

Narratives of Crisis in the Final Reign of Uthman bin ‘Affan: An Evaluation

Asyiqin Ab Halim*

Abstract

The reign of Uthman bin ‘Affan can broadly be divided into two distinct phases. The first phase was marked by peace, harmony, prosperity, and significant progress among the Muslim community. In contrast, the second phase witnessed increasing turmoil, unrest, disputes, and dissension, culminating in serious discord among Muslims. Historians and scholars have offered varying interpretations regarding the issues that emerged during this period, their underlying causes, and Uthman’s responses to them. This study aims to examine the major problems that arose during Uthman’s reign, including the accusations directed against him, the contributing factors behind these challenges, and the measures he employed to address them, particularly his approach to the rebellion and those he faced. This qualitative research based primarily on primary and secondary sources for data collection and analysis. The findings indicate that the accusations against Uthman were largely unfounded, as he possessed legitimate justifications for his actions. Nonetheless, a combination of internal and external factors escalated tension beyond control, ultimately leading to the assassination of the Caliph.

Keywords: Uthman, rebellion, issues, accusations, reign

Introduction

During his reign, Caliph Uthman governed the state for almost 12 years. Some suggest that his first six years were peaceful and efficient,¹ and the people favoured him more than Umar because of his kind and tender nature, similar to Abu Bakr’s. However, he still adopted Umar’s policies in his government.² Unfortunately, the last phase of his reign was plagued with problems, and disputes and disunity among Muslims arose, leading to disorder and lawlessness which eventually resulted in his murder.

The selection of Uthman b. ‘Affan as the successor of Umar al-Khattab had a direct impact on Muslim society. Muslims began to split, and the situation became uncontrollable after his murder. Before his death, the former Caliph Umar, who was depicted as unable to choose the rightful successor, had appointed six candidates for the position. He instructed them to be discussed through a council, and a nomination was to be made within three days after his death.³ Four of the candidates withdrew themselves from the election, leaving Uthman and Ali as the only contenders.⁴ This was based on the majority choice of the Muslims and Companions who leaned towards Uthman, and his promise to govern the government unconditionally according to the Qur’an and Hadith, as well as the examples and principles of the precursors of the two Caliphs.⁵ Thus, Uthman received the oath of allegiance from the Muslims at the age of seventy and was officially announced as the third Caliph on 4 Muharram 24 AH/10 November 644 AD.⁶

Uthman’s Achievement During the First Phase of His Reign

During the initial period of his rule, Caliph Uthman accomplished several significant feats. One such achievement was successfully managing the trial of Ubaidullah bin Umar, who had been found guilty of wrongly killing three non-Muslims and their family on grounds that they were plotting to assassinate his father, Umar al-Khattab. While some Companions believed that Ubaidullah should face the death penalty for these killings without substantial evidence, Caliph’ Uthman made a prudent decision by ordering him to pay blood money as compensation for those who were killed - taking on this

*Asyiqin Ab Halim (corresponding author) (PhD), Senior Lecturer, Academy of Islamic Studies, Universiti Malaya, Malaya. Email: aasyiq5@um.edu.my.

¹ Majid Ali Khan, Majid, *The Pious Caliphs* (Islamic Book Trust., 2001), 127.

² S.M. Imamuddin, *Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs* (Najmah and Sons Ltd., 1965), 171.

³ Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, 119 and S.M. Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 169.

⁴ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 169

⁵ S. Khuda Bukhsh, *A History of the Islamic People* (Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1983), 67

⁶ Al-Tabari, *The History of al-Tabari Volume XV*, trans. R.Stephen Humphreys (State University of New York Press, 1990), 1, S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 170.

responsibility as the leader at that time rather than executing' Ubaidullah. Moreover,' Uthman even assisted in covering part of the payment from his own funds when' Ubaidullah could not afford it. This act was commended by Muslims for its generosity and lawful preservation of a Muslim's life.

During his reign, Uthman initiated the standardisation of the Qur'an manuscript. He ordered the compilation of a standardised version and multiple duplicates to be circulated throughout various provinces. This was done to prevent any confusion or disputes that may arise when reading and reciting the Qur'an, especially in territories outside of the Arab region where a significant number of non-Arabs had converted to Islam. Prior to this, there was only one copy of the Qur'an compiled by Zayd b. Thabit, which was under the possession of Hafsa bint Umar since the time of Abu Bakr. This made it difficult for other Muslims to refer to it. Additionally, differences in recitation from one region to another had created conflicts and disagreements among Muslims, where each group claimed their recitation was the correct one. To address this issue, the Caliph ordered Zayd b. Thabit and other Companions to create a standardised version of the Qur'an encompassing all the recitations that were allowed according to the language of Quraysh. This version was then distributed to various provinces, and Uthman became known as the Jam'ul Qur'an,' meaning the Compiler of the Qur'an due to his idea and great contribution.⁷

During the first phase of his period, Muslims witnessed significant expansion of their territory from Maghrib in the west to Ghani and Kabul in the east.⁸ During this military campaign, the suppression of the rebellion in Muslim territory led to further expansion. The conquest included Azerbaijan, Armenia, North Africa, as well as Khurasan and Tabaristan. Additionally, it marked the launch of the first Muslim fleet under Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan's leadership which later resulted in the conquest of Anatolia, Cyprus, Rhodes and Sicily. This turned out to be one of the largest Muslim conquests since Umar's time and significantly expanded Muslim territory.

The Caliph had enlarged the grand square of Ka'bah and renovated the Mosque of the Prophet. With an increasing number of Muslims but limited space in the Prophet's Mosque and the surrounding area of Ka'bah, the Caliph decided to expand them. The renovation started in 29H, but it faced disagreement and intolerance from some Muslims and Companions.⁹ Despite this, a better structure made of concrete was built, including walls and a roof, which later proved to be very beneficial for the Muslim community.

The Last Phase of the Reign of Caliph Uthman

The final phase of Caliph Uthman's reign is a topic of debate among historians due to the 'First Fitna' or Great Discord among Muslims that arose during this time. This period is considered by many as the start of the Great Discord (Fitna Kubra) within Muslim society, which eventually led to Uthman's murder and the first civil war in Muslim history, known as the Battle of the Camel and the Siffin. During this time, many accusations were made against Uthman's policies. Numerous criticisms were levelled against him for introducing schemes that contradicted the principles of Islam, which he should not have removed. Syed Ahmad Khan accused Uthman of not only deviating from the examples set by Abu Bakr and Umar but also "disregarding divine law," despite promising to govern with an unconditional policy if selected as Caliph.¹⁰ Most of the accusations against him were insubstantial, but Uthman responded with strong arguments regarding the policies he had introduced. Below are the main criticisms levelled against Uthman's government in response to these allegations.

Criticism on Burning the Material of the Qur'an

During the time of Uthman, a standardisation of the Qur'an was compiled to ensure uniformity of recitations. Several copies were made and circulated to different provinces in order to provide people with authentic copies to refer to. All other materials of the Qur'an which were written individually since the time of the Prophet and Abu Bakr, apart from the authentic copies, were ordered to be burnt by the Caliph.¹¹ This was done to avoid any confusion and disputes among Muslims concerning the recitation

⁷ Majid Ali Khan, Majid, *The Pious Caliphs*, 132

⁸ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 179

⁹ Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, 148

¹⁰ S. Khuda Bukhsh, *A History of the Islamic People*, 68

¹¹ M. M. Al-Azami, *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation* (UK Islamic Academy, 2003), 91.

and manuscript of the Qur'an, and to focus on the authentic duplicates compiled by trusted individuals. As Muslims reached and opened Azerbaijan and Armenia, the people there were taught to recite al-Qur'an in their own dialect as it seemed quite difficult for them to leave their native language behind. Yet, it has caused differences in pronunciation, subsequently led to dispute and conflict within them. Hence, Hudhaifa bin al-Yaman has directly went to meet Uthman from Azerbaijan and asked the Caliph to take action upon this situation before Muslims differ in reciting the Qur'an as the Christians and Jews differ of their Book.¹² The action of Uthman in burning or destroying the old copies of the Qur'an has been explained in detail by Umar bin Shabba, narrating through Sawwar bin Shabib, where he reports,

“Going in to see Ibn al-Zubair in a small group, I asked him why Uthman destroyed all the old copies of the Qur'an...He replied, “During Umar reign, an excessively talkative man approached the Caliph, and told him that the people were differing in their pronunciation of the Qur'an. Umar resolved therefore to collect all copies of the Qur'an and standardised their pronunciation, but he suffered that fatal stabbing before he could carry the matter any further. During Uthman's reign this same man came to remind him of the issue, so Uthman commissioned [his independent] Mushaf. Then he sent me to [the Prophet's widow] A'isha to retrieve the parchments upon which the Prophet had dictated the Qur'an in its entirety. The independently-prepared Mushaf was then checked against these parchments, and after the correction of all errors he ordered that all other copies of the Qur'an be destroyed.¹³

However, this act was criticised by people, including Ibn Mas'ud, who was against burning the words of God.¹⁴ Additionally, it was exploited by the enemies of Islam, specifically the Sabaites, to create further unrest by accusing Uthman of burning the sacred book. As a result, people who lived far from Madinah and the Caliph received wrong information regarding the actions of the Caliph.

It appears that the action taken by the Caliph was correct. If the unauthentic version of the Qur'an remained in someone's possession, it would create confusion and the person who had the manuscript would claim to have the right one. Ali agreed with Uthman's decision and stated that he would have done the same thing if he was in Uthman's position.¹⁵ Therefore, the accusation made against Uthman's action during Ali's period was unjustified and rejected due to the strong reasoning given by Uthman.

Accusation for Giving One-fifth of the Booty Share in North Africa to Abdullah Ibn Abi Sarh and Giving Money to His Kinsmen

In the beginning, the Caliph offered a reward to Abdullah b. Abi Sarh to motivate him to conquer land in North Africa. After Abdullah b. Abi Sarh successfully triumphed over North Africa, Uthman fulfilled his promise and gave him one-fifth of the state's booty share. However, some people started criticising him for giving away a share that legally belonged to him. Despite explaining that he had the right to give it to his governor as the share belonged to him as the Caliph, the majority still rejected it. As a result, Uthman requested that Abdullah return the rewards.¹⁶

He was charged with enriching his relatives with wealth and honour, but he claimed that he never used public funds for their benefit. All the money he spent on them was from his own pocket. He admitted to favouring his kinsmen, but argued that there was nothing wrong with this as long as he was also just to others.¹⁷ Furthermore, this accusation came after he had lost much of his wealth, which he had previously used to help his kinsmen and the people during the time of the Prophet and two previous Caliphs. At that time, no one had accused him of wrongdoing. His response showed that he believed his actions were not wrong and that the accusation was unfounded.

Accusation of Pointing His Relatives as the Governors and Official in the Government

This is the main accusation against Uthman, which is thought to have caused problems during the last phase of his reign. He was criticised for removing the previous governors and appointing new people from his own kinsmen. For instance, Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, his foster brother, replaced Amr b. al-'As as the governor in Egypt. Walid b. 'Uqbah, who was related to Uthman from his mother's side, became

¹² Ibid., 87

¹³ Ibid., 91.

¹⁴ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 193

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 190

¹⁷ Fazi Ahmad, *Othman the Third Caliph* (SH. Muhammad Ashraf, 1966), 66

the governor in Kufah. Sa'id b. al-As, Uthman's relative, later replaced Walid b. 'Uqbah in Kufah. Abdullah b. Amir, Uthman's cousin, was the governor in Basrah, and Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan, Uthman's relative, was the governor in Syria.¹⁸

Although most of the administrators during Uthman's reign were from his own family, they were still competent and skilled in their roles. They proved their abilities by expanding the Muslim empire's territory before and during their time as governors. Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh conquered North Africa (Tripoli and Cyprus), Sa'id b. al-As took over Tabaristan and Armenia, Abdullah b. 'Amir occupied Kabul, Harat, Sijistan and Nishapur, and Mu'awiyah led the conquest of Cyprus and Rhodes Island.¹⁹ Additionally, he introduced the first Muslim fleet. If they had been weak in administration, it could have been a valid reason for criticism.

It is crucial for any government to have officials who are efficient, experienced and loyal to their leaders. Uthman found these qualities in his kinsmen, and the same approach was adopted by Ali b. Abi Talib when he became the Caliph.²⁰ Uthman would reject any complaints and accusations against his governors if he favoured them, but he listened to the complaints and took action when they were found guilty. For example, Walid b. Uqbah was removed from his position as governor in Kufah due to reports that he was drunk.²¹ Assidiqi and Priin Putra shared the similar views where Uthman took action against Uqbah once he had made mistakes though he was a relative of Uthman as Uthman chose the governors based on ability, not on kinship.²² In other words, the idealism of Uthman in choosing the governors was based on their capability to become leaders. It is also argued that Uthman would have granted the request of his adopted son, Muhammad b. Hudhaifah, to become the governor if the relative factor was considered. However, he rejected it because Muhammad b. Hudhaifah was not fit for such a position at that time.

Regarding the issue of replacing the previous governor with a new one, who was mostly selected from among his relatives, it was done for specific reasons. For instance, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was replaced by 'Abdullah b. Amir in Basrah because he was accused of being extravagant and biased towards the Quraysh.²³ Regarding the issue of replacing the previous governor with a new one, who was mostly selected from among his relatives, it was done for specific reasons. For instance, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari was replaced by 'Abdullah b. Amir in Basrah because he was accused of being extravagant and biased towards the Quraysh. According to Imamuddin, initially, Abu Musa al-Ash'ari had appointed his own candidate in 29 H/ 642-650 AD. However, as he turned out to be incompetent, 'Abdullah bin 'Amir, who was a cousin of the Caliph was appointed as the new governor of Basrah.²⁴

Moreover, 'Amr b. al-'As was replaced by Abdullah b. Abi Sarh in Egypt. Reports suggested that 'Amr b. al-'As mistreated the dhimmis during his suppression of the rebellion in Alexandria by selling women and children into slavery, which displeased the Caliph and contradicted Islamic teachings on how to treat enemies during war.²⁵ Additionally, he failed to increase state revenue despite building new canals there; in contrast, Abdullah b. Abi Sarh managed to raise state income from 12 million dinars to 14 million dinars after assuming office as governor.²⁶ These circumstances provided solid grounds for Uthman's decision to replace 'Amr bin al-As with Abdullah b. Abi Sarh as the governor of Egypt.

During the reign of Uthman, Mughirah b. Shu'bah was replaced by Sa'ad b. Abi Waqqas as the governor of Kufah because Mughirah did not perform well in his job. Sa'ad had previously held the position and was a better candidate. However, he was later dismissed due to a crisis between him and Ibn Mas'ud, who was in charge of Bayt al-Mal. Sa'ad had borrowed a large sum of money from Bayt al-Mal but was unable to repay it on time. He was found guilty and replaced by Walid b. 'Uqbah, a strong administrator who managed to suppress any rebellion in Kufah. However, due to his strictness, his enemies, mainly the Sabaites, made a false accusation that he was drunk. As a result, he was discharged

¹⁸ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 186-187.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p 188

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p 190

²¹ *Ibid.*, p 187. Taha Husain, *Fitnah Terbesar dalam Sejarah Islam*, (Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015), 126.

²² Muhammad Raqib Assidiqi and Grand Colin Amdhana Priin Putra, "Historical Analysis of Caliph Uthmān bin 'Affān's Policy (Period 24 AH-29 AH)," *ALJIT: An-Nur International Journal of Islamic Thought* 2, no. 1 (2024): 47.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 185

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 185-186

by the Caliph, and Sa'id b. al-As became the new governor. He too was later replaced by Abu Musa al-Ash'ari due to demands from the insurgents who caused rebellion in Kufah.

Overall, the reasons for the replacement of governors during Uthman's reign were justified and not based on familial ties. However, later on, Uthman attempted to appease discontented individuals by replacing governors due to their complaints. If the governors, such as 'Amr b. al-As, Sa'ad b. Abi Waqqas, and Abu Musa al-'Ash'ari, had not faced any crises with the Caliph or the people, they would have remained in their positions, as did Mu'awiyah b. Abi Sufyan in Syria. Uthman's main priority was to find a qualified person to rule the provinces, and not necessarily to choose someone from his clan. In fact, many members of his clan had proved themselves to be excellent administrators in expanding the Muslim territory. The accusations made against Uthman were created to blame him for the problems that arose during the latter part of his rule, as stated by Imamuddin.²⁷ It is important to note that the issue in question was only brought up towards the end of Uthman's reign. However, the governors appointed by him had been ruling their provinces since the beginning of his reign. This suggests that the criticism is more likely intended to discredit Uthman's leadership rather than serve any constructive purpose.

Maltreatment to the Companion

There was a disagreement between Uthman and Abu Dhar al-Ghifary. Some writers claimed that Abu Dhar was "banished from Madinah to a lonely oasis in central Arabia".²⁸ However, the reality of the situation was that he chose to withdraw from the world when it became too luxurious and wealthy for his liking. As a Companion who had lived during the time of the Prophet, he was saddened by the extravagance and comfort of the people and wanted them to feel the same way. Despite giving sermons on this matter in Syria and Madinah, his views were generally rejected by the community. Uthman, who had a different view, tried to discuss the matter with him, but was unsuccessful. As a result, Abu Dhar left Madinah and settled in a small village called Rabadhah.²⁹ However, it was reported that Uthman had given him some camels and two servants to look after him, which confirmed that there was no mistreatment of the Companions by Uthman.³⁰

Rebellion and Movements Against Uthman

During the reign of Uthman, there were several rebellions and movements against him. One prominent advocate of these movements was Abdullah b. Saba', also known as Ibn Sawda' or Ibn Saba'. He was originally a Jew who converted to Islam with the intention of creating disputes and chaos among Muslims.³¹ To achieve his objective, he used two methods. First, he spread the belief that Uthman was not the rightful person to be the Caliph, but rather Ali was, as Ali was the messenger or Wasi' of the Prophet, just as Haron was the Wasi' of the Prophet Moses.³² Second, he made false accusations against the government of Uthman, claiming that there were nepotism and partisanship in the appointment of governors who were his relatives. He also alleged that the government did not take any action against offenders.³³ Moreover, any disagreement or dispute among Muslims, especially between the governors and the people, was exploited by them to create enmity and hostility. Consequently, people began to believe in their misinformation and opposed the Caliph.

Their movement began in Kufah, Basrah, and Fustat, except in Damascus where Mu'awiyah strictly controlled the situation. They demanded that the governors meet their criteria: weak and less strict, so they could move freely and spread their propaganda. For example, they insisted that Abu Musa al-Ash'ari be the governor in Kufah and wanted to dismiss Sa'id al-As, the former governor. This request was granted by the Caliph. They also influenced those who were discontent and against the Caliph to join their movement, such as Muhammad b. Abu Bakr and Muhammad b. Hudhaifah. They also sent letters full of false accusations against the governors to the Caliph and Companions in Madinah.

²⁷ Ibid., 189

²⁸ M.O.A. Abdul, *The Historical Origin of Islam: With Some Reference to West Africa* (Islamic Publications Bureau, 1978) 69

²⁹ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 78

³⁰ Fazi Ahmad, *Othman the Third Caliph*, 55

³¹ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 182

³² Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, 128

³³ Ibid., 133

When Uthman realised the problem that had arisen, he initially had a meeting with his governors to search for a solution. He called Mu'awiyah, Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh, Sa'id b. al-'As, 'Amr b. al-As, and 'Abdullah b. Amir, and each of them gave their opinions. Mu'awiyah suggested that each governor should take responsibility for the problems occurring in their own provinces by establishing peace according to their ability. Meanwhile, Sa'd b. al-'As viewed that the disturbances created by this particular group should be suppressed by killing the ringleaders.³⁴ 'Abdullah b. Amir and Abdullah ibn Abi Sarh proposed the idea of crushing the rebellion through war. Meanwhile, Amr b. al-As criticised Uthman for being too soft in this kind of situation and advised him to follow the example of Abu Bakr and Umar, who showed kindness but were also strict when necessary.³⁵ However, Uthman replied that he would not be harsh unless it was in accordance with the law of God. He believed that the best solution was to calm down everyone involved in the chaotic situation.

Uthman sought the opinions of Talhah and acted upon his suggestion that anyone who had complaints about his governors could meet him during the time of Hajj every year. Additionally, he sent a delegation to each province to assess the condition of his people.³⁶ The Caliph also dispatched four trusted men to investigate the situation in the four provinces of Damascus, Fustat, Basrah, and Kufah regarding the complaints received from the insurgents. Muhammad b. Musalma, Usama b. Zayd and 'Ammar b. Yasir was sent to those provinces. All of them returned to Madinah except 'Ammar, who reported that the situation there was under control and none of the complaints and accusations from the people were valid. However, it was later reported that 'Ammar had been influenced by the Sabaites and had joined them.³⁷

The situation went worse when the insurgents began to move from their places in Kufah. The situation worsened when insurgents moved from Kufah, Basrah, and Fustat to gather in Madinah. They carried with them a list of accusations against the governors appointed by Uthman. They demanded that the Caliph remove all of his governors and appoint new ones. If he refused to comply, they threatened to use force or have him abdicate from his position. They also brought along a list of candidates for the Caliph to replace Uthman. According to Imamuddin, the Egyptians chose Ali, the Basrites preferred Talhah, and Fustat leaned towards Zubayr.³⁸ The insurgents presented their complaints to the Caliph, who responded by delivering a sermon in the mosque in the presence of the insurgents and other Muslims.³⁹ The insurgents could not reply and pretended to be satisfied with the explanation. They then returned to their respective places.⁴⁰

The situation worsened with the appearance of a suspicious letter, in which the insurgents claimed to have intercepted a messenger carrying an order to the governor of Egypt to use force against them on behalf of the Caliph.⁴¹ However, Ali b. Abi Talib insisted that the letters were false. It seemed implausible for the insurgents to be aware of these letters, given their divergent paths upon leaving Madinah unless there was a coordinated plan among them. Furthermore, it seemed unreasonable for Uthman to instruct suppression from Egypt instead of addressing it locally or seeking assistance from Mu'awiyah who could easily quash them. Additionally, simply dealing with rebels in Egypt would not resolve all issues and appeared more like an excuse by some individuals to undermine the position of the Caliph.

The Caliph's response to the letter was rejected by the insurgents, leading to a siege of his house for several weeks and ultimately resulting in his death at their hands. There are doubts surrounding this incident, as it is believed that the Caliph had the power to suppress the rebels but appeared helpless in doing so. However, according to Imamuddin, the Caliph took a more cautious approach by stationing armed guards at his door without instructions to use force unless absolutely necessary, out of concern for causing harm to fellow Muslims. Additionally, there were no standard troops in Madinah at that time and although a message was sent for military assistance from Mu'awiyah, it arrived too late before the murder of the Caliph occurred while he was reading Qur'an on Friday 18 Dhulhijjah at 82 years

³⁴ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 194

³⁵ Ibid.,

³⁶ Ibid., 195

³⁷ Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, 134-135

³⁸ S.M Imamuddin, *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*, 183-184

³⁹ Ahmad, Fazi, *Othman the Third Caliph*, 70-71

⁴⁰ Majid Ali Khan, *The Pious Caliphs*, 137

⁴¹ Ibid., 139-140

old.⁴² He tragically became one of the first Muslims killed by other Muslims while trying to prevent bloodshed among them.⁴³

Analysis and Discussion on the Accusation to Caliph Uthman

In the writer's opinion, Uthman's handling of the insurgency problem led to chaos and unrest during his reign, which ultimately resulted in his murder. While Uthman's insistence on dealing with the rebels peacefully and avoiding forceful action may have been the right decision, it also led to a lack of action in the face of a chaotic situation that ultimately resulted in bloodshed. However, it should be noted that this was the first time such a situation had arisen for the Muslims, and it was difficult for Uthman to make the best decision. Additionally, among the insurgents were true Muslims who were deceived by propaganda, making it even more challenging for the Caliph to take up arms against them.

However, to the contrary, the attitude and actions taken by the Caliph, who intended to preserve peace and avoid disputes among Muslims, actually led to further chaos and division, especially after his assassination. The Caliph did not take action while he had the power and control over the situation of Muslims. This gave an advantage to his enemies, allowing them to gain more power and ultimately control Madinah after Uthman was killed. Thus, the decision taken by the Caliph was a mistake and caused greater disorder. In addition, his appointment of relatives as governors was also a contributing factor. Although the Caliph had the right to appoint officials based on their ability and strengths, his people did not see it the same way. Moreover, the prior Caliphs did not take similar actions before, making it easy for the enemy to twist the facts and cause suspicion towards his government. Furthermore, the Caliph did not explain the reasons behind his selections until the end of his reign, by which time the people's distrust of him had already been firmly established.

Furthermore, during the time of Uthman, the Muslim territory had expanded significantly, which resulted in an influx of wealth, prosperity, and peace in the lives of Muslims. However, this newfound stability and luxury had also given rise to jealousy, grudges, and malice, which are the precursors to hostility and disagreements among Muslims. Additionally, old hostilities between Arab tribes and Quraysh, as well as between Banu Ummayah and Banu Hashim, which had been resolved during the time of the Prophet and the first two Caliphs, resurfaced during Uthman's reign. The spirit of brotherhood began to wane in their hearts, and the feeling of superiority over one another indirectly created disputes and disunity among Muslims that even the Caliph found challenging to handle. As a result, this situation was taken as an opportunity for the enemies to sow discord and disagreements among Muslims, leading to the chaotic and unstable situation that followed later.

Besides, the condition of Uthman himself allowed for the challenges to his rule without being able to effectively address them. As he was nearly 80 years old during the later part of his reign, it can be assumed that he had less physical energy but a more advanced thought process before making decisions. Additionally, his gentle and kind nature towards others made him vulnerable to exploitation by his enemies, resulting in disturbances during the second phase of his rule and leading to movements against him. This ultimately led to a chaotic situation, culminating in his murder and further division among Muslims especially during Ali's reign and subsequent governments.

Conclusion

During the last phase of Uthman's reign, a situation of disarray and uproar arose. However, it was not due to his weaknesses in administration. It was proven that Uthman had solid reasoning behind all the accusations thrown at him, particularly regarding the appointment of governors from his relatives. The chaos was actually a strategy by his enemies to disrupt his government and overthrow him as the Caliph. However, it was found that Uthman may have been wrong in his decision-making when dealing with the rebels. This decision opened the door to chaotic and uncontrolled situations during his reign, leading to his eventual murder. Additionally, the prosperity and abundance of wealth during his time created jealousy and malice among the Muslims, making it easier for the enemy to create hostility and enmity among them. In summary, there were several circumstances that contributed to the chaotic condition that arose during Uthman's reign, apart from the actions taken by the Caliph himself. Therefore, these

⁴² Ibid.,196-197

⁴³ Ibid.,197

arguments would clarify the confusion and absolve the Caliph of any blame for the problems that occurred during his reign.

References

Abdul, M. O. A. *The Historical Origin of Islam: With Some Reference to West Africa*. Islamic Publications Bureau, 1978.

Ahsanullah, M. *History of the Islamic World*. Deep and Deep Publication, 1992.

Al-Azami, M. M. *The History of the Qur'anic Text from Revelation to Compilation: A Comparative Study with the Old and New Testaments*. UK Islamic Academy, 2003.

Al-Tabari. *The History of al-Tabari Volume XV*, trans, R. Stephen Humphreys. State University of New York Press, 1990.

As-Sayuti, Jalaluddin. *History of the Caliphs*, trans Major H.S. Jarrett. Karim Sons, n.d.

Assidiqi, Muhammad Raqib and Putra, Grand Colin Amdhana Priin, "Historical Analysis of Caliph Uthmān bin 'Affān's Policy (Period 24 AH-29 AH)." *AJIIT: An-Nur International Journal of Islamic Thought* 2, no. 1 (2024): 42-51.

Bertold, Spuler. *The Age of the Caliphs History of the Muslim World*. Markus Wiener Publishers, 1969.

Bukhsh, S. Khuda. *A History of the Islamic People*. Idarah-I Adabiyat-I Delli, 1983.

Haji Yahaya, Mahayudin. *Sejarah Awal Perpecahan Umat Islam (11-78H/632-698M)*. Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 1986.

Husain, Taha. *Fitnah Terbesar dalam Sejarah Islam*. Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, 2015.

Imamuddin, S. M. *A Political History of the Muslims: Prophet Pious Caliphs*. Najmah and Sons Ltd, 1965.

Jabbar Beg, M. Abdul. *Belief Lives if the Companions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)- The Sahabah in Islamic History Including the First Four Caliphs (632-60 AD)*. Cambridge and East Anglia: 1st Century Publications.

Juynboll, G. H. A. "The date of the great fitna." *Arabica* 20, no. 2 (1973): 142-159.

Khan, Majid Ali. *The Pious Caliphs*. Islamic Book Trust, 2001.

McNeill, William H. and Woldman, Marilyn Robinson. *The Islamic World*. Oxford University Press, 1973.