Aqidah, Noble Character and Consolidation of Knowledge in The Development of Malaysia

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Abstract
Efforts of developing the country that have been implemented for a long time have yielded results for Malaysia. However, the issue of the imbalance of the country's development has put a great pressure on the Malaysian society. Imbalance that occurs in the country's development is an imbalance between the physical and spiritual development. This article thus focuses its attention on the current challenges faced by the Malaysian society particularly the Muslims, namely on the urgent need for strengthening of *aqidah*, solidifying noble character and consolidating knowledge among the Malaysian people. To achieve this objective, this article evaluates the function of *aqidah*, noble character and knowledge in balancing the country's development today. For this reason, this article contains several parts that comprise the background of the country's development, analysis of the elements of *aqidah*, noble character and knowledge in human development, and a summary. The discussion concludes that the current situation that emerges in tandem with the development of the country indicates that *aqidah*, noble character and knowledge are the main elements that need to be mastered fully by Malaysians, and it is also these elements that are the basis for a balanced development of the country.
Keywords: Balance of Development, Development, Human Development.

Introduction
To begin the journey of the country's progress after Malaysia achieved its independence in 1957, the main agenda of the country has been development. In order to achieve and enjoy the benefits from the agenda of progress and development, Malaysia has for more than fifty years earnestly implemented various efforts and has succeeded in achieving a higher level of progress and a good level of economic achievement.

The country's physical and economic development has gone through excellent transformation, from a country whose economy was based on agriculture and land products to a country that is implementing rapid industrial processes as well as a large service sector. Today, Malaysia owns national infrastructures that are on par with those of developed countries; the nation's global symbols or landmarks are found at various locations in Malaysia such as the Kuala Lumpur Tower, the Petronas Twin Towers, the state-of-the-art federal government administrative centre in Putrajaya, telecommunications facilities, as well as land,

water and air routes that can connect Malaysia with the rest of the world, where all these achievements are an indicator of the country's development (Abdul, 2007).

However, the success of achieving higher levels of progress in Malaysia today is confronted with the issue of imbalance that is occurring in the development of the country. The imbalance that is happening is visible through several phenomena of life in the society. For example, even though Malaysia has successfully produced various advanced technologies that facilitate people in performing their daily life affairs, we have failed to control the continued pollution, damage and destruction of the environment. Additionally, even though impressive information and communication technologies have successfully been developed presently to the point that direct communication with others far away is possible, we have failed to develop members of society who are capable of communicating amicably and have mutual respect towards their neighbours and close relatives. Today, humans are able to develop technologies to ensure that they are always active and healthy, but they fail to develop human beings who have noble character and are respectful of their parents and each other. Humans are successful at producing highly educated individuals but fail to educate their soul and morals, successful at producing rich and wealthy people but fail to educate the human soul to not be greedy and to constantly appreciate and be grateful for the wealth that they have. Even greater is that humans are able to manage the world well, resulting in various advances, yet humans at the same time fail to manage the main goal of life in this world, namely the journey to the afterlife (Mohd, 2009).

The issue of imbalance in Malaysia's development process was once mentioned by Abdul (2007). He felt that there is a fundamental weakness in the country's development process where imbalance has occurred between the material and non-material development in that the material development has been advanced in an orderly manner and has progressed far ahead, but the non-material development has not been developed in the same manner. In other words, it is a one-sided development which he described as a development that advances the hardware but lacking in emphasis on the software.

The initial step that can be carried out first in implementing any national development effort is to develop the people who are going to carry out the country's development. The people are the implementers of the development efforts and at the same time, they are the objects or materials to be developed. Additionally, the human development effort to be carried out must be balanced between the physical and the spiritual aspects. Hence, through the process of human development, the country's development process will take place in a balanced manner between the physical and the spiritual. In other words, there will be a balance between the development of the hardware and the software.

There are many aspects that need to be taken into consideration and implemented to ensure that the human development process is carried out comprehensively. However, the three basic elements that are the starting point to a comprehensive human development involve the elements of *aqidah*, morality and knowledge. Through the development of humans with strong *aqidah*, noble character and high knowledge, it will guide the person towards performing the development process in a balanced and good manner (Mohd, 1988).

Methodology
The data analysis method used in this study is an inductive and comparative method. The inductive method is used to gather information, describe and discuss the focus of the study. In addition, this inductive method is also used to clarify research ideas related to the balance of Malaysia's development. In this context, academic materials from previous researchers will

be collected to form a basic concept related to the balance of Malaysia's development. While the comparative method used in this study is to compare, organize and to make categorization of the main themes of the study that will answer the research problems. Main objective of this paper to give understanding on the need and strengthening the element of *aqidah*, solidifying noble character and consolidating knowledge among the Malaysian Muslim people.

Research Findings and Discussion
The Elements of *Aqidah* as the Foundation of a Balanced Development
The term *aqidah* is derived from the Arabic word which means "knot" or "bond", conveying that it is something which is of certainty, without doubt, strong, and firm (al-Razi t.th). In practice, *aqidah* is the belief and conviction within a person; in other words, *aqidah* is a person's faith in the belief that is held (Sayyid, 2000).

True *aqidah* will exist in a person when they have the following four essences: first, *aqidah* is built based on the truth of the revelation from Allah SWT; second, the *aqidah* must be truly firm, of conviction and steadfast, without any doubt or disbelief of the faith, and the *aqidah* will not change in whatever situation and will remain unwavering and steadfast; third, the conviction in the *aqidah* must be followed by obedience, contentment, and performance of all the commandments and avoidance of all the prohibitions of Allah SWT without any objections; and the fourth, *aqidah* is capable of being the main driving force of its owner in carrying out all actions or behaviour to the point that the person will be resolute by putting their heart, soul and wealth in carrying out what is contained in their *aqidah* (al-Qaradawi, 1973).

True *aqidah* comprises three basic elements that need to be believed by every Muslim; the first is related to faith in the divinity of Allah SWT through the attributes of Allah, the names of Allah and all that are related to the essence of Allah SWT, the second is related to faith in all the Prophets and Messengers of Allah, the angels and the Sacred Book of Allah SWT, and the third is related to faith in matters of *sam'iyyat* and *ghaybiyyat* such as the questions of heaven, hell, sin, reward, the day of judgement, *qada*, *qadar* and so on (al-Khatib & al-Hazayimah, 1996). *Aqidah* that has been embedded will not change in whatever circumstances even when there have been changes in time and space (Sayyid, 2000).

A person who has true *aqidah* will believe, understand and be convinced that this entire universe including the Earth and human beings themselves are creatures of Allah SWT's creation that need to be put to good use as best possible, and that the world itself is a sign and proof of the existence, power and wisdom of Allah SWT. In addition, all the existence in this world exists in an orderly manner according to the laws that have been decreed for it by Allah SWT. Therefore, all human behaviours must always be parallel and be within the framework of the laws of the universe that have been decreed by its creator, Allah SWT, and all the outcomes of development will certainly lead humans towards piety to Allah SWT (Mohd, 1988).

In the context of managing the governance of this world, a person who has true *aqidah* will translate their faith to Allah through every aspect of their life, including in the context of implementing the country's development efforts. In this way, the implementation of the country's development efforts will always be carried out solely in the manner that is accepted

by Allah SWT, the creator of this universe. The result is that any development effort to be implemented will converge towards a harmonious, balanced and best possible implementation because it is the demand of Allah SWT. If the development effort is implemented contrarily, it means that it has violated the demands of Allah SWT. Such a thing should not happen in a person who possesses, understands and believes in the true *aqidah*.

Therefore, with the awareness that the development that exists today produces an imbalanced outcome between the physical and material development similar to the moral crisis and the crisis of faith that are happening in the country, which is a result of the imbalanced development, it should be clear that such a situation will continue to be a burden to the country. At the same time, it tells of humans' thirst for the element of faith which is at a critical level. Hence, this element of true *aqidah* or faith certainly needs to be imbued and held by each person so that each member of the society possessing true *aqidah* will be capable of developing themselves first and subsequently develop their country well.

The Significance of Noble Morals to Implement Malaysia's Development Agenda
The element of noble character is another basic element that serves as a guide towards achieving a balanced development. Noble character is an exemplary formed from revelations to organise human life towards the perfect form where this exemplary functions as a guide for humans in conducting their behaviour in all aspects of life (Miqdad, 1973).

A person who has noble character must act and behave as outlined by the Quran and the exemplary of the Prophet SAW. Indeed, moral integrity will only be realised when the person performs the morals consistently and unwaveringly, without mixing it with bad behaviour. By having noble character, the individual will only behave with good behaviour and character and will certainly avoid from bad behaviour and traits (Tabbarah, t.t.).

Noble character is embodied in two aspects of human life, namely the external physical aspect and the internal aspect of the human being. The internal moral aspect of the human being is the primary focus in the process of achieving noble character, where the determination of a person having noble character begins with their internal morality. If the aspect of the person's internal morality has truly behaved well, only then would it be easy for their external character to consistently behave with good morality (Abd, 2008).

The aspect of a person's external physical morality requires that the person behaves with good morals in every aspect of their daily life. As an example, when speaking, the person should speak of good things and utter the truth, speak in a moderate tone of voice, not speak loudly and speak in a manner that is suited to the occasion. When walking, the person should not walk too fast nor too slow, and if socialising with others, they should mingle with good manners, and if the person makes a promise, they should always keep the promise. The person should not act arrogant, should not be extravagant, and should help each other, and be fair. In fact, being morally good also encompasses taking good care of one's appearance by always combing their hair, and wearing clean, nice and tidy clothes (Abd, 2008).

Meanwhile, the aspect of a person's inner morals is the behaviour that is not performed by the person's body parts and cannot be acted out by the human senses, and instead is performed through the human heart. For example, when afflicted by misfortune and the test of Allah SWT, one should always be patient, not be arrogant, *'ujub* (vain) and *riya'* (showing off), always be sincere in every action, not be resentful or malignant, always assume good and

not be prejudiced or have bad thoughts or assumptions, be loving, be content, *qana'ah* (feeling of contentment and satisfaction) and many others (Abd, 2008).

Zaydan (1992) is of the view that to change a person's bad character and behaviour to one that is noble, the changes can occur through three forms of training integratively. First, by making the effort to lessen the bad character that a person wants to change and trying as best possible to diminish other matters related to the bad character. Second, cleansing and eliminating despicable traits and at the same time, directing oneself to good morals, and third, replacing the bad behaviour and traits with good morals and behaviour such as replacing lying with speaking the truth, replacing tyranny with justice, replacing treachery with trustworthiness, and replacing other despicable traits to good morals.

In the context of the balance of the country's development process, the moral decay that is happening in the society is a disease that needs to be treated completely so that the development carried out will truly be balanced and harmonious without any bad implications that would impede the country's development balance. For the well-being of the country's development, it greatly needs members of the society who have and always behave with good morals. If all the members of the society always appreciate and have good morals, any imbalance that occurs in the effort of the country's development such as the occurrences of moral decline, greed, corruption and many others can be curbed and subsequently eliminated.

This element of noble character will encompass all aspects of a person's life including economic, social, legal, scientific, political, administrative and many others. Thus, through the embodiment of noble character in all aspects of one's life, it will regulate the person's behaviour so that they will behave with good morals. Consequently, the development process that is carried out will be implemented in a balanced manner and is able to give benefit and well-being to all.

High Knowledge Personalities for Sustainable Development

The element of knowledge is also the basis that is needed to develop a person as the existence of knowledge will make a person successful and developed; in contrast, the lack of knowledge will make a person weak, degenerate and despised (Wan, 1989). Knowledge as clarified by al-Attas (1978) is "the arrival of meaning into the human soul as a result of true information". Through this definition, it explains that to have knowledge, a person needs to have true information and the true information must be meaningful to the person who receives the information; if the information is untrue or is not able to provide meaning to the person, then the information is not knowledge.

The level of knowledge a person has will differentiate them from others; the higher a person's knowledge, the higher will be their position, and indeed a person's high knowledge will make the person gain more advantage in developing themselves and their society (Mohd, 1998). Mohd (1988) explained that the main purpose of being highly knowledgeable is to be a pious, righteous and obedient servant of Allah SWT, as well as not to disobey the commandments of Allah SWT; it is not merely to enrich oneself with knowledge and information.

The effect of having high knowledge with the appreciation that the main purpose of seeking knowledge is to become a righteous servant of Allah will produce a human being who

is rich in knowledge and wisdom as well as capable of using their knowledge to manage the governance of this world in a good, just and civilised manner (al-Attas, 2007).

The amount of knowledge that humans possess when compared with the vastness of Allah's knowledge over all creations shows how insignificant human knowledge is compared to Allah's knowledge. A highly knowledgeable person is aware, understands and appreciates the fact of Allah's all-encompassing knowledge and will not be arrogant with the knowledge that they possess as they are aware that the knowledge that they own is a gift from Allah SWT and that the knowledge they possess is only a fragment of the vastness of Allah's knowledge. A person who is developed by such an axis of understanding will contribute their wealth of knowledge for the benefit of humankind as a sign of appreciation and gratitude for the gift of knowledge given to them by Allah SWT (Zakaria, 2011).

Therefore, it is only by having high and sufficient knowledge that a person is ready and able to perform their duties as the administrator of this world and make the most of God's blessings in this world for the benefit of human beings themselves as well as other creatures in this world. Likewise, if humans who are supposed to function as the administrator of this world do not have sufficient knowledge or do not practice the activity and culture of seeking knowledge, they will not have the capability to carry out the duties and trust given to them to govern and develop this world, let alone complete the task. Without knowledge, the effort of managing the governance and development of this world will be chaotic and will produce developmental outcome that is imbalanced.

Thus, in a country's development process, knowledge is one of the key elements that a person must have before they carry out their responsibility of developing the country. Knowledge will be a resource for the person who will administer the governance and develop the country. Hence, irrespective of whether the development is a physical or spiritual development, knowledge is necessary. Without sufficient knowledge, the development is unlikely to be harmonious and complete. Knowledge needs to be sought as much as possible, and after acquiring knowledge to the fullest extent possible as well as mastering various fields of knowledge and combining the knowledge acquired wisely, all the efforts to carry out the development process of the country will be implemented well and brilliantly.

Summary

Based on the description above, it can be concluded that to ensure that the country's development is implemented in a balanced way, it is necessary to first develop the people who live in the country, where it is these people who will perform the duty of developing the country. With the existence of the three main elements in every member of the Malaysian society, namely the elements of true *aqidah*, noble character, and having high knowledge, all actions towards the country's development will always be carried out while guided by these three elements. With the integrity of *aqidah*, the nobility of morals and consolidation of knowledge of the members of the society, these will be the axis of the country's development efforts, thereby guaranteeing the outcome of a balanced development between the physical and spiritual which will ultimately create a high-quality human civilisation that is able to provide benefits and wellbeing to the whole world.

As for the elements that are required in the process of the country's development such as the elements of mastery of technology, management and many others, the awareness to work persistently and earnestly on these responsibilities will naturally arise among the people whose *aqidah*, morals and knowledge have been strengthened. This is because the strength

of *aqidah*, morals and knowledge itself will propel the members of the society to continue to progress and develop in various aspects of life.

Realising this goal is not an easy matter, and it demands persistence, strong determination and high commitment towards large scale planning and actions. However, it is not something impossible and is indeed achievable. The lessons and examples from the history of past Islamic civilisations have proven that the elements of *aqidah*, noble character, and knowledge can be instilled in the life of the people and become a foundation for the country's balanced development.

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