Contrast on Leadership Approaches:
An empirical Study of Majority and Minority Muslims

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ABSTRACT

Islamic leadership is a psychological contract between a leader and his followers where he will try his best to guide them, to protect them, and to treat them fairly and with justice. The objective of Islamic leadership principles is to encourage Muslim followers to practice and develop human qualities for a better place in a society and a better life for the Muslim Ummah.

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the application of transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles in Muslim majority and a minority countries in Southeast Asia. This study shows differences or conformance between two: one Muslim majority and minority countries on Islamic leadership practices by adopting Islamic leadership principles. This study conducted an empirical survey in two different but neighboring nations in Southeast Asia, namely Malaysia and Thailand.

The research data was analyzed through non-parametric analysis such as one independent sample t-test and one-way ANOVA. The findings of the empirical study indicated some significant differences in the Muslim minority country as compared to that of the Muslim majority. Possible reasons and policy prescriptions are offered in the conclusion.

Key Words: *Islamic leadership principles, Leadership approaches, Islamic management, Muslim in Southeast Asia*

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a dynamic relationship based on mutual influence and trust to achieve a common purpose by leaders and followers alike in which both are moved to higher levels of motivation and moral development as they affect reality with intended change (Rost, 1991; Beekun, 2006). Leadership in Islam is trust (*Amanah*). It represents a psychological contract between a leader and his/her followers that he/she will try his/her best to guide them, to protect them, and to treat them fairly and with justice (Ahmad, 2007). The objective of Islamic leadership is to encourage Muslim followers to practice and develop the qualities of followership, teamwork, partnership, consultation, and joint planning, making this world a better place to live in and a better life for the Muslim Ummah at large.

Objectives and Scope of the study

The present study aims to compare the conventional leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles and practices between Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries in South East Asia. The main objectives of this study are:

- To measure conformance or difference between Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries on transformational leadership principles

- To find out conformance or difference between Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries on transactional leadership principles

- To identify conformance or difference between Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries on servant leadership principles

- To examine conformance or contrast between Muslim majority and Muslim minority countries in terms of conventional and Islamic leadership principles

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational leadership:

The transformational leadership approach leads the change in an organization's vision, strategy, and culture, and it empowers people in the organization and increases the base of power and effectiveness rather than restricting it (James and Joseph, 2001). This is the role of mentoring followers towards putting up with attitudes which are acceptable by society. The leader brings about some changes for the betterment of his or her followers' lives. Leadership in this context is concerned with change from wrong to right. Leaders with good morals can serve as role models and influence and empower others. Leaders should be forward-looking with the aim of achieving the vision of the planned future rather than just the daily objectives of the organization. Thus, they should direct their followers towards understanding the organization's vision and how they are to achieve success in their duties in life in the best manner and in the Hereafter.

A leader should have the visionary trait; they are expected to have a sense of direction and long-term vision for the organization or community. A well-defined vision brings constancy to the leader's directives, stability to the organization, inspires organizational members and

reduces the potential for confusion and conflict among all stakeholders. The vision should be such that all can be identified with, should constantly inspire a leader's and his follower's efforts and should propel all organizational members forward.

Transactional leadership:

Transactional leadership is a leadership approach that stresses the exchange of rewards with subordinates for services rendered (Parolini, Patterson and Winston, 2009). The leader plays the role of enhancing the potentials and capabilities of all members by enticement. He or she is concerned with raising organizational members in a number of ways, especially: economically, spiritually, academically, intellectually, psychologically, socially and professionally. Followers expect their leaders to remain positive about the future no matter how bad the situation may be. The leader must never give up or lose hope. An example of how a leader inspires his followers could be traced to Nelson Mandela after being tested during apartheid.

Leaders with this style empower and closely supervise their followers to make sure that the tasks are performed to their expectations. They are more concerned with getting the job done with the help of obedient followers. They set targets for followers and ensure they adhere strictly to rules. This includes showing mutual trust and respect for subordinates. Leaders express concern for the followers' needs and look after their welfare. They listen to their suggestions and ideas. It is in a supportive or employee-oriented style. Leaders with a participative style of leadership try to get involved instead of directing their followers; by doing so they contribute to employee personal growth and increase their motivation. This style could otherwise be called employee involvement. A participative leader puts less emphasis on the use of legitimate power.

Servant leadership:

This approach is quite close to Islamic leadership principles. This is based on a moral leadership approach that leans toward values, ethics, principles, virtues, morality, spirituality, and authenticity. It advocates that leaders should serve those under them, protect them and help them to reach maximum effectiveness (Beekun, 2006; Khaliq, 2009). Since the 'servant leadership' theory is much closer to Islamic principles of leadership, it needs further elaboration. The following paragraph would help to explain this further.

The framework for servant leadership consists of helping others discover their inner spirit, earning and keeping the trust of others, service over self-interest, and effective listening. The core of Greenleaf's (1977) servant leadership model is based on four tenets of moral authority: (a) sacrifices, (b) inspires commitment to a worthy cause, (c) teaches others that ends and means are inseparable, and (d) introduces the world of relationships.

The above three leadership approaches; transformational, transactional and servant leadership styles have been extensively researched in Western countries based on the Anglo-Saxon culture and taught in almost all business schools worldwide. However, local values especially practiced by Muslims elsewhere are not given attention in contemporary literature on leadership. As with the West, leadership in Islam also serves as bridge used by leaders to influence their members' attitude and behavior to achieve organizational objectives (Ali, 2007). Beekun and

Badawi (1999) explained leadership in Islam as a process by which the leader seeks voluntary participation of followers in an effort to achieve the shared vision of the organization. He or she should communicate this vision to the followers with clarity acting like a coach, a mentor and a role model. A legitimate leadership is based on mutual agreement between the leader and the follower (McShane and Von Glinow, 2008). Thus, leaders should avoid forcing their followers to change except if their actions contradict with Shariah guidelines extracted from the revealed sources of knowledge of Qur'an and Prophetic traditions known as Sunnah.

An Overview on Islamic Leadership Principles

The line of demarcation between leadership in Islam and that of the West lies in its religious, moral, and human roots. Religious and moral spirit (Taqwa) dominated the leadership of Prophet Mohammad (SAW) and that of the four Caliphs (Al- Buraey, 2006). From an Islamic perspective, the Islamic roots of leadership generally exist in the primary sources of Shari'ah (Qur'an and Sunnah). It is a concept whose principles are derivable from the doctrine of Tawheed as practiced by the Prophet (SAW) (Ahmad, 2007). Allah says in the Quran; "He, it is Who has sent the Prophet (SAW) with guidance and the Deen of Truth so that it may become dominate over all other systems, however much of the mushrikeen may be averse to it" (Surah At-Taubah, [9] 33 and Surah As-Saff, [61] 9).

Islamic Leadership Principles vs Conventional Leadership Approaches

The Islamic leadership model and the principles associated with a leadership alternative can open the door for excellence and achievement. The principles glean from the Quranic words of the mighty wise, the practice and sayings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) who possessed not only transformational leadership values but also possessed extraordinary values which made him a unique leader in the history of humankind. His transformational leadership values are consists of liberty, justice, equality, and collective well being. The Prophet (pbuh) also focused and demonstrated transactional leadership qualities. He emphasized on family values and about the affection and kindness for children, children honoring their parents in return of their sacrifices in bringing them up during the formative years, the importance of educating the children, financial security for wives after the husband's death, husbands treating their wives with kindness and gentleness, respecting even foster parents, brothers, and sisters, and the importance of loving and honoring relatives. The Prophet (pbuh) was one of servant leaders. His speeches also focused on character building based on values that include gentleness, humility, kindness, moderation, modesty, politeness, and truthfulness. Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) public communication included the admonition of community values that included charity, forgiveness, hospitality, and mercy. On the other hand, character and deeds of the four rightly guided Caliphs and other great Muslim leaders had great servant leadership style with excellent communication skills and high moral values.

The concept of Islamic leadership principles and values consist of faith and belief, knowledge and wisdom, courage and determination, mutual consultation and unity (fraternity and brotherhood), morality and piety (honesty and trust), superior communication, justice and compassion, patience and endurance, commitment and sacrifice, lifelong endeavour and

gratitude and prayers (Khan, 2007). These Islamic leadership principles and values practiced by the Prophet Muhammad(pbuh) Caliph Abu Bakar, Umar, Othman, Ali, and other great Islamic scholars helped them achieve their goals and made them great leaders in human history.

As a result, this servant leadership style elaborated model pioneered by Greenleaf and developed by Russell and Stone (2002) has indeed provided practitioners and Muslim researchers with opportunities for the study and application of such leadership, which was espoused by various researchers as a valid, postmodern theory of organizational leadership. Since it is based mostly on Catholic values, many have resemblances with Islamic leadership principles too.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data collection for the study was carried out by means of self-administered questionnaire. The instrument of this research was developed based on three sections namely A, B, and C. Section A pertains to the respondents' demographic information such as gender, age group, educational background, marital status, and occupation. Section B was developed based on three leadership approaches namely, transformational leadership approach, transactional leadership approach and servant leadership approach. Each leadership approach consisted of eight items. On the other hand, section C pertains to Islamic leadership principles consisting of eight items. Both section B and C evaluated the responses based on a 5-point Likert scale. In this study, 260 questionnaires were distributed in two different countries namely Malaysia and Thailand. Out of 260 responses, the author received 100 responses from Malaysia and the remaining 50 responses from Thailand. This gave a response rate of 57 percent. Although 150 responses are not exactly 5 times in accordance to the rule of the thumb based on a total of 32 questions, yet further processing of the data and reliability test helped us to draw a reasonable conclusion.

The research questionnaires were distributed to the respondents through online and by hand. A small gift as an incentive was offered with each questionnaire distributed by hand in order to increase the response rate, although participation was entirely voluntary. After conducting the survey, a reliability test was done and the data analyzed according to mean, standard deviation, independent samples t-tests, and one-way ANOVA via SPSS -19 version.

Data Analysis

In this study, there are three parts in the data analysis. The first part is descriptive analysis based on demographic information of the respondents, and the second part measures the validity and consistency of research instruments according to the reliability analysis. Last but not the least, part three is the comparison analysis of Islamic leadership approaches and principles between Malaysia and Thailand through the test of independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA.

Descriptive Analysis

In this study two similar surveys were conducted in two different countries in South East Asia namely, Malaysia and Thailand. Based on the data collection 150 usable responses were received in good order, out of which 100 respondents were from Malaysia, whereas, 50 respondents

participated from Thailand. The study obtained the respondents' personal information including gender, age group, educational qualification, marital status, and occupation. These data have been illustrated in Table I.

Table I: Demographic profile of the respondents

Description	Malaysia		Thailand	
	Frequency	*Percentage*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Gender				
• Male	57	57.0	23	46.0
• Female	43	43.0	27	54.0
Age Group				
• 21 - 25 years	32	32.0	20	40.0
• 26 - 30 years	32	32.0	16	32.0
• 31 - 35 years	30	30.0	11	22.0
• 36 - 40 years	6	6.0	3	6.0
Education Qualification				
• Higher Secondary school/STPM	13	13.0	7	14.0
• Certificate/Diploma	47	47.0	24	48.0
• Bachelor degree	33	33.0	16	32.0
• Master degree	7	7.0	3	6.0
Marital Status				
• Single	37	37.0	17	34.0
• Married	63	63.0	33	66.0
Occupation				
• Business	12	12.0	-	-
• Professional	30	30.0	13	26.0
• Lecturer	16	16.0	10	20.0
• Govt. employee	36	36.0	24	48.0
• Others	6	6.0	3	6.0

In Malaysia's case, there were more males than females. Out of 100 respondents, male respondents constituted 53 percent, whereas 47 percent were female respondents. On the other hand, out of 50 respondents from Thailand, female respondents 54 percent, whereas, 46 percent were male respondents who participated. Three age groups of respondents from Malaysian samples have a similar percentage: 21 – 25 years (32 percent), 26 to 30 years (32 percent) and 31 – 35 years (30 percent). On the other hand, the highest number of

Thai respondents' age group was between 21 – 25 years, which is 40 percent. The second highest Thai respondents' age group was 26 – 30 years (32 percent) and the lowest number of respondents' age group was 36 – 40 years, which is only 6 percent of the total respondents from both the countries.

A similar pattern was noticed in the educational background of the responses. In the Malaysian survey, most of the respondents' educational level was certificate/diploma (48 percent). The second highest education level of the respondents was bachelor degree (33 percent). Similarly, the highest number of Thai respondents' educational background was certificate/diploma (48 percent) and second highest education level of the respondents was bachelor degree (32 percent). However, only 3 Thai respondents (6 percent) who participated in this study had masters degree qualification.

Table I also illustrated that sixty three Malaysian respondents were married (63 percent) and remaining thirty seven (37 percent) respondents were single. Similarly, most of the Thai respondents were married which was 66 percent and 34 percent of the respondents were single. In the survey questionnaire, the respondents were asked about their current occupation. Based on the responses, majority of the Malaysian respondents (66 percent) were government employees (36 percent) and professional (30 percent). Likewise, 48 percent of Thai respondents were government employees, 26 percent were professional and 20 percent were lecturers.

Reliability Analysis

According to Malhotra (2010), reliability refers to the extent to which measurements of the particular test are repeatable. Hair et al. (2010) says, reliability is an "assessment of the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of variables". In other word, reliability is the degree of uniformed results on repeated trails given by an instrument measure (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

According to Cooper and Schindler (2011) and Zikmund et al. (2010), there are four common methods to measure reliability, namely the test-retest method, the alternative form method, the split-half method and the internal consistency method which is known as Cronbach's alpha. The most popular method of testing the reliability of questionnaires is internal consistency, or Cronbach's alpha. Internal consistency is the degree of different items that are homogeneous in measuring the same underlying construct (Cooper & Schindler, 2011). It was introduced by Kuder and Richardson in 1937 for dichotomous data and then generalized by Cronbach which can be applied to any data. In this study, Cronbach's alpha was used to test internal consistency of 19 items for all four dimensions, which are: transformational approach, transactional approach, servant leadership approach and principles for Islamic leadership. Cronbach's alpha score ranges from 0 to 1, with values close to 1 indicating high consistency (Hair et al., 2010).

Table II illustrates the Cronbach's alpha for four dimensions of Islamic leadership approaches and principles. The alpha values ranged from 0.794 to 0.973, exceeding the minimum requirement of 0.70 Cronbach's alpha. Thus, all research items and overall instruments were considered highly reliable.

Table II: Reliability Analysis of Islamic Leadership Approaches and Principles

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership Approaches		
Transformational Approach	08	0.794
Transactional Approach	05	0.838
Servant-Leadership Approach	03	0.880
Islamic Leadership Principles		
Principles for Islamic Leadership	03	0.973

Comparison of three Leadership Approaches and Islamic Leadership Principles

In this study, authors analyzed three dimensions of Islamic leadership approaches and principles for Islamic leadership in Malaysia and Thailand based on independent samples t-test (see Table III and IV) and ANOVA (see Table V, VI and VII).

Independent Samples t-Tests on three Leadership Approaches and Islamic Leadership Principles

In this study, independent samples t-tests were used to identify the differences or conformance between Muslim majority and minority countries on leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles based on gender and marital status (see Table III and IV).

Table III: Independent samples t-test of gender

Variables	Gender	Malaysia			Thailand		
		N	Mean	Sig.	N	Mean	Sig.
Transformational Approach	Male	57	4.1316	0.659	23	4.2500	0.075
	Female	43	4.0901		27	4.0185	
Transactional Approach	Male	57	4.0246	0.254	23	4.0696	0.902
	Female	43	4.1395		27	4.0519	
Servant-Leadership Approach	Male	57	4.3216	0.425	23	4.4638	0.014*
	Female	43	4.2403		27	4.1235	
Islamic Leadership Principles	Male	57	3.8772	0.219	23	3.9420	0.096
	Female	43	3.7519		27	3.7037	

*Note: * variable is significant at the 0.05 level (2 tailed).*

Table III illustrated that there is no significant differences between Malaysian male and female respondents on Islamic leadership approaches and principles. However, the independent samples t-test showed that Thai male and female respondents have significant differences on the servant leadership approach (p = 0.014). The test mean value shows that Thai male respondents (μ = 4.4638) like to follow more servant leadership approach than female respondents (μ = 4.1235).

Table IV: Independent samples t-test of marital status

Variables	Gender	Malaysia			Thailand		
		N	Mean	Sig.	N	Mean	Sig.
Transformational Approach	Single	37	4.1453	0.604	17	4.1838	0.521
	Married	63	4.0952		33	4.0947	
Transactional Approach	Single	37	3.9892	0.192	17	4.1294	0.487
	Married	63	4.1238		33	4.0242	
Servant-Leadership Approach	Single	37	4.2883	0.980	17	4.3333	0.591
	Married	63	4.2857		33	4.2525	
Islamic Leadership Principles	Single	37	3.8468	0.722	17	3.8039	0.926
	Married	63	3.8095		33	3.8182	

According to the results of independent samples t-test, author did not find any significant differences between single and married respondents on leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles (see Table IV) in either of the two- Muslim majority (Malaysia) and minority (Thailand) countries.

ANOVA Tests on Leadership Approaches and Islamic Leadership Principles

According to Hair et al. (2010), analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical technique for testing the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between two or more population means. In this study, the author used one-way ANOVA test to find out the significant differences on three different groups, namely age, education and occupation. These three different groups were tested with four dimensions of the three conventional leadership approaches and one Islamic leadership principles (see Table V, VI and VII). Based on the results of one-way ANOVA test, the Thai age groups of the respondents have significant differences on the transactional leadership approach ($p = 0.05$). More specifically, Tukey test indicates that there is a significant difference between 26 - 30 years and 31 – 35 years of Thai respondents on the transactional leadership approach. The group mean values show that those respondents age is 26 - 30 years ($\mu = 4.2500$), they have more transactional leadership approach compared to those at 31 – 35 years of age ($\mu = 3.7273$).

Table V: ANOVA tests on three leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles based on age groups

Variables	Age Groups	Malaysia			Thailand		
		Mean	F-value	Sig.	Mean	F-value	Sig.
Transformational Approach	21 - 25 years	4.1367	0.090	0.965	4.1688	0.595	0.622
	26 - 30 years	4.1211			4.0000		
	31 - 35 years	4.0958			4.1932		
	36 - 40 years	4.0417			4.2500		
Transactional Approach	21 - 25 years	4.0250	0.459	0.712	4.0700	2.736	0.050*
	26 - 30 years	4.1063			4.2500		
	31 - 35 years	4.0533			3.7273#		
	36 - 40 years	4.2667			4.2000		
Servant-Leadership Approach	21 - 25 years	4.3125	0.076	0.973	4.2833	0.515	0.674
	26 - 30 years	4.2604			4.2500		
	31 - 35 years	4.2778			4.3939		
	36 - 40 years	4.3333			4.0000		
Islamic Leadership Principles	21 - 25 years	3.8646	0.188	0.904	3.7833	1.954	0.134
	26 - 30 years	3.7708			3.7708		
	31 - 35 years	3.8333			4.0606		
	36 - 40 years	3.8333			3.3333		

*Note: * variable is significant at the 0.050*
      # variable at ($\mu = 3.7273$).

Table VI illustrated the results of one-way ANOVA test on leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles which indicates Thai respondents have significantly different perception on all four dimensions such as transformational approach ($p = 0.000$), transactional approach ($p = 0.009$), servant leadership approach ($p = 0.000$), and principles for Islamic leadership ($p = 0.000$). However, Malaysian respondents do not have any significant differences based on educational background.

Table VI: ANOVA tests on Islamic leadership approaches and principles based on education

Variables	Groups	Malaysia			Thailand		
		Mean	F-value	Sig.	Mean	F-value	Sig.
Transformational Approach	Higher Secondary school/STPM	4.1731	0.289	0.833	4.2500	7.667	0.000*
	Certificate/Diploma	4.1356			4.2917		
	Bachelor degree	4.0833			3.7500		
	Master degree	4.0000			4.5000		
Transactional Approach	Higher Secondary school/STPM	3.9385	0.401	0.753	4.2000	4.334	0.009*
	Certificate/Diploma	4.0851			3.9417		
	Bachelor degree	4.1152			4.3000		
	Master degree	4.0571			3.4000		
Servant-Leadership Approach	Higher Secondary school/STPM	4.3077	0.009	0.999	4.0000	10.579	0.000*
	Certificate/Diploma	4.2837			4.5556		
	Bachelor degree	4.2828			3.9167		
	Master degree	4.2857			4.6667		
Islamic Leadership Principles	Higher Secondary school/STPM	3.8718	0.129	0.943	3.3333	12.250	0.000*
	Certificate/Diploma	3.8014			4.0833		
	Bachelor degree	3.8182			3.5208		
	Master degree	3.9048			4.3333		

*Note: * All the four Thai variables*

Similarly, the result of a one-way ANOVA test on occupation Table VII shows the same results as the previous variable on education in Table VI on leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, Malaysian respondents do not have any significantly different perception on three (transformational, transactional and servant) leadership approaches as well as Islamic leadership principles. This is due to the reason that a majority Muslim country's people's perception is unique. However, data collected from a Muslim minority country and research findings indicate that Thai Muslim respondents have a significantly different perception on the three leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles based on four demographical factors such as gender age, education and occupation. The reasons could be because Malaysia is a Muslim majority country and it's a peaceful nation in terms of political stability and cultural integration.

Table VII: ANOVA tests on Islamic leadership approaches and principles based on occupation

Variables	Groups	Malaysia			Thailand		
		Mean	F-value	Sig.	Mean	F-value	Sig.
Transformational Approach	Business	4.0208	0.966	0.430	-	7.864	0.000*
	Professional	4.1667			3.9519		
	Lecturer	4.2734			4.5000		
	Govt. employee	4.0486			4.1563		
	Others	4.0000			3.3750		
Transactional Approach	Business	4.2333	0.950	0.439	-	14.239	0.000*
	Professional	4.0067			4.1846		
	Lecturer	3.9375			3.4000		
	Govt. employee	4.1111			4.2000		
	Others	4.2333			4.6000		
Servant-Leadership Approach	Business	4.1667	0.919	0.456	-	4.625	0.007*
	Professional	4.3556			4.2821		
	Lecturer	4.4375			4.6667		
	Govt. employee	4.2037			4.1944		
	Others	4.2778			3.6667		
Islamic Leadership Principles	Business	3.6667	0.945	0.441	-	8.034	0.000*
	Professional	3.9000			3.8718		
	Lecturer	3.9583			4.3333		
	Govt. employee	3.7500			3.6250		
	Others	3.8333			3.3333		

*Note: * All the four Thai variables*

In Malaysia, as a Muslim majority nation everyone has equal rights in terms of education, job opportunity and other facilities. Therefore, Malaysian Muslims do not have a significantly different perception on either of the three approaches and Islamic leadership principles. On the other hand, Thailand is a Muslim minority country and has been facing many problems due to perceived state discrimination and political instability leading to internal conflicts. In addition, Thailand Muslims are not enjoying the same privileges as Malaysian Muslims have in terms of free access to education, equal job opportunities amongst others. Thus, Thailand Muslims have a significantly different perception on leadership approaches and Islamic leadership principles.

Islam is indeed a comprehensive, integrated and holistic religion that governs and interweaves with regards to all aspects of adherents of faith (Islam) in this life. Duniya (mundane life) and Akhirah (Hereafter) do not necessarily stand in conflict to each other. Also is operating a business (duniya) and Ibadah (Akhirah) as long as one maintains a strong Iman (faith) hoping to seek Allah's pleasure, the Muslim's ultimate goal in the human life? Thus, the rule of exception to any leadership style is not arising at all; the Islamic leadership principles is seen as one that assists the individual in attaining happiness in both the worlds. It directs human life properly in order to serve society in achieving happiness. It is one that ensures happiness for the individual and society at large irrespective of the fact one lives in a majority or minority Muslim country.

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