



## Economic Independence in the Medina Period

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**Abstract:** This study examines the economic and political strategies implemented by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) during the Medina period, focusing on economic independence and efforts to empower the Muslim community. This study analyzes the economic policies enacted within and outside Medina, contributing to the literature by providing a comprehensive overview of these strategies. Key measures within Medina included the establishment of a brotherhood between the Ansar and Muhajir (*muāhāt*), the creation of the *suffa* for education and shelter, and the establishment of the Medina market. Outside Medina, strategies included alliances with neighboring tribes, military expeditions against Quraysh caravans, and events, such as the embargo by Sumāma ibn Usāl and the boycott by Abū Basir. These actions were designed to secure the economic and political stability of the Muslim community in Medina. Many sariyyahs and ghazwahs organized outside the borders of Medina, especially in the early periods, targeted the economic income sources of the Quraysh polytheists, namely, the caravans. This study highlights how these measures strengthened the Muslims economically and politically, making them more resilient against the Meccan polytheists. Additionally, this study explores the perspectives of orientalist and Muslim scholars on the motivations behind the military expeditions and economic measures. The strategic use of economic sanctions illustrates the integration of economic and political tactics during this period, ultimately aiding the Muslims in gaining control and weakening their adversaries.

**Keywords:** Islamic history, Prophet Muhammad, economic independence, embargo, boycott, Medina, sariyya and ghazwa

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## Introduction

After the hijrah to Medina, several measures were implemented to ensure the economic independence of the Muslim community. This study categorizes these measures into two groups: internal measures taken within Medina and external measures applied outside the city. It explores the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) economic policies aimed at securing economic sufficiency for Muslims within Medina and imposing economic measures outside the city. These policies are presented as a framework for achieving economic independence and are examined within the context of the broader concept of embargo. This study is based on primary Islamic historical sources, secondary literature, and contemporary research. Methodologically, the analysis entails examining these sources to identify and interpret the relevant economic strategies. Recognizing the necessity of economically weakening polytheists as a critical step in the struggle against them, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) established internal security and political unity through his economic policies in Medina.

A literature review reveals a lack of independent studies specifically focused on this topic. This study contributes to the academic discourse by analyzing the economic policies formulated in Medina to achieve economic self-sufficiency and political power. Scholars, such as Muhammad Hamidullah (1908-2002), have addressed the causes of various sariyyahs and ghazwahs in different works, responding to Orientalist critiques (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, pp. 90-92; 2023, pp. 42-43, 1981, p. 66, 2021, pp. 15-33). Serdar Özdemir, who categorizes the sariyyahs based on their motivations, argues that one purpose was to control trade routes (Özdemir, 2001, pp. 15-33), whereas Elşad Mahmudov describes these actions as economic and political embargoes (Mahmudov, 2022, pp. 64-136). In his article, "Mecca's Food Supplies and Muhammad's Boycott," Fred McGraw Donner discusses the boycott primarily in the context of preventing food caravans from reaching Mecca (McGraw Donner, 1977, pp. 249-266).

In international relations, there may be an opportunity to influence or direct the foreign or domestic policies of other countries through the use of economic relations to obtain political results and through the use of political relations to obtain economic results (Arı, 1999, p. 298). The economic measures and sanctions enforced by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) aimed to strengthen the Muslim community politically and ensure its security from external threats. Thus, the Prophet's economic policies in Medina culminated in the recognition of the political sovereignty of the Muslim community through their strengthened economic position.

This article evaluates the economic policies of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) from this perspective. The Prophet and the early Muslims, who were forced to emigrate, leaving their property behind and facing threats to their lives, devised economic regulations and sanctions as a means of ensuring their political and economic survival. Economic practices, such as *ganīma*, *fay'*, *kharāj*, *'ushr*, *jizyah*, *khumus*, *zakāh*, *sadaqah*, *waqf*, which are among the sources of the *bayt al-māl* fund, the foundations of which were laid in the Prophet's era, can also be counted among economic activities (Rahman, 2015, pp. 29-34 ). However, this subject is beyond the scope of this article and is therefore excluded from this study.

A boycott is defined as a collective social, economic, and cultural response by individuals united for a common purpose, acting in a planned manner against a particular situation. It is the social, economic and cultural reaction of people who gather for the same purpose as a form of struggle (Seyyar, 2007, p. 155). A boycott, in which citizens of one state refuse to purchase goods from another state due to hostile behavior, is typically initiated by the public, although governments may sometimes support such actions (Gönlübol, 1993, pp. 152-153). In this context, the economic measures implemented by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) against the Meccan polytheists in Medina and the sanctions imposed to achieve economic independence can be understood within the context of a boycott and embargo due to some similar points. Nevertheless, these measures share certain similarities with contemporary concepts like boycotts and embargoes; however, they do not fully correspond to these terms. While a boycott represents an individual or collective response and an embargo implies entirely debilitating the opposing party economically, the Prophet Muhammad's (peace be upon him) actions, such as providing financial and material aid to the Quraysh of Mecca and facilitating the resumption of food supplies during Sümame's embargo, reflect humanitarian considerations that distinguish his approach from these modern concepts. Despite all this, measures targeted at achieving control over trade routes around Medina, establishing border agreements with neighboring tribes, monitoring caravans to prevent the Quraysh of Mecca from gaining strength, and policies, such as the economic embargo imposed by Sumama demonstrate aspects that align with contemporary concepts of boycotts and embargoes. These actions were strategically designed to protect Medina and curb the economic influence of adversarial forces. The establishment of an independent Muslim marketplace in Medina and the ability of Muslims to produce their own goods, establish their own trade networks, and engage in commerce with each other can all be interpreted as forms of economic independence.

When a boycott receives government endorsement, it escalates to an embargo (Anonim, 1990, p. 38). Sumāmāh's blockade of food shipments to Meccan polytheists can be classified as an embargo, given his role as a regional leader. In contrast, a blockade involves isolating a country from external contact and supporting economic sanctions with military forces (Arı, 1999, pp. 314-315). The planned prevention of food shipments and humanitarian aid to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and Muslims by Meccan polytheists during the boycott in the neighborhood of Abū Tālib in Mecca can be considered a blockade. However, the Prophet's actions against the Meccan trade caravans do not constitute a blockade, as he facilitated the lifting of the boycott imposed by Sumāmāh, purchased commercial goods from Abū Sufyān during the famine in Mecca, and sent financial aid to the Meccans.

The research question of this article is what measures and policies the Prophet took to ensure economic independence and the security of Muslims in Medina. It discusses the ways in which the measures taken are similar or different from the concepts of boycott and embargo used today. The hypothesis of this study is that the economic measures implemented inside and outside Medina during the early period of Islam not only contributed to achieving economic independence but also accelerated the spread of Islam in Arabia and played a significant role in Muslims attaining political sovereignty. The research problem focuses on the economic policies and strategies implemented during the Medinan period and their significant role in strengthening the political and economic power of the Muslim community. These policies counter the claims of some Orientalists who argue that the wars of the period were driven solely by economic motives. This study examines how the economic strategies that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) employed against the polytheists contributed to the significant successes across much of the Arabian Peninsula and the nearly bloodless conquest of Mecca. This study aims to derive lessons from the historical strategies of the Prophet's era and explore how these policies can inform modern struggles for economic independence in the face of contemporary economic challenges and dependencies. The concept of economic independence has been a critical concern for societies throughout history. For Islamic society, economic independence continues to be important in the context of theoretical academic research and contemporary practices, both in the historical process and today, as it was in the first formation period. This study prioritizes the theoretical approach of Islamic thought based on the practices of the Prophet Muhammad but also aims to point out its reflections on the present day. Another aspect that makes this study crucial in the modern academic context is the examination of orientalist claims on this subject.

### Some Orientalist Claims on the Subject

Some of the Orientalists regarded the sariyyahs organized against commercial caravans as acts of looting. For example, Grimme (1864-1942) argues that the Prophet acted out of a desire for personal revenge, convinced his followers of the necessity of war through the verses he recited, and thus put pressure on both polytheists and Jews and Christians (Grimme, 1895, pp. 136-137). Margoliouth (1858-1940) went even further and claimed that Muhammad asked Jews and Christians for a loan, and after receiving a negative answer, he became angry with them and decided to fight them (Margoliouth, 1905, p. 237; Sarıçam, Özdemir, & Erşahin, 2023, pp. 234-237). He also argues that the Prophet's intention to plunder the caravans was behind the inclusion of the clause in the Constitution of Medina (*Wasīkah*) that the polytheists in Medina could not patronize the Quraysh polytheists against the Muslims and could not prevent the believers from interfering with the Quraysh (Margoliouth, 1905, p. 238). Orientalists are willing to interpret sariyya and gha-zwa as looting and robbery (Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 1969, pp. 117-119; Rodinson, 1971, pp. 161-162). Hodgson (1922-1968), who adopts an objective approach contrary to general acceptance, argues that the purpose of these sariyyahs was not to loot but instead primarily to break the arrogance of Quraysh and force them to establish relations with Muslims and secondarily to enable Muslims to gain economic independence (Hodgson, 1974, p. 175).

According to Fred McGraw Donner, through his planned policy, the Prophet prevented food from coming into Mecca through trade. This led to famine in Mecca, and the Meccans were forced to accept Islam or Muslim rule (McGraw Donner, 1977, pp. 249-266). The Donner also claims that many of the Prophet's campaigns were directed against the caravans traveling to Mecca and that their purpose was to cut off Mecca's food supplies from outside. He cites some verses from the Qur'an (al-Duhan 44/10-15; al-Nahl 16/112) as evidence and attributes the Prophet's success to the food boycott. According to him, the Meccans accepted Muslim rule because of the shortage of food, and this was how the Prophet established his authority over Mecca, which he had not been able to verify before (McGraw Donner, 1977, pp. 258-266). However, contrary to these claims, the Prophet made gestures toward the polytheists of Mecca during the days of famine in Mecca. In the 5th year of the hijrah, the Prophet sent a donation of 500 dinars to those in need due to the famine in Mecca, bought the skins that Abū Sufyān (d. 651-52) could not sell and sent dates from Medina in return and provided economic support. He mediated the embargo of Sumāmah and allowed food to enter Mecca. In these examples, the

Prophet observed the virtues required by commercial ethics even during the state of war. Therefore, when dealing with Donner's claim, the effect of these virtues on Meccans' acceptance of Islam or Islamic rule should not be ignored (Muhammed Hamidullah, 1998, pp. 297-299).

Muhammad Hamidullah makes some clarifications, declaring that he is not on the same side as the timid defenders of Islam, who seek evidence to deny the existence of sariyyahs against commercial caravans (Muhammed Hamidullah, 1981, p. 66). According to him, it is wrong to consider these sariyyahs, which took place within the scope of the measures taken against the Quraysh caravans, as looting. These measures did not come out of nowhere. For this process to be considered oppression, the Qurayshites should have been innocent, and the attackers should have been a looting gang. However, the Quraysh polytheists were not innocent, and the attackers were not looters. The possibility of war between the two sides was evident because of what had happened before. War, on the other hand, gives the parties the right to damage life, property and the interests of the enemies (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2023, pp. 42-43). The Quraysh wanted to kill the Prophet. This was essentially a declaration of war by the polytheists against the Muslims. After hijrah, they sent the threatening letters mentioned above. Therefore, it was the Meccan polytheists who initiated the reasons that led to the war. The Muslims were trying to protect and strengthen themselves. Since the Meccan polytheists had usurped all the movable and immovable property of the Muhajirs that remained in Mecca when they migrated to Medina, it was natural for the Muslims to struggle with their property. In addition, the Meccan polytheists used revenues from the caravans they sent to regions, such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq as weapons against Islam. Hence, Muslims had to intervene in these trade caravans. In this case, the Prophet could have prioritized the war of aggression as a priority in the fight against the polytheists. However, the Prophet did not prefer war as a priority, despite the possibility that they might become Muslims in the future, and applied economic pressure on them and prevented the caravans from passing through Medina and its vicinity (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, pp. 91-92). As a successful merchant, the Prophet was aware that economic warfare was the best deterrent for Meccan polytheists (Karan, 2021, p. 44). In other words, the Meccan polytheists' rejection of the sovereignty of Medina, their sending caravans to encroach on the Muslims' dominated lands without the need to make a treaty, their acts of defiance against them, and their refusal to recognize them as interlocutors were the reasons for some of the military campaigns during the Medinan period (Gökalp, 2021, 86).

In fact, there was no fighting in most of the military troops sent by the Prophet. The main goal was realized with the feelings of fear and uneasiness that were targeted at sariyyahs and ghazwahs. Owing to these economic pressures, Meccan polytheists' trade was disrupted, and they became impoverished and eventually gave up fighting Muslims after a while (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, p. 92). W. Montgomery Watt (1909-2006), who can be said to be in the same vein, states that the Quraysh were disturbed by the threats to their trade in the first sariyyahs and ghazwahs in which they did not suffer any losses and that despite the measures they took, they were worried about severe losses in case the Muslims were successful one day. According to him, the polytheists' desire to fight in the Battle of Badr also highlights concerns about these sariyyahs (Watt, 2016, p. 25). In the final analysis, the purpose of the caravan chases was to demonstrate the political power of the state, to prevent the hostile behavior of the polytheists and to show that they could face situations, such as hunger and poverty (Kapar, 1990, p. 405).

Crone looks at the issue from a different perspective. She criticizes Henri Lamens, Watt and their followers by questioning the assumption that Mecca was a major trading center in the pre-Islamic period, arguing that Mecca's geographical location was not at the crossroads of trade routes as described and questioning the veracity of the products allegedly traded in Mecca. Crone explains the rise of Islam in terms of the social and religious context rather than economic factors; in other words, he argues that the success of Islam was based not only on economic measures but also on its ability to unite Arab tribal society under a religious and political framework (Crone, 1987, pp. 6-11, 231-250).

### **Domestic Economic Measures Inside Medina**

During the Medina Period, several steps were taken to address the problems Muslims faced or were likely to face in their internal relations (Demircan, 2016, p. 289). Some of these measures were closely related to the economic life of Muslims. The economic aspect of the *muāhāt*, a practice of cooperation and brotherhood between the Muhajir and the Ansar by the Prophet approximately five months after the hijrah to Medina, is prominent. *Muāhāt* facilitated the lives of the Muhajirs who migrated to Medina leaving all their assets in Mecca and played an important role in correcting their economic conditions by eliminating their material problems and providing them with livelihood opportunities (Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 504-505; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, pp. 160-161; Demircan, 2016, pp. 289-292). In addition, those who lived in the *suffa*, which functioned as a school during the day and as a shelter at night and was built next to the masjid for orphaned poor Mus-

lms to stay, continued their lives with the financial support of other Companions (Ibn Sa‘d, 2001, pp. 1/196; Baktır, 2009, pp. 469-470; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, p. 158).

In the posthijrah period, letters were sent by the polytheists, indicating that the Muhajirs should be returned to Mecca; otherwise, they would be attacked. The Prophet brought to the agenda an agreement for all Medinans to live safely. With this agreement, which included all the people living in Medina, political unity was achieved within the city, and it became possible to act together against any attack that might come to Medina from outside. With the Constitution of Medina (*Wasīkah*), freedom of religion and conscience were adopted, and the security of life, property, and honor was legally guaranteed (Aydın, 1991, pp. 153-154; Özkan, 2019, pp. 212-215). One of the responsibilities of the polytheists of Medina, who were parties to the treaty, was not to protect the property and lives of the polytheists of Quraysh and not to prevent Muslims in this regard. In other words, the polytheists who accepted this constitution would not be able to make agreements with the Quraysh polytheists who shared the same belief (Ibn Hishām, 1375, p. 1/501-504; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, p. 179; Demircan, 2016, p. 298). In a sense, as a result of the agreement with the Muslims, they would not be able to form an economic union against the Muslims and organize a type of economic boycott. This also means that no one could prevent Muslims from economic sanctions against the polytheists of Quraysh.

The Polytheists and Jews dominated the markets in Medina, and their rules were still valid. For Islamic principles to be in force in the commercial field, it was necessary for Muslims to have markets where their own rules could be applied (Kallek, 1997, p. 190). With the migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina, it became possible for them to establish an economic system in which Islamic principles could be effective. The Prophet established the Medina market as an alternative (Ceruz, 2019, p. 41; Karan, 2021, p. 40). The markets could not be left at the mercy of the Jews since they considered what they could snatch from the Arabs as profit and claimed that they were not responsible and sinful for what they did (Javād Ali, 2001, 14/107; Kallek, 1997, p. 191). Before hijrah, there were four markets in Medina. These markets were *Safāsif*, *Muzāhim*, *Kaynuka* and *Zubāla* from south to north (Lecker, 2003, p. 162). Jewish tribes dominated the markets of Medina (Cora, 2020, p. 54). According to the narrative, when the Prophet decided to establish a market in Medina, he first came to the market of Banī Kaynuka. In another narration, the Prophet pitched a market tent at a place called Baqī‘ al-Zubayr and

said, “This is your market.” Ka’b ibn Ashraf (d. 624) from Banī Nadīr came to the market and cut the ropes of the tent. The Prophet then said, “*I will definitely move this market to a place that will anger Ka’b more. This is your market. Do not set a fixed place with a stone, and do not take tax from anyone.*” (Samhūdī, 1419, 2/257; Kister, 2002, p. 26; Lecker, 2003, p. 165; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, p. 800). He established the Madinah market in the Buthān Valley near Masjid al-Nabawī, on the entrance and exit roads of the city and in a location that could serve all segments of the city. Since the fact that the Muslim market is in a busy location means that it is more preferred and developed, it is understood what the Messenger of Allah (pbuh) meant by the expression “to anger Ka’b” (Kallek, 2022, p. 133). Owing to the principles adopted in the Medina market, the market started to strengthen over time, and the ability to shop safely attracted people to the market (Ceruz, 2019, p. 41; Cora, 2020, pp. 56-57; Hizmetli, 2020, p. 72). The Prophet established a fair, transparent and sustainable economic system in the Medina market based on moral values and social justice principles, thus balancing individual gain and social welfare (Haisy, 2023, p. 12).

### **Economic Measures Outside Madina**

The Prophet’s economic policy against Mecca was influenced mainly by his family’s commercial experience (Sarıçam, 2022, pp. 52-53). The Prophet’s grandfather Hāshim, a prominent merchant, was the one who established the tradition of the Quraysh trade journeys, going to Yemen and Abyssinia in the winter and to Damascus and Gaza in the summer (Ibn Sa’d, 1410, pp. 1/62; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, p. 46). The polytheists of Quraysh tortured the Muslims of Mecca, forcing them to migrate first to Abyssinia and then to Medina, seized the property of those who left Mecca, met with the rulers and dignitaries of the country in the places where they migrated, and pressured them to return the Muslims and send them back to Mecca (Ibn Ishāk, 1398, pp. 1/213-216; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/333; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, pp. 99-107, 2023, pp. 37-38; Öztürk, 2015, pp. 110-112). The polytheists decided to kill the Prophet in Dār al-Nadwa. When he heard this news, he traveled to Medina with Abū Bakr (Ibn Sa’d, 2001, pp. 1/193-194). After hijrah to Medina, Abū Sufyān and Ubay ibn Khalaf (d. 625) wrote a letter condemning and threatening the Ansar for sheltering the Prophet and demanded his return (Ibn Habīb, n.d., pp. 1/271; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, p. 69; Özdemir, 2001, p. 18).

When Ansar rejected this offer, they sent an ultimatum to Abdullah ibn Ubayy (d. 631) and the polytheists like themselves in the second threatening letter they

wrote. The polytheists, who could not find a face from the Ansar, negotiated with the Jews, and then the incident of Banī Nadīr broke out (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2021, pp. 185-186, 2001, pp. 66-67). The Muslims retaliated with economic pressure for the aforementioned reasons and the looting of their property, and they did not want to allow the passage of Quraysh caravans in the lands under their control and took the necessary measures.

### **Treaties with Tribes Around Medina**

The Prophet imposed economic and political measures to put an end to the enmity of the Meccan polytheists. He established diplomatic relations with the tribes around Medina and made agreements (Mahmudov, 2005, pp. 62-63). It was not easy for Muslims to intervene in the caravans traveling to the Yemen region. Since Medina was located north of Mecca and on the route of caravan routes, the Prophet offered treaties to some tribes (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, p. 90). While some tribes, such as the chief of the Abs tribe, Khirāsh, rejected this treaty offer (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, p. 262), tribes, such as Banī Damra, Banī Gifār, Banī Zur'a and Banī Rab'a branches of the Juhayna tribe, and Banī Mudlic agreed to a treaty (Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/591, 599; Ibn Sa'd, 1410, pp. 1/207, 210; Isāmī, 1419, pp. 2/35; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, pp. 262, 266-268). These tribes had some commercial benefits from the Meccan caravans passing through their territory. For this reason, they initially hesitated to accept the agreement. Hearing that they were promised unity against the enemy, security of life and property, and help in case of not violating the agreement, the tribes accepted this agreement and formed an alliance with the Prophet and the Muslims (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, p. 90; Apak, 2018, pp. 208-210). The Prophet forbade passage through the areas inhabited by the tribes with whom the treaty was concluded, stating that he was not allowed to pass through them. The sending of regular forces made these prohibitions enforceable. When sariyyahs and ghazwahs began to be sent for the passage of caravans, the Meccans sent out an army to fight the Muslims (Muhammad Hamidullah, 2017, p. 90).

### **Sariyyahs and Ghazwahs**

After the hijrah, the process of statehood began in Medina. With the revelation of the verse stating that those who were attacked were allowed to fight because they were subjected to oppression (al-Haj 22/39), the Prophet wanted to weaken the financial power of the Meccan polytheists by keeping them under economic and political pressure with sariyyahs and ghazwahs and to force them to peace for

less bloodshed (Özdemir, 2001, p. 28). The first military operations were organized against the idolatrous Meccans to obstruct the caravan route (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2023, p. 161). Therefore, a significant part of the struggle against the Quraysh polytheists was aimed at gaining economic superiority, responding to what the Meccan polytheists did to them, preventing the Quraysh caravans from passing through the vicinity of Medina, observing these caravans and wearing them down economically, and ensuring the economic and political strengthening of the Muslims in Medina (Fayda, 1992a). Efdaleddin Tekiner (1868-1957), who was one of the last Ottoman period *sirah* researchers, focused on this issue in his work (Efdaleddîn, 1326, p. 67; Karan, 2021, p. 43).

The following incident is noteworthy in explaining the usual process of economic measures: Sa'd ibn Mu'az (d. 627) of the Ansar was a friend of Umayya ibn Khalaf (d. 624) in Mecca. When Umayyah traveled to Medina, he would visit Sa'd, and when Sa'd went to Mecca, he would stay as a guest of Umayyah. Shortly after the hijrah of the Muslims to Medina, Sa'd went to Mecca for Umrah and met Abū Jahl (d. 624), while Umayyah was with him. Abū Jahl asked who Sa'd was. When Umayyah introduced Sa'd, he said threatening him: "Be careful, I see that you are circumambulating the Ka'bah in safety in Mecca, whereas you have harbored those who changed their religion and you say that you are helping them. By Allah, if you had not been with Umayya, you would not have been able to return to your family safely." At this point, Sa'd said: "Beware, by Allah, if you forbid me from this circumambulation, I will do something more severe than this against you, and I will cut your trade route through Medina and forbid you from it." (Wākidi, 1409, p. 1/35; Bukhārī, 1413, p. "Maghāzi," 2; Şiblî en-Nu'mānî, 2003, p. 205; Apak & Demircan, 2021, p. 231). It does not seem politically possible for the polytheists, who wanted to prevent even the circumambulation of visitors in Mecca, to remain unrequited. This account can be considered the first indication of plans for economic measures against the Quraysh polytheists involving the Mecca-Damascus trade route (Apak & Demircan, 2021, p. 231; Bukhārī, 1413, p. "Meğâzi," 2; Özdemir, 2001, p. 16; Şiblî en-Nu'mānî, 2003, p. 205; Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/35).

It was attempted to put pressure on caravans by means of ghazwahs and sariyyahs organized after hijrah and before the Battle of Badr, but no clashes took place (Fayda, 1992a). For this purpose, four ghazwa and seven sariyya were organized (Mahmudov, 2005, p. 63). Detailed information about these sariyyahs will not be given, but they will be evaluated within the framework of the subject of this article. The first of these sariyyahs was the sariyya of Hamza ibn Abdulmuttalib (d. 625)

(*ʿĪs sariyya*). This sariyya set out with 30 cavalries under the command of Hamza to meet the Quraysh caravan returning from Damascus and traveling to Mecca. When they met the caravan led by Abū Jahl, Hamza and his soldiers took sides for battle. No clash took place due to the mediation of Majdī ibn Amr, who was an ally of both sides (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/9; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/595, 2/609; Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/3-4). Abū Jahl returned to Mecca with his companions and caravan, and Hamza returned to Medina with his companions. It can be said that the Prophet was pleased that there was no conflict in this incident (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/10; Özdemir, 2001, pp. 22-23; Hattāb, 1995, p. 54).

The Prophet sent 60 cavalry under the command of Ubaydah ibn Hāris to the region of Rābigh and Saʿd ibn Abū Waqqās (d. 55/675) to the region of Harrār to keep the Mecca-Damascus Quraysh trade route under pressure. No clashes occurred in these sariyyahs (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/10-11; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/591-600; Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/4-5; Hattāb, 1988, p. 57). Based on this information, the Quraysh were intimidated and declared their sovereignty in these regions. It can be said that Muslims achieved their goal of harassment and intimidation as part of their economic measures (Özdemir, 2001, pp. 25-26).

The Prophet traveled to Abwa to meet the Quraysh caravan without any confrontation. It made a treaty with the Banū Damra, agreeing not to attack each other and to unite against their enemies. This agreement was reduced to writing (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/11-12; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/591, 1375, pp. 3/142; Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/5). Afterward, he went to Buwāt Ghazwa to meet the Quraysh caravan, which included Umayya ibn Khalaf. It ended without any conflict (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/12; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 3/142; Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/5-6). Later, the Ghazwa of Zuʿl-Ushayrā was undertaken to meet the Quraysh caravan on its way to Damascus (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/12). In these ghazwahs, agreements were reached with some tribes, and the Quraysh caravan was returned without being encountered (Hattāb, 1988, p. 59).

Seventeen months after hijrah, the Prophet asked Abdullah ibn Jahsh (d. 625) to go as far as Batn al-Nahla between Tāif and Mecca and observe the Quraysh caravan coming from the south. A clash occurred between them and the Quraysh caravan. In this sariyya, Amr ibn Hadramī was killed, the other polytheists in the caravan were taken prisoner, and the caravan was captured (Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/7). Abdullah and his companions were condemned by Muslims for fighting in the forbidden month (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/13-14; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 1/601-602; Ibn Saʿd, 1410, pp. 2/7). A verse (Surat al-Baqarah 2/217) compared the ruling on

fighting in the forbidden (*haram*) month with the behavior of the polytheists. It stated that the behavior of the polytheists was the greater sin (Karaman, Çağrıç, Dönmez, & Gümüş, 2004, pp. 1/341-343). The polytheists, who realized that the use of the trade routes they had been using for centuries could be prevented by the Muslims, realized that they had to take the Muslims in Medina seriously. Therefore, Batn al-Nahla Sariyya is considered one of the reasons for the Battle of Badr (Fayda, 1992a, p. 202).

There was ongoing diplomatic traffic between Meccan polytheists and Muslims. The caravan was the main reason for the start of the Badr Battle. The caravan's pursuit was aimed at continuing the de facto state of war that started with hijrah, with the economic blow to be applied to polytheists. In fact, in the Ghazwa of Zu'l-Ushayrah, which had taken place three or four months earlier, they had set out to meet the same caravan on the way out. Badr Ghazwa took place when they set out to meet the caravan on the way back (Ibn Sa'd, 1410, pp. 2/6). In the second year of hijrah (624), the Prophet heard that a large trade caravan led by Abū Sufyān was returning from Syria. He gathered his companions and said, "Here is the caravan of Quraysh! It is hoped that Allah will make it a booty for you" and invited them to follow the caravan (Ibn Sa'd, 1410, pp. 2/8; Fayda, 1992b, pp. 325-327). Upon receiving this news, Abū Sufyān asked for help from Mecca, changed the caravan route and brought it to Mecca. The Badr Ghazwa took place with the army prepared by Meccan polytheists to support the caravan and ended with the victory of the Muslims (Fayda, 1992b, pp. 325-327). After the defeat at Badr, the merchants of Mecca searched for different routes to bring their caravans safe. They tried to reach Syria through Iraq on the Najid Road, which was not a busy trade route (Tuysuz & Hira, 2018, p. 467).

Abū Sufyān, seeking to avenge his defeat in Badr, launched a sudden raid on Medina, set fire to the date palms belonging to the Muslims in the valley of Urayd, killed one of the Ansar and his laborer and set off for Mecca. When the Prophet heard the news, he set out with a force of 200 people composed of Muhajir and Ansar. However, when he could not reach Abū Sufyān's army, he returned to Medina (Ibn Sa'd, 2001, pp. 2/27-28; Ibn Ishāk, 1398, pp. 1/135). A few months after this incident, news of a Quraysh caravan on the Najid-Iraq road arrived. With the Mecca-Syria route largely closed to them, the Meccans began to use the Najid-Iraq route instead (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/197-198; Hattāb, 1995, pp. 160-161; Özdemir, 2001, pp. 29-30; Önkāl, 2001, p. 487). The caravan was captured with the sariyya organized under the command of Zayd ibn Hārīsa (d. 8/629). Most of the people in

the caravan managed to escape. The guide Furāt, one of the captives, was released when he became a Muslim (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/197-198; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 2/50; Ibn Sa‘d, 1410, pp. 3/33; Önkāl, 2001, p. 487). Through this sariyya, the Muslims also took control of the Mecca-Iraq-Syria road. This resulted in a disaster for the economic life of Mecca (Hattāb, 1995, p. 162; Apak, 2018, p. 231).

Economic factors are also among the reasons that led to the Battle of Uhud. The Quraysh polytheists, who could not use the Mecca-Syria trade route after the Battle of Badr, began to search for the Iraq trade route, which they considered an alternative after the Iraq trade route came under the control of the Muslims as a result of the Qarada Sariyya. To avenge Badr and regain their commercial interests, the polytheists used caravan goods that escaped from Badr and reached Mecca to finance the war they planned (Apak, 2018, pp. 231-232). Until Uhud, these goods were sold and converted into gold and left to Abū Sufyān. The reason that brought the polytheists to war again was their profit from the caravan. This is clearly stated in the verse (al-Anfal 8/36) (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 1/199-200). Notably, the polytheists used the goods of the commercial caravans as financing in Uhud. Thus, as long as the Quraysh polytheists were economically strong, they would continue to be a danger to Medina (Özdemir, 2001, p. 34).

Although the Quraysh appeared to have been victorious at Uhud, they could neither secure their commercial relations nor cause any damage to the territory of Medina. In fact, the Muslims maintained their influence in the surrounding areas with their sariyyahs to Bi‘rīmaūna and Zāturrikā in the east and Dūmat al-Jandal in the north. Both the northern routes to Egypt and Syria and the Iraq route to the northeast were close to the Meccan caravans. On the other hand, the Jews of Banī Nadir dominated the northern road of Medina and agreed with the tribes in the neighboring regions against the Medinans (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2023, pp. 75-79, 146).

In the Battle of Khandak, the Jews invited the polytheists of Mecca and other polytheist tribes to form an alliance against the Muslims by offering them a year’s harvest of their date crops. With this financial contribution, many tribes organized themselves against Muslims (Apak, 2018, p. 244). Watt stated that at the time of the Battle of Khandak, the crops had been harvested before the usual time with the Prophet’s foresight. Thus, the Meccan polytheists had difficulty finding fodder for their horses (Watt, 2016, p. 62). Caravans carrying supplies to enemy soldiers are intercepted, and the enemy’s food is confiscated in Khandak (Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 3/230-231; Apak & Demircan, 2021, p. 288). Owing to this measure taken in

the Khandak, the course of the war changed, and the war ended with the fewest casualties. The Prophet, who met with the Gatafan tribe to disrupt the unity of the allied army in the Khandak, offered one-third of the Medina date harvest. He gave it up after the Medinans did not want it (Wākidi, 1409, pp. 2/477-478; Ibn Hishām, 1375, pp. 2/223; Apak, 2018, pp. 251-252). Even though the economic measure taken by the Prophet during the war to avoid damage to the allied army was not finalized, it is valuable in viewing the Prophet's strategy.

The Prophet continued to send sariyyahs to the surrounding areas (Wākidi, 1409, 2/553; 2/774; Ibn Sa'd, 1410, 2/66-67, 2001, 1/122-123; Mahmudov, 2009). The Meccans earned their livelihood by organizing caravans to the north and south of Mecca in the summer and winter seasons. The Prophet managed to control the northern caravan route from Medina to Egypt and Syria. Abdullah ibn Jahsh and the Qarada sariyya controlled the trade routes to the south of Mecca. With the embargo decision of Sumāma, the influence of Muslims extended as far as Yemāma in the east of the Najid region (Muhammed Hamidullah, 2023, pp. 96-97).

### Sumāma's Embargo

Located at the center of trade routes from north to south and east to west, Yamāma was an economically important region with a geopolitical position and fertile valleys (Askar, 2012, pp. 96-97). Sumāma ibn Usāl was one of the two rulers of the tribe of Banī Hanifa living in this region. This tribe responded negatively to the Prophet's invitation letters (Ibn Hishām, 1375, 2/607; Bilge, 2013, pp. 399-400; Hocaoğlu, 2022, p. 106). During his journey to Mecca for Umrah, Sumāma was captured by Muhammad ibn Maslama (d. 663), the commander of the Quratā Sariyya, and taken to Medina. Sumāma was invited to embrace Islam, but he did not immediately convert to Islam. When he was released without ransom after three days, he became a Muslim because of the good treatment he received. Then, Sumāma travelled to Mecca and performed Umrah. While some of the Quraysh, who were disturbed by his visit to Ka'bah by bringing Talbiya, wanted to kill him, some wanted him to be released because of trade relations with Yamāma. Upon this, Sumāma was released and said, "I have followed the best of religions, the religion of Muhammad. From now on, not even a grain of food will come to you from Yamāma until he gives permission." (Bukhārī, 1413, p. "Megāzi", 72; "Cihād", 59). Thus, he declared an economic embargo on the Quraysh. Sumāma prevented grain and food from being sent to Mecca. The Meccans asked the Prophet to mediate in lifting the embargo. The Prophet sent a letter to Sumāma, and the embargo was lifted. With the initiatives of the Messenger of Allah, Sumāma allowed the shipment of

provisions and other necessities to Mecca (Ibn Hishām, 1375, 2/638-640; Muslim, 1413, “Cihād ve Siyer,” 60; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, pp. 75-76; Çubukçu, 2010, p. 131/132; Bilge, 2013, p. 399; Apak, 2017, pp. 255-256).

### **Economic Aspects of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah**

One of the reasons (perhaps the biggest one) that led the Quraysh polytheists to accept the Treaty of Hdaybiyah was that they were under severe economic pressure. Because the Muslims had taken control of the Mecca-Syria trade routes. Thus, trade caravans, the only source of livelihood in the region, were prevented. When Sumāma ibn Usāl became a Muslim, it became difficult for food to come to Mecca from the east, from the Najid and Yamāma regions. Banī Khuzā’ah, allied with the Prophet, did not let the Quraysh pass on the Yamāma side. They also began to realize that they could not intimidate Muslims with wars (Muhammed Hamidullah, 1998, pp. 297-299). Therefore, they became willing to ensure the security of their trade routes by making an agreement with Muslims. One of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah articles highlights the importance and economic dimension of caravans for Meccans. The following clause of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah is intended to ensure the safety of trade caravans: “Both sides will ensure the safety and security of the territories under their control for the passage of caravans, as well as for pilgrimage and Umrah.” (Muhammed Hamidullah, 1998, pp. 297-299). In this agreement, security was provided for the trade routes of the people of Tāif as well as the Meccans (Ibn Hishām, 1375, 2/607; Abū Ubayd, n.d., p. 206; Baladhuri, 1417, 1/351; Muhammed Hamidullah, 2001, p. 81; Aycan, 1993, p. 223).

### **Abū Basīr Incident**

Abū Basīr from Quraysh was imprisoned by the Quraysh tribe because he had become a Muslim. He could not stay with Muslims in accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Hdaybiyah (Wākidi, 1409, 2/624-625). He settled in Sif al-Bahr on the Red Sea coast, or according to another narration, in Īs (Wākidi, 1409, 2/627). Other Muslims, such as Abū Jandal, who were Muslims but could not come to Medina, came to Abū Basīr. Their number is said to have reached 70; in some narrations, it is said to have reached 300 (Buraigish, 1996, p. 89). When this group began to harass the caravans of the Quraysh in the region, the Meccan polytheists demanded that the Prophet change the terms of the agreement (Buraigish, 1996, pp. 96-97). Accepting this, the Prophet sent Abū Basīr and his companions a letter informing them that they could come to Medina. Abū Basīr had passed away. The others went to Madina (Wākidi, 1409, 2/629; Kandemir, 1994, p. 101). The insist-

ent proposals of Quraysh in the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah and the proposal to change this article by Quraysh, which was accepted despite the objections of the Muslims, highlight the importance of trade caravans for Meccan polytheists and the effect of economic sanctions on politics. Although these activities of Abū Basir and his companions, which took place at a time when the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah was in force, were based on their individual preferences, this event was important because of its economic impact and because it was a kind of boycott.

### Conclusion

After hijrah to Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) implemented economic measures to tackle the political and economic problems of Muslims at a time when they had few assets and many enemies. These measures also point to the political foundations of economic measures. After hijrah, the Prophet took several internal and external measures to help Muslims maintain their economic existence. It can be categorized the measures he took within Medina as internal measures and those he took outside Medina as external measures.

The measures he took within the borders of Medina for Muslims to achieve their economic freedom were the establishment of *muāhāt* (brotherhood agreements), the Constitution of Medina (*Wasīkah*), the *suffa* (a shelter for the poor and travelers), and the Medina Bazaar. The measures he took outside Medina were making agreements with some tribes around Medina, declaring dominance of the caravan routes, applying economic pressure, the embargo of Sumāma and the solution of the problem through the intermediary of the Prophet; the economic reasons leading to the Hudaibiyyah agreement and the boycott of Abū Basir. In the process of statehood in the Medina period, the economic sanctions taken by the Prophet against the Meccan polytheists were significant. These sanctions were effective in the process of Meccan polytheists, whose livelihood depended on trade, surrendering to Muslims and Islamization. These economic measures were to protect themselves from the threats, persecution, and attacks of the polytheists and to unify against all adversaries. The Muslims, who had been forced to migrate and leave behind all their possessions, grew stronger through these economic strategies and ultimately triumphed over their enemies.

The characterization of the sariyyahs as looting, as asserted by some orientalist, is a biased and superficial assessment. For the sariyyahs and ghazwahs (military campaigns) to be considered looting, the party conducting them would have to be a looting gang, and the Quraysh polytheists would have to be victims. However,

neither were the Quraysh polytheists oppressed nor were the Muslims acting as looting gangs. The motivations behind these sariyyahs were rooted in the historical context that began during the Meccan period and the ongoing state of war between the two sides. Taking economic measures in political relations and wars has a feature that affects the politics between the parties and puts them ahead in winning the war. Examining the events within a holistic framework is sufficient to comprehend the measures implemented against caravans.

The reason for the economic policies carried out by the Prophet was that the Muslims had difficulty in living their religion in Mecca and had to emigrate from their homeland, their efforts for material and spiritual existence in Medina, and the efforts of the polytheists, Jews and neighboring Arab tribes to prevent the Muslims from living in peace and security in this new land. While it does not attribute the spread of Islam solely to these economic measures, it emphasizes their significant role in facilitating the dissemination of Islam and the recognition of its political existence. The measures taken for economic independence and regulations have applicable aspects for today. These days, when the significance of the economic independence of Muslims is felt the most, witnessing the difficulties experienced by the Prophet in this regard in his life and understanding the measures and sanctions he took to solve these problems will guide those seeking solutions.

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