

Islam and CSR:

**A study of the compatibility between the tenets of Islam
and the UN Global Compact**

John Zinkin

Associate Professor of Marketing and Strategy

and

Geoffrey Williams

Associate Professor of Financial Economics

**Nottingham University Business School
Malaysia Campus**

Contacts:

zinkin@streamyx.com

geoffrey.williams@geoffwilliams.org

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Abstract

This paper looks at whether the tenets of Islam are consistent with the ‘Ten Principles’ of responsible business outlined in the UN Global Compact. The paper concludes that with the possible exception of Islam’s focus on personal responsibility and the non-recognition of the corporation as a legal person, which could undermine the concept of corporate responsibility, there is no divergence between the tenets of the religion and the principles of the UN Global Compact. Indeed Islam often goes further and has the advantage of clearer codification of ethical standards as well as a set of explicit enforcement mechanisms. Focusing on this convergence of values could be useful in the development of a new understanding of CSR in a global context and help avert the threatened “clash of civilizations”.

Key Words

CSR; Islam; UN Global Compact; Environment; Human Rights; Labour Rights

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the editor and two anonymous referees at the *Journal of Business Ethics* for very helpful and constructive comments on an earlier version of this paper.

1. Introduction

Within the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) it is often claimed that organized religion has played a significant role in the development of personal values and behaviour which influences many areas of business.

There has been considerable research on this issue (Calkins, 2000; Epstein, 2002; Weaver and Agle, 2002) and in particular, many conceptual studies have linked the Bible, the Qur'an and Rabbinic writings to the way the Abrahamic faiths expect business to be undertaken (Tamari, 1990; Stackhouse et al, 1995; Epstein, 2002; Sacks, 2004; Zinkin, 2004). These studies have been complemented by empirical research into the relationship between religion and ethical values (Miesing and Preble, 1985; Ibrahim and Angelidis, 1993; Terpstra et al, 1993; Smith and Oakley, 1996; Angelidis and Ibrahim, 2004) and also into its impact on managerial attitudes and decision-making (Kidwell et al, 1987; Agle and Van Buren, 1999; Longenecker et al, 2004).

Perhaps the most notable example of the practical implications of this relationship is the 1993 Interfaith Declaration on business ethics, which attempted to codify "the shared moral, ethical and spiritual values" of the three Abrahamic faiths to "draw up a number of principles that might serve as guidelines for international business behaviour" (Interfaith Declaration, 1993. p2). This has been reinforced by actions taken by the Interfaith Centre on Corporate Responsibility looking to persuade consumers and investors to hold corporations accountable for their actions.¹

Part of this debate has focussed on the influence of religious teaching in Islam on the attitudes of Muslims towards the ethical behaviour of firms, (Gambling and Karim 1991, Beekun 1996, Rice 1991, Ali 2005) and empirical papers in this area appear to show that Muslims may not be as concerned about ethical business behaviour as members of other religions (Guiso et al 2003, Brammer et al. 2005 and Williams and Zinkin 2005). This raises the question whether there is something inherent in Islam that led to the lower scores and therefore places Islam in conflict with the ethical basis for business developing amongst many western companies within the context of CSR. This paper investigates

Islamic precepts and how they relate to the UN Global Compact which proposes a set of universal minimum standards as a baseline for CSR across the globe. We find no substantive conflict and indeed we argue that not only is Islam fully in accordance with the CSR agenda as codified in the UN Global Compact but it goes further in ways that could potentially lead to a better understanding between Islam and the West.

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section we provide an overview of the UN Global Compact and its underlying tenets. In Section 3 we discuss the general ethical framework for business transactions that can be seen in Islamic teachings which leads to a specific discussion connecting these teachings to aspects of the UN Global Compact in Section 4. The final section provides a discussion and some of our main conclusions.

2. The UN Global Compact

The UN Global Compact was first outlined at the World Economic Forum on 31st January 1999, by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Its aim is to bring together companies, UN agencies, labour organisations and civil society to support a set of minimum universal environmental and social principles. The Global Compact's operational phases were launched on 26th July 2000 and by December 2005 around 3,000 stakeholders were involved including 2,300 companies, in 90 regional networks across the world.

The Global Compact is a voluntary process with two main objectives; (1) to bring a set of universal principles of responsible business into mainstream activities of companies around the world and; (2) to act as a catalyst for initiatives in support of wider UN goals in the area of social and environmental development. It is not a regulatory instrument and offers no form of measurement or enforcement on participants. Instead it relies on public accountability, transparency and the enlightened self-interest of those involved to initiate and cooperate in pursuing the principles on which it is based. It also helps to facilitate projects and enhance engagement through policy dialogue, education, support for country and regional networks and funding for specific projects.

The compact uses a framework of ten universal principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the natural environment and anti-corruption, which are summarised in Table 1. Each is based on other underlying UN initiatives such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1992 Rio Declaration on the Environment, summarised in Table 2. Although based on different sources and motivations, we argue that there is close proximity between the prescriptions of Islam and those of the UN Global Compact which is not well understood. Indeed the fact that Islam has stricter ethical standards in many instances and also provides a clearer codification and enforcement regime is also often overlooked.

3.1 The ethical basis of Islamic business

Previous research supports the idea that religious people have a wider notion of CSR than non-religious people (Rest 1986; Agle and Van Buren, 1999:581; Weaver and Agle, 2002; Brammer et al, 2005) and given that Islam, like Judaism, is concerned with orthopraxy as well as orthodoxy, we would expect to find specific prescriptions regarding socially responsible behaviour.

In Islam the proper development of human life requires two things: (1) the resources needed to maintain life and fulfil the material needs of both the individual and society; and; (2) the individual's knowledge of the principles of individual and social behaviour to allow individual self-fulfilment on the one hand and the maintenance of social justice and tranquillity on the other (Ahmad, 1971). A Muslim is urged to seek wealth and develop his life in this world, but prayer comes first and although work must be stopped when it is time for worship, it is equally clear that when prayers are finished, a good Muslim returns to work.²

Perhaps more important is the need for balance between the demands of this world and the demands of the afterlife (Chapra, 1992). The importance and special nature of worship (*Ibadah*) is a fundamental element of Islam for worship is the main reason for the creation of mankind.³ This has five elements: (1) the recognition that there is only one God and that Muhammad is His Prophet; (2) regular, daily devotional acts of prayer; (4) fasting during Ramadan; (4) the payment of *Zakat* (obligatory charity) and; (5) the *Hajji* pilgrimage to Mecca. However, worship is not confined to these since worship also

requires that Muslims serve Allah through good behaviour in all aspects of their daily life even in their work and business life. Many passages in the Qur'an encourage commercial and economic activity (Lewis, 2001) and every individual is required to work in Islam (Rahman, 1994). The concept of *Tazkiyah* (growth and purification) requires active participation in the material world (Gambling and Karim, 1991, p33). However, all forms of productive work can be considered as an act of worship provided that any material enhancement and growth leads to social justice and spiritual enhancement. If so, they are performed in accordance with the will of Allah – thus in Islam the concept of worship is wide and recognizes that mankind can be rewarded by performing both ritual acts and daily works. However, for daily actions to be regarded as part of worship there are three conditions: (1) the action must be undertaken wholeheartedly for the sake of Allah, and not for another reason (e.g. the love of money); (2) the action must be in accordance with the *Shari'ah*, (the canon of Islamic Law),⁴ and; (3) it must not cause a Muslim to neglect existing obligations.

The emphasis on individual choice and the balance between responsible behaviour and piety comes from recognizing that man has two missions to accomplish: first the mission as a servant of Allah, and second the mission as vicegerent or steward of Allah. In the first relationship man is responsible to God as his servant, while in the second, he is accountable for his relationship with creation.⁵ Both of these relationships co-exist and have equal weight in determining virtuous behaviour. Islam requires a balance and equilibrium (*'adl*) which means doing things in a proportionate manner and avoiding extremes. At a more metaphysical level, equilibrium, or *'adl*, relates to the all-embracing harmony in the universe (Beekun and Badawi 2005) enabling man to fulfil his responsibility to God and simultaneously his responsibility to creation as God's steward on earth. Creation does not just consist of nature and the environment but also other human beings and social interactions as a whole. Law and order in the universe, which in Islam is based on and understood within the ethical basis of the faith, reflects this delicate balance. The property of equilibrium is more than a characteristic of nature; it is a dynamic characteristic which each Muslim must strive for in his or her life.

The underlying concept of the vicegerent is one of representation or stewardship, the real ownership of the assets remains vested in their owner and not their steward or administrator who simply manages

them in accordance with the owner's instructions, within the limits of authority prescribed, to do the will of the owner as opposed to his own. Any representative or steward who did not fulfil these four conditions would be abusing his authority and breaking the covenant implied in the concept of representation.⁶ Man in his capacity as vicegerent acts as steward or representative on earth to administer it according to Allah's will. In so doing man must realize that he is responsible for other human beings, for society and for the environment and nature and the connection between these three responsibilities of the vicegerent and the basic aims of CSR is clear.

3.2 Islam's Definition of Responsible Business

Islam recognized that being responsible in business is about much more than what is done with the profits made from business activities – hence the existence of activities that are regarded as *haram*. Given that the Prophet was a successful trader who married a successful businesswoman, it is perhaps not surprising that there are so many prescriptions regarding what type of business was acceptable and how to do it. Business is an activity, which is encouraged because it provides sustenance,⁷ but this does not apply to all forms of business.

The prohibitions on certain types of business come from the concern to protect health and life, so that products and services that put these at risk are prohibited (alcohol, tobacco, armaments and gambling). The justification for the prohibition is best explained in the words of the Qur'an: "*They ask thee concerning wine and gambling. Say: In them is great sin, and some profit for men; but the sin is greater than the profit.*" (Qur'an 2:219). Gambling in particular is forbidden because it represents "getting something too easily" and any monetary gain that comes too easily is deemed unlawful and condemned strongly.⁸

The prohibition of usury and interest is also well-known.^{9,10} According to most scholars interest or usury is prohibited in Islam not because the religion does not see it as a way to turn excess capital into profit but because of a deeper concern for the moral, social, and economic well-being of society, since it creates profit without work and it does not share the risk between the lender and borrower (Al-Qaradawi, 1985, pp.265-270). There is also another perspective, namely that Islam chooses to create a

different basis for an economic society, which prefers an “equity-based, risk-sharing, and stake-taking economic system to a debt-based system.”¹¹

Prices must be determined fairly and price fixing is discouraged, “*Allah is the One Who fixes prices, Who withholds, Who gives lavishly, and Who provides and I hope that when I meet Him none of you will have a claim against me for any injustice with regard to blood or property.*”¹² Monopolistic business was also declared unlawful by the Prophet because it leads to exploitation, interferes with the workings of the free market and encourages price manipulation (Al-Qaradawi, 1985, p255, Muslim, 2005).

Speculation is also regarded as wrong because it is based on selfish interest at the expense of society as a whole, leading the poor, who can least afford it, to pay more as a result. In the words of the Prophet : “*If anyone withholds goods until the price rises he is a sinner*” (Muslim quoted in Al-Qaradawi, 1985, p256) and in another Hadith we have: “*The withholding of grain for 40 days out of desire of high price is prohibited in Islam*” (Ahmad and Hakim quoted in Al-Qaradawi, 1985, p256)

Trade where the buyer has no chance to see what he is buying before the transaction occurs, because this puts the buyer at an unfair disadvantage. (Muslim, Book 010, No 3612). This applied specifically to two types of cloth buying (*Mulamasa* and *Munabadha*) which are not relevant in today’s world, through the principle of the prohibition of selling things unseen clearly remains relevant.

Trades based on uncertainty were also prohibited because one party was at disadvantage. There are two Hadith making it clear goods could not be sold before the seller possessed them.^{13,14} This principle extends to buying of goods as well – so that any transaction that depends on a leap in the dark is forbidden. Thus exchanging dry fruits whose quantity and weight is known for fresh fruits that are still on the trees (*Mozabana*) is forbidden (Muslim, Book 010, No 3693), as is the selling of fruit futures (*Mu’awama*) (Muslim, Book 010, No 3672). Equally to sell things that one cannot possess, such as fish in a river or birds in the air (*Ba’i al Gharar*) is not allowed. Finally, buyers should not attempt to capitalize on the seller’s ignorance¹⁵ and likewise, *caveat emptor* is not accepted.¹⁶

4. Islam and the UN Global Compact

4.1 Islam and Human Rights

The concept of human rights is codified in the UN Global Compact within the context of more than forty precepts under four headings; (1) Equality; (2) Life and Security; (3) Personal Freedoms and; (4) Economic, Social and Cultural Freedoms. These are summarised in Table 2. The underlying principles are drawn from the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and cover a wide array of factors relating to the dignity, freedoms and protection of the individual. In Islam, when speaking of human rights Muslims recognize that rights granted by kings or parliaments can be withdrawn as easily as they are granted, but that the rights accorded by Allah must be accepted and enforced.¹⁷ Perhaps even more important is the recognition in early Islam at least, that rulers governed through consultation.¹⁸ Since governments are representatives (*Khalifah*) of Allah it is made quite clear that nobody has a right to rule.^{19,20} Thus the framework that Islam sets for human rights reflects principles that should be equally acceptable to anyone brought up in the traditions of *Magna Carta* or John Locke and is fully consistent with the underlying tenets of the first two principles of the UN Global Compact which aim to ensure that businesses recognise the human rights of stakeholders and actively avoid working with those who may undermine these rights. In this context, Muslim businesses should have no problem complying with the UN Global Compact, since the Qur'an and the *Shari'ah* often go further than the Compact requires.

4.1.1 Islam and Equality

The right to equal treatment is protected by Islam's recognition of the brotherhood of man regardless of race, colour or nationality because all mankind is descended from one set of parents.²¹ "*O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other*" (Qur'an 49:13). Islam also makes it clear that non-Muslims are also to be treated respectfully "*To you be your Way and to me mine*" (Qur'an 109:6) and that there should be no compulsion to religion.²² Pride of place goes not to any particular family, race or nation, but rather to those who are righteous. "*Verily, the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the*

most righteous of you” (Qur’an 49:13). The idea of equality is also reinforced by the Prophet’s last sermon.²³

What is perhaps less recognised is that in Islam, women have equal rights to men, at least in the time of the Prophet. Beekun and Badawi (2005, p.137) argue that “*normative Islam rejects sexism in business as well as in other areas of life. The Qur’an depicts women as spiritually equal to men (Qur’an 4: 1, 7: 189, 3: 195, 4:124, 33: 35, and 57: 12). Central concepts such as trusteeship, human dignity, and responsibility are presented in a gender-neutral manner (Qur’an, 32: 9, 15: 29, 2: 29). The only basis for superiority in the Qur’an is piety and righteousness, not gender (Qur’an 49: 13). Unfortunately, as summarized in the UNDP (2002) report, Islam’s normative teachings are inconsistently followed in the Muslim world and are set aside either by too conservative an approach or cultural bias.*” Every woman who fled Mecca and came to Medina had access to full citizenship as a *Sahabiyat*, the female equivalent of a Companion of the Prophet. They could enter the councils of the *Umma*, speak freely to the Prophet, dispute with men, fight for their happiness and be involved in military and political affairs (Mernissi, 1991).

In the domestic arena, Islam recognised the different and complementary work done by women, and unlike in the West, this work was celebrated and valorized financially. Marriage and motherhood were remunerated and the economic independence of women is enshrined in the faith. Married women were not the chattels of their husbands for marriage was treated as a contract between consenting partners. Goods were separated and women’s wealth is their own – not to be merged with that of the household. Husbands were expected to make an initial down-payment before getting married (*Mehre*), as well as maintenance for the household and the wife for as long as the marriage lasted. “Islamist women can, and do, argue that in its recognition and valorization of marriage, and women’s sexuality within it, fourteen centuries ago Islam offered women what twentieth century feminists are yet to achieve, namely a recognised, well remunerated relationship with a man who is required to be both physically and financially satisfactory” (Afshar, 2004).

The right to equal treatment extends to equality before the law. When a woman of high rank was brought for trial for being involved in a theft, and it was recommended that she be treated leniently because of her rank, the Prophet replied: *"The nations that lived before you were destroyed by Allah because they punished the common man for their offences and let their dignitaries go unpunished for their crimes; I swear by Him (Allah) who holds my life in His hand that even if Fatima, the daughter of Muhammad, had committed this crime, then I would have amputated her hand."*²⁴

4.1.2 Islam, Life and Security

Islam has explicit protection for the right to life and for example, capital punishment for murder or for the spreading of corruption can only be decided by a competent court of law²⁵. Taking a life can only be done in accordance with the due process of law (*bi'l haqq* – literally “with the truth”). At the same time the Qur’an emphasizes the value of human life by equating one life with that of the entire people²⁶. These injunctions apply to all human beings regardless of race or religion and make it clear that Muslims are obliged to protect life wherever possible, as well as to be careful about how a life should be taken.

Islam also recognises the right to individual liberty and for example, forbids enslaving captured free men or selling people into slavery. On this point the Prophet was quite explicit: *"There are three categories of people against whom I shall myself be a plaintiff on the Day of Judgment. Of these three, one is he who enslaves a free man, then sells him and eats this money"* (Bukhari and Ibn Majah). In fact Muslims were encouraged to free slaves – the freeing of a slave of one’s own free will was an act of such great merit that the limbs of the liberator would be protected from hell-fire – one for each limb of the freed slave. The early leaders set an example, the Prophet set 63 slaves free; A’isha 67; Abbas 70; Abd Allah bin Umar 1,000; and Abd al-Rahman purchased 30,000 and set them free (Maudoodi).²⁷

Islam upholds the right to justice and is a religion based on a clear and codified system of law, which expects Muslims not only to be fair amongst themselves but also with others, even with their enemies.²⁸ The emphasis on justice is so great that Muslims are expected to choose it over protecting

their own families.²⁹ Justice is however not merely an issue of outcomes but also a question of due process.³⁰ The Prophet said: *"I have been ordered by Allah to dispense justice between you."* This is reinforced by Caliph Umar who said: *"In Islam no-one can be imprisoned except in pursuance of justice."* His words are often interpreted as meaning that justice requires due process of law in open court.³¹ An extension of this principle is that in Islam individuals are personally responsible and liable for their actions and collective punishment is unjust. Individuals have the right not to be punished for the actions of others.³²

Although many Muslim societies are often hierarchical in nature, Islam protects the right of individuals to disobey a superior in recognition that instructions from superiors can have good or bad outcomes and as a result may be in conflict with the moral basis for proper behaviour. *"Help ye one another in righteousness and piety, but help ye not one another in sin and rancour"* (Qur'an 5:2). Even though obedience is highly desirable, this recognition gives Muslims the right to disobey a parent, superior or leader if they are asked to do something that deviates from the *Shari'ah*, which is a canon of law whose purpose is moral as well as legal, unlike most western codes of law. Implicit in this right to disobey is the independence of the judiciary, for they receive their authority from the existence of the *Shari'ah*, which predates the formation of any Islamic state.³³

4.1.3 Islam and Personal Freedom

In terms of the right to freedom of expression and worship, Islam allows individuals to express themselves freely provided this does not lead to improper acts, and is used to promote good behaviour.³⁴ Islam does not offer unrestrained freedom of expression which is often, and often erroneously, claimed to be true of many western societies. Freedom of expression is constrained by the need to be truthful and to promote good and by contrast the qualities of a hypocrite are described in the Qur'an as: *"They bid what is improper and forbid what is proper"* (Qur'an 9:67). The Prophet reinforces this point in his own words: *"If any one of you comes across an evil, he should try to stop it with his hand (using force); if he is not in a position to stop it with his hand then he should try to stop it by means of his tongue (meaning he should speak against it). If he is not even able to use his tongue*

then he should at least condemn it in his heart. This is the weakest degree of faith.” (Maudoodi).³⁵ In this sense free expression is an obligation if it promotes good and prevents slander.

In addition to encouraging freedom of expression, particularly if it is to put right a wrong, Islam recognizes the rights of other religions and the freedom of worship.³⁶ Respect for other people’s beliefs does not mean that debate is forbidden, but rather that such discussion should be carried out in a polite and restrained manner.^{37,38} This instruction is not limited to the People of the Book (i.e. the other Abrahamic faiths of Judaism and Christianity), but applies with equal force to those following other faiths, as the practice of the Mughal Emperor Akhbar in India demonstrated when he encouraged Hindus to debate with Muslims.

Islam protects the right to privacy and makes it clear the people’s personal privacy is to be protected.^{39,40} Interestingly, this applies to matters of state as well and contrary to recent examples in Britain and the US, prying into the life of the individual cannot be justified on moral grounds by a government saying that it needs to know the secrets of potentially dangerous persons. The injunction of the Prophet is: *“When the ruler begins to search for the causes of dissatisfaction amongst his people, he spoils them”* (Abu Dawood). Amir Mu'awiya reports hearing the Prophet say: *“If you try to find out the secrets of the people, then you will definitely spoil them or at least you will bring them to the verge of ruin.”*

4.1.4 Islam and Economic, Social and Cultural Freedoms

Islam has explicit recognition of the right to a basic standard of living in line with that of the Global Compact as shown in Table 2. The existence of *Zakat* (obligatory charity) makes it clear that Muslims are expected to provide a minimum social safety net to fellow believers. Muslims are also encouraged to make provision for the deprived and needy of all religions and races⁴¹. The point to note about this statement in the Qur’an is that at the time when it was written, there was no Muslim society as such and those who were Muslims came into contact with non-Muslims everyday, simply by weight of numbers. It can be argued that the real meaning of this verse is that anyone, regardless of their background or belief, who suffers from deprivation or need and asks for help has a right to share in the

property and wealth of a Muslim. Indeed Islam also makes it clear that it expects the state to provide an economic safety net for the needy. The Prophet is recorded as saying: *"The Head of State is the Guardian of him who has nobody to support him"* (Abu Dawood, Tirmidhi).⁴² The extent of the state's obligation to provide a safety net is captured in the Prophet's wider use of the term *Wali* (guardian) to reflect the duty and responsibility of the state to support and assist orphans, the old, the unemployed, the sick, and even to provide a decent burial for the dead.

From this brief review of human rights as recognised in Islam, we can see that far from being a religion that promotes despotism and anti-democratic principles, it is a religion that recognizes that the power of the state should depend on consultation, consent of the people, independence of the judicial authority and the granting of fundamental human rights. The litmus test is that the state should promote good rather than evil and should conform to the moral and ethical principles revealed in the Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadith.

4.2 Islam and Labour

The underlying tenets of the labour principles in the Global Compact focus on the way people are treated in the workplace and on remuneration and equal treatment. Despite its emphasis on justice and equality of treatment, Islam like most other social systems does allow hierarchies in management.⁴³ Nevertheless this is balanced by the prohibition of the oppression of subordinates by their superiors.⁴⁴

The correct treatment of employees is also spelt out clearly. It is a condition of hiring workers that it is concluded for a stipulated piece of work since hiring someone for unspecified work is potentially unfair. Thus the recompense or property paid in return for hiring should be described and witnessed to remove any uncertainty. The Prophet said, *"If anyone of you employed a worker then he has to inform him of his wage"*. The worker must be paid immediately after completing the stipulated work and this is reinforced by the saying of the Prophet, *"there are three persons of whom I am an opponent on the Day of Judgement: A man who gave a word in my name then he deceived, a man who sold a free person and devoured his price, and a man who hired a worker where he received (the work) from him in full and did not give him his wage."* (Bukhari 3:258)

The effort required by the worker must be stipulated as well and workers should not be asked to do more than they are capable of.⁴⁵ Working conditions should be safe.⁴⁶ Islam also encourages fair labour practices.⁴⁷

From the treatment of workers demanded by Islam we can see that there is a reasonable alignment with the principles of the UN Global Compact dealing with labour rights, even though the different historical conditions mean that there is no real recognition of the right to association and to collective bargaining, though the following quote from the Qur'an is sometimes interpreted as allowing association. *"You are the best community which has been brought forth for mankind. You command what is proper and forbid what is improper and you believe in Allah."* (Qur'an 3:110). The strictures against slavery and non-payment for work deal with Principle 4 and work is treated as a contract – a benefit in return for a recompense - and only amongst people who are regarded as adult – i.e. who have reached puberty can enter into a contract which makes child labour illegal in conformity with Principle 5. As far as discrimination, Principle 6, is concerned as discussed above in the context of equality, the Prophet's Last Sermon makes it quite clear that it is inappropriate.⁴⁸

In this respect Islam is consistent with the Global Compact but goes further when it comes to the issue of developing the potential of people and enhancing human capital. Islam recognizes the central importance of learning and indeed the first commandment given to the Prophet is *"Iqra!"* (Qur'an 96:6203) often translated as a command to read. The Prophet reinforced this idea by saying *"Seeking knowledge is obligatory to every Muslim,"* (narrated by Ibnu Majah, quoted by Razak 2004). The reason is that man is born ignorant even though he is equipped with sight, hearing and intelligence, which are the tools for learning both in the religious and the secular sense.⁴⁹ In fact it has been argued that becoming a Muslim requires knowledge because Islam is based on knowledge rather than birth. Moreover affirmation of the truth can only occur once the affirmer knows what the truth is – hence the central importance of the search for knowledge (Maudoodi, 1982).

Some scholars classify knowledge into obligatory knowledge (*fardu ain* – the individual's duty) regarding the fundamentals of the religion using available evidence⁵⁰ and into optional knowledge,

which forms part of the collective duty (*fardu kifayah*) to acquire knowledge vital to the welfare of the community. Such knowledge relates to understanding science, mastery of economics and the skills needed to succeed in the professions. These are part of the religious duty to learn and are not separate from Islamic teaching. Islam thus recognizes that knowledge is the key to success and that this knowledge must be kept up-to-date. Perhaps the idea is best captured in the words of the Prophet: *“If you want to succeed in the world you must have knowledge. If you want to succeed in the hereafter you must have knowledge. If you want to succeed in both lives you must have knowledge,”* (Narrated by Ibn Asakir). This emphasis on knowledge explains the success of early Muslim civilization at a time when Europe was plunged into the Dark Ages.

A critical element in the development of human capital is the role of women and Islam recognizes this quite clearly in the valorization of the role of women as mothers. Interestingly this was explicitly recognized by Mohamad Hashemi of the Iranian Foreign Ministry in 1995⁵¹. *“Good men are raised in the laps of good women”* (Afshar 2004). For good women to raise good men it is essential that women have access to education so that they can exercise independent and informed judgments. Despite the poor record of most Islamic nations in providing this access, it is clearly not a result of the religion, but rather of tribal, patriarchal customs, as is evidenced by the fact that in Iran and Malaysia there are more women at university than men (Afshar, 2004).

4.3 Islam and the Natural Environment

The UN has been concerned about the natural environment for decades but its success in building consensus on these issues has been mixed at best. Perhaps the central cause of this failure lies in the focus on the economic consequences of environmental degradation and also the economic costs of environmental protection. Within Islam the issue of the natural environment is rather different since it has an inherently ethical basis. Man is the steward of the natural environment acting as Allah’s vicegerent and his responsibility is to look after and protect it.⁵² Man is answerable to Allah for his stewardship and will be punished if he abuses this role by not protecting Nature since it stressed that Nature belongs to Allah and not to Man.⁵³

In order to protect land, forests and wildlife, the Prophet created special zones which were inviolable, known as *hima* and *haram* where the natural resources were to be left untouched. *Haram* areas were often drawn up around wells and springs to protect the water table from depletion. *Hima* areas were reserves for forests and wildlife where grazing and wood-cutting were restricted and species were protected (Ziaudin, 1990). The Islamic principle of analogy, *qiyaas*, allows these ideas to be applied in modern, practical terms in the context of environmental protection legislation (Beekun and Badawi 2005). As a consequence environmental protection is given explicit attention in Islamic teaching and in the *Shari'ah*.

We can see from this that the underlying approach to nature converges with that expressed in the UN Global Compact's principles regarding the environment although it does so from an ethical rather than an economic perspective. Above all Islam encourages moderation and discourages waste.⁵⁴ Not only is Islam green in that it promotes sustainable husbandry but it also recognizes the interconnectedness of biodiversity.⁵⁵

4.4 Islam, Transparency and Corruption

Given the focus on business ethics and individual rights in the preceding section it is not surprising that Islam would find corruption totally unacceptable, since corruption a manifestation of unequal treatment before the law and of disregard for due process and so is inherently unethical. Indeed whereas the Global Compact appears to focus more on the business arguments against corruption, in Islam, as in other religions, the ethical argument dominates almost exclusively and as such Islam takes a stricter view, as is shown by a raft of teachings from the Qur'an and other Islamic texts such as: "*The Messenger of Allah cursed the one who offers the bribe, the one who receives it, and the one who arranges it,*" (Reported by Ahmad and Al-Hakim, quoted in Al-Qaradawi 1985, p330).⁵⁶

When it comes to transparency in business Islam goes much further than the Global Compact. For example, clear, written contracts are required for all business transactions (Qur'an 2:282) and in Islam, as in Judaism, the principle of *caveat emptor* does not apply and many *Hadith* outline principles such as, "*It is not permissible to sell an article without making everything about it clear, nor is it*

permissible for anyone who knows about its defects to refrain from mentioning it.”⁵⁷ Muslim businesses are therefore expected to use high standards at all times or to be open about the standard that has been used if it is different. The issue of quality standards can also be seen in Qur’anic teaching on weights and measures (Qur’an 6:152, 17:35, 83:1-6) for example (Qur’an 26:181-183) “Give just measure and cause no loss (to others by fraud). And weigh with scales true and upright. And withhold not things justly due to men, nor do evil in the land working mischief.” Whilst this does not of itself imply that the same standard should be applied everywhere, it does require that full information is provided on the standards used, which requires greater transparency than the precepts of the Global Compact

5. Discussion and conclusions

It is clear that the teachings of Islam not only appear to be in close conformity with the Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact but in many respects go further than the minimum standards adopted by this framework. In particular Islam exceeds the requirements of the Global Compact in a number of important ways. First, it appears to be wider in scope, for example in the development of human capital and in the transparency requirements in business transactions. Second, it has a clear codification defining what is permissible or *halal* and what is forbidden or *haram*. Third, Islam has an explicit enforcement mechanism in the *Shar’iah* as well as in community enforcement and the final sanction of the accountability of the individual for unethical behaviour on the Day of Judgement: (Qur’an 17:13), “*Everyman’s fate We have fastened to his neck: On the Day of Judgement we shall bring out for him a scroll, which he will see spread open.*”

However, the analysis so far has focussed on the teachings of Islam but, as in all other ethical systems, there is often a difference between teaching and practice and it must be recognised that not all of the teachings of Islam appear to be followed in many Islamic countries. For example, we have already noted that when it comes to equal treatment of women many Islamic countries fall short of basic standards of equality as defined by the UN and the same is true of issues related to basic human rights and transparency of the judicial process (UNDP 2002, Beekun and Badawi 2005). In addition many

measures of corruption such as that provided by Transparency International show that Islamic countries are often high on the corruption scale.⁵⁸ More generally, studies such as Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) or Inglehart (1997) based on the World Values Survey show that Islamic countries tend to be more deferential in hierarchies, less equal in their treatment of women and minority groups and less supportive of the rights of individuals. Nonetheless these issues are almost certainly not related directly to Islam *per se* but are more likely to be due to other socio-political factors related to the nature of government and the development of civil society since many non-Islamic countries also perform badly along these dimensions (Williams and Zinkin 2006).

A final possible area of dissonance arises in the focus on individual responsibility in Islam, an idea reinforced by the lack of priestly intermediation between Muslims and Allah and the apparent recognition that the corporation is no more than a legal entity which has no responsibilities that can be separated from those of the individuals who make up the organisation (Bhatia 2004). Nonetheless, in general, the close conformity between Islamic ethical standards in business and the universal global standards in the UN Global Compact is very encouraging since it suggests that a discourse based on the Ten Principles and discussions of how best to develop CSR can usefully emphasize the commonalities and convergence between modern stakeholder capitalism and Islam. This opens up the prospect of a new form of CSR which integrates a more liberal, 'European Islam,' along the lines suggested by Tariq Ramadan, who suggests that many of the habits that Muslims display are not Islamic *per se*, but rather are cultural traits specific to the Middle East, Africa, or Asia and "Muslims living in Europe have an opportunity to reread our [religious] sources" (Ramadan, 2005). This is not unique to Europe but is also a common feature of modern *Islam Hadhari* which is a core focus of the more progressive approach to Islam adopted by many leading Muslims including the Malaysian Prime Minister and Islamic Scholar, Abdullah Badawi. When looked at from this perspective CSR and the UN Global Compact programme offer a way of build bridges between civilisations in what is an increasingly difficult and turbulent world.

Table 1: The Ten Principles of the UN Global Compact:

<u>Human Rights</u>	
Principle 1:	The support and respect of the protection of international human rights;
Principle 2:	The refusal to participate or condone human rights abuses.
<u>Labour</u>	
Principle 3:	The support of freedom of association and the recognition of the right to collective bargaining;
Principle 4:	The abolition of compulsory labour;
Principle 5:	The abolition of child labour;
Principle 6:	The elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation.
<u>Environment</u>	
Principle 7:	The implementation of a precautionary and effective program to environmental issues;
Principle 8:	Initiatives that demonstrate environmental responsibility;
Principle 9:	The promotion of the diffusion of environmentally friendly technologies.
<u>Anti-Corruption</u>	
Principle 10:	The promotion and adoption of initiatives to counter all forms of corruption, including extortion and bribery.

Source: www.unglobalcompact.org, viewed on 31st March 2006

Table 2: The origins and underlying tenets of the 10 Principles

Human Rights

The **1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** which sets basic minimum international standards for the protection of the rights and freedoms of the individual including: -

Equality - This prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Life and Security - The rights to life, liberty and security, and the right to be free from slavery, servitude, torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment further develop the notion of personal dignity and security; The rights of the individual to a just national legal system; The right to recognition as a person before the law, to equal protection of the law, to a judicial remedy before a court for human rights violations, to be free from arbitrary arrest, to a fair trial before an independent court, to the presumption of innocence and not to be subjected to retroactive penal laws.

Personal Freedom - Rights protecting a person's privacy in matters relating to family, home, correspondence, reputation and honour and freedom of movement; The right to seek asylum, to a nationality, to marry and found a family and the right to own property; Freedom of thought, conscience and religion and freedom of opinion and expression; The right of peaceful assembly and association and the right to take part in government.

Economic, Social and Cultural Freedoms – The right to social security and to the economic, social and cultural right to human dignity and the free development of each individual's personality; The right to a standard of living adequate for health and well being, including food, clothing, housing, medical care, and to social services and security, if necessary; The rights to education, and to participate in the cultural life of the community, and to the right of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production.

Labour

The International Labour Organisation's **1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work**

In line with the UDHR, the labour principles recognise the right to form and join trade unions, the right to rest and leisure, reasonable limitations on working hours and periodic holidays with pay. The right to work is set out, and to equal pay for equal work and to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for the worker and the worker's family an existence worthy of human dignity (which can be supplemented if necessary by other means of social protection).

Environment

International work has been led by the **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**, since 1973 and includes: -

The 1992 Rio Declaration – a statement of 27 principles which built on the previous Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment which was adopted in Stockholm in 1972.

Agenda 21 – a 40 chapter blueprint on specific issues relating to sustainable development that emerged from the Rio Summit.

The 'Brundtland Report' – 'Our Common Future' which was produced in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development, also laid the foundations for the Environment Principles.

The main environmental challenges are identified as – Loss of biodiversity and long-term damage to ecosystems; pollution of the atmosphere and the consequences of climate change; damage to aquatic ecosystems; land degradation; the impacts of chemicals use and disposal; waste production and; depletion of non-renewable resources

Transparency and Anti-corruption

Principle 10 was added on 24 June 2004, during the **UN Global Compact Leaders Summit** it involves other international initiatives run by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and through the entering into force of the first globally agreed instrument, the United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) in December 2005.

The main arguments for the anti-corruption principle are given as:-

The ethical case – Corruption is inherently wrong

The business case – Legal risks; Risk to reputation and brand image; Financial costs; Repeated demands for bribes and graft; Blackmail, no recourse and security risks and the idea that, 'The one who cheats will be cheated against'

Source: www.unglobalcompact.org, viewed on 31st March 2006

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Endnotes

- ¹ See the ICCR's website at : <http://www.iccr.org/about/>
- ² "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the remembrance of Allah and leave off your business. That is the best for you if ye but knew. And when the prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land and seek of Allah's bounty, and remember Allah frequently that ye may prosper" (*Qur'an* 62:9-10)
- ³ "I have created the jinn and men that they may worship Me." (*Qur'an* 51:56)
- ⁴ *Shari'ah* differs from secular laws where law and ethics may differ. The purpose of *Shari'ah* is to make people and society good – its objective is moral and ethical, as well as providing a legal framework. As Sheldon Amos said in his book *The Science of Law*, "A man may be a bad husband, a bad father, a bad guardian without coming into conflict with the rules of a single law" Indeed as Ibn Al-Qayyim put it so well, "The *Shari'ah* is founded and based on wisdom and the benefit of people in this life and in the eternal life. *Shari'ah* is altogether justice, mercy, benefits and wisdom. Any rules that depart from justice to oppression, from mercy to its opposite, from benefit to harm and from wisdom to uselessness, is not from the *Shari'ah*, even if it is included in *Shari'ah* by interpretation." (Siddiqi, M. H., 1997, *Justice and Compassion: Ethics and our Responsibilities*).
- ⁵ This concept of stewardship is not unlike that of Protestantism in Christianity which has been part of the teachings of this faith since the Reformation and has been recognised as an influence on business ethics since Max Weber (Guiso et al 2003). In this respect there is a close affinity between Islamic concepts of individual responsibility and accountability to God and those of the Protestant faiths which contrasts with the intermediation of the hierarchy of the Church in Catholicism for example.
- ⁶ Syed Abul A'la Maudoodi, *Human Rights in Islam: The Political Framework Of Islam*. <http://www.jamaat.org/islam/HumanRightsPolitical.html>, visited on July 11th 2005
- ⁷ "Encouraged upon you is business, for in it is nine out of ten of your sustenance" (*al-Ghazali*)
- ⁸ "O ye who believe! Intoxicants and gambling, (dedication of) stones, and (divination by) arrows, are an abomination of Satan's handiwork: eschew such (abomination), that ye may prosper" (*Qur'an* 5:90).
- ⁹ "But Allah has permitted trade and forbidden usury." (*Qur'an* 2:275)
- ¹⁰ "Allah's Messenger cursed the accepter of interest and its payer, and one who records it, and the two witnesses, and he said: "They are all equal" (*Muslim, Book 010, The Book of Transactions, No 3881*).
- ¹¹ Ahmad, K., (2003), "An Islamic Perspective", in Dunning, J., (ed), *Making Globalization Good*, (Oxford: OUP), p197
- ¹² *Hadith* reported by Ahmad, Abu Daoud, al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and Abi Y'ala in Al-Qaradawi (1985 p.255)
- ¹³ "Whoever buys cereal shall not sell them until he has obtained their possession" (*Muslim, Book 010, The Book of Transactions, Number 3640-9*)
- ¹⁴ "Bargain not about that which is not with you" (*Muslim, Book 010, The Book of Transactions*)
- ¹⁵ "The townsman should not sell for a man from the desert (with a view to taking advantage of his ignorance of market conditions in the city). And Zuhair reported from the Holy Prophet that he forbade the townsman to sell on behalf of the man from the desert" (*Muslim, Book 010, The Book of Transactions, No 3628*).
- ¹⁶ "It is not permissible to sell an article without making everything about it clear, nor is it permissible for anyone who knows about its defects to refrain from mentioning them." (*Hadith reported by Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqi*)
- ¹⁷ "If any do fail to judge by what Allah hath revealed, they are disbelievers (Kafirun) (*Qur'an* 5:44).
- ¹⁸ "And their business is (conducted) through consultation among themselves" (*Qur'an* 42:38).
- ¹⁹ "Allah has promised to appoint those of you who believe and do good deeds as (His) representatives on earth" (*Qur'an* 24:55).
- ²⁰ "The strength of the sovereign (al-mulk) does not become consummated except by implementation of the *Shari'ah*...; The *Shari'ah* cannot be implemented except by a sovereign (al-mulk); The sovereign cannot gain strength except through the people (al-rijal); The people cannot be sustained except by wealth (al-mal); Wealth cannot be acquired except through development (al-imarah);

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- Development cannot be attained except through justice (al-adl); Justice is the criterion (al-mizan) by which God will evaluate mankind; and The sovereign is charged with the responsibility of actualizing justice” Ibn Khaldun quoted in Chapra, (2000), *The Future of Economics: An Islamic Perspective*, Leicester: The Islamic Foundation, pp147-148
- ²¹ "The believers are brothers (to each other)" (*Qur'an 49:10*)
- ²² (Qur'an 2.256) YUSUF ALI: "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in Allah hath grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold, that never breaks. And Allah heareth and knoweth all things."
- ²³ "No Arab has superiority over any non-Arab and no non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; no dark person has superiority over a white person and no white person has any superiority over a dark person. The criterion of honour in the sight of Allah is righteousness and honest living". (*The Prophet's Last Sermon*).
- ²⁴ http://www.geocities.com/indiafas/India/human_rights_in_islam.html
- ²⁵ "Take not life, which Allah has made sacred except through justice and law" (*Qur'an 6:152*)
- ²⁶ "That if any one slew a person unless it be for murder or for the spreading of mischief in the land – it would be as if he slew the whole people and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he had saved the life of the whole people" (*Qur'an 5:32*)
- ²⁷ Syed Abul A'la Maudoodi, *Human Rights in Islam: The Political Framework Of Islam*. <http://www.jamaat.org/islam/HumanRightsPolitical.html>, visited on July 11th 2005
- ²⁸ "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety and fear Allah, for Allah is well acquainted with all ye do." (*Qur'an 5:8*).
- ²⁹ "O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even as against yourself, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it against rich or poor." (*Qur'an 4:136*)
- ³⁰ "Whenever you judge between people, you should judge with (a sense of) justice" (*Qur'an 4:58*).
- ³¹ http://www.geocities.com/indiafas/India/human_rights_in_islam.html
- ³² "No bearer of burdens shall be made to bear the burden of another." (*Qur'an 6:164*)
- ³³ "Ibn Umar, may Allah be pleased with them reported: The Holy Prophet said: "It is obligatory upon a Muslim that he should listen (to the ruler appointed over him) and obey him whether he likes it or not, except that he is ordered to do a sinful thing. If he is ordered to do a sinful act, A Muslim should neither listen to him nor should he obey his orders." (*Muslim: Hadith 3423*)
- ³⁴ "They enjoin what is proper and forbid what is improper" (*Qur'an 9:71*).
- ³⁵ Ibid.,
- ³⁶ "There should be no coercion in the matter of faith" (*Qur'an 2:256*).
- ³⁷ "Do not abuse those they appear to instead of Allah" (*Qur'an 6:108*).
- ³⁸ "Do not argue with the people of the Book unless it is in the politest manner" (*Qur'an 29:46*).
- ³⁹ "Do not spy on one another" (*Qur'an 49:12*).
- ⁴⁰ "Do not enter any houses except your own homes unless you are sure of their occupants' consent" (*Qur'an 24:27*).
- ⁴¹ "And in their wealth there is a due share for the needy and deprived" (*Qur'an 51:19*).
- ⁴² http://www.geocities.com/indiafas/India/human_rights_in_islam.html
- ⁴³ "...and He has raised you in ranks, some above others: that he may try you in that which he has bestowed on you." (*Qur'an 6:165*).
- ⁴⁴ Hadith of the prophet which urges Muslims to "help their brothers whether he is the oppressor or the oppressed i.e. if he is an oppressor he should prevent him from doing it, for that is his help and if he is the oppressed he should be helped (against oppression)" (*Muslim, Book 3, No 6246*)
- ⁴⁵ "On no soul doth Allah place a burden greater than it can bear." (*Qur'an 2:286*).
- ⁴⁶ "and make not your hands contribute to (your) destruction; but do good; for Allah loveth those who do good." (*Qur'an 2:195*).
- ⁴⁷ "Your employees are your brethren upon whom Allah has given you authority. So if one has one's brother under his control, one should feed them with the like of what one eats and clothe them with the like of what one wears. You should not overburden them with what they cannot bear, and if you do so, help them in their job". (*Muslim 3:4093*)

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- ⁴⁸ “No Arab has superiority over any non-Arab and no non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; no dark person has superiority over a white person and no white person has any superiority over a dark person. The criterion of honour in the sight of Allah is righteousness and honest living”. (*The Prophet’s Last Sermon*)
- ⁴⁹ “It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks to Allah” (*Qur’an 16: 78*)
- ⁵⁰ This relates to knowledge regarding Allah, the Prophet and the fundamentals of the Faith
- ⁵¹ “The family is the very basis of civilization and society in the world and women play a complex role within this structure. It is they who have the highest levels of productivity, who give the best quality of service and provide the essential physical and psychological care. Their part is of the essence and the slightest inattention on their part carries unaccountable costs for the entire society...throughout history women have played a fundamental part in the construction and the reconstruction of society and they have always obtained the least rewards.” *Zaneh Ruz, 6th May 1995*
- ⁵² “It is He who made you the inheritors of the earth. He hath raised you in ranks, some above others that he may try you in the gifts He hath given to you – for thy Lord is quick in punishment, yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (*Qur’an 6:165*)
- ⁵³ “But to Allah belongs all things in the heavens and on the earth and it is He that encompasseth all things.” (*Qur’an 4:126*)
- ⁵⁴ “...wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess” (*Qur’an 7:31*).
- ⁵⁵ “Never a Muslim plants a tree, but he has the reward of charity for him, for when it is eaten out of that is charity; what is stolen out of that, what the beasts eat out of that, what the birds eat out of that is charity for him”. (*Muslim 3764*).
- ⁵⁶ See for example: (*Qur’an 2:188*) “And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people’s property;” “Salim’s father (Abdullah) narrated that the Prophet said, “Whoever takes a piece of the land of others unjustly, he will sink down the seven earths on the Day of Resurrection” (Bukhari: Vol 3, Book 43, No 634); “Abd-Allah ibn Amr Al As said "The Prophet (P.B.U.H) cursed the one who bribes and the one who takes bribes.” (Abu Dawud; Hadith No. 3573); “The Prophet (P.B.U.H) sent Abdullah bin Rawahah to the Jews to estimate what they owed as taxes on their palm trees. The Jews offered him some money as a gift. He told them "what you have offered as a bribe is haram (prohibited) and we do not accept it”. (Reported by Malik) or; “Beware, in the body there is a piece of flesh; if it is sound, the whole body is sound and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt and hearken, it is the heart” (Muslim: Book 101, No 3882)
- ⁵⁷ *Hadith* reported by Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqi
- ⁵⁸ See the Transparency International Website at www.transparency.org