allamah Tabataba'i has understood: "It is understood that Lot (peace be upon him) meant by offering his daughters that people marry them, not that they satisfy their desires through fornication. Far be it from the position of a prophet of God to make such a proposal, because there is no purity in fornication."

So, this action of Prophet Lot (AS) shows that religious leaders did not spare any effort to eliminate enmity and reform the morals of their people, even risking their own reputation.

### **Conclusion:**

1. Based on the Quranic triangle model of establishing friendship presented in this article, both the program for establishing friendship, the method of training competent executors for that program, and instructions for implementing that program can be derived from the themes of the verses of the Holy Quran;
2. According to the priority system that can be understood from the Holy Quran in the missions of divine prophets and religious leaders: Without creating grounds for friendship and removing grounds for hostility, the mission of religious leaders cannot be accomplished; therefore, in a situation where the world is suffering from human enmity, it should not matter to religious leaders at all what religion or creed human beings follow; rather, in such circumstances, the first and fundamental priority of religious leaders should be to focus on removing grounds for hostility and creating grounds for human friendship;
3. Religions should strive to morally educate leaders who create and strengthen inner and true benevolence, not only as a requirement for observing moral principles and regulations, but also as an internal and institutionalized value. Only such leaders can fulfill the true divine mission;
4. Religious leaders should not abandon any action or effort in the cause of world peace and friendship, and in this path they should not become tired, discouraged, or disappointed in any way, and they should pay close attention to this Quranic promise: In the end, the earth will be inherited by the righteous and peace-loving servants of God.

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# The Baskerville Institute



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