# Navigating Religious Tensions: An Analytical Study of the Hadith "Expel the Polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula" and its Role in Preventing Conflict

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**Abstract**

Islam's stance on dealing with non-Muslims is one of the foundational topics in Islamic thought. Among the key principles of a Muslim's interaction with others are: recognizing the existence of the other, freedom of religion, the lack of any authority to coerce someone into Islam, and kindness and justice should govern interactions with non-Muslims in general. Moreover, Islam explicitly permits marriage between a Muslim and a person of the People of the Book. Despite the clarity of these Islamic values and principles that promote peaceful coexistence and peacebuilding, some texts and reports fall under the category of "problematic hadith," (Arabic: الحديث المشكل, *hadith al-mushkil*), such as the hadith: "Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula." A group of Muslims has adhered to the literal interpretation of this hadith and similar problematic texts, leading them to conclusions that undermine the principles of Muslim-non-Muslim relations. This has resulted in extremism, the creation of conflicts, and the rejection of efforts toward peacebuilding and fostering a culture of pluralism and peaceful coexistence. This research aims to study a problematic hadith related to Islam's position on the "other," which on the surface may suggest that Muslims should only deal with non-Muslims through war and violence. It also aims to explore the views of scholars in explaining the hadith. The research will employ both inductive and analytical methodologies, tracing the narrations of the hadith from the six major books of hadith, analyzing them, and contextualizing them within Islam's stance on the "other." The key findings of the research include that the hadith is not precise, absolutely clear, and lucid, and not *Muhkam* (established meaning) in its meaning. Nevertheless, scholars have offered varied interpretations. Adopting the views of some scholars in this matter undermines fundamental, universally agreed-upon principles. Furthermore, in the era of globalization, with the world more interconnected, and with the widespread acceptance of principles of cultural diversity, pluralism, acceptance of the "other," and freedom of religion, it is more prudent to follow the majority of scholars who negate the apparent meaning of this problematic hadith. Instead, the guiding principle should be kindness and justice in dealing with others, as long as they do not attack or fight us.

**Keywords:** Problematic Hadith, Arabian Peninsula, Jews and Christians, Polytheists, Six Major Hadith Collections, Religious Conflict, Peaceful Coexistence, Hejaz.

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## Overview

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. Praise be to Allah, and may peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, his companions, and those who follow them.

There is no doubt that Islam is based on divine revelation, namely, the Noble Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah of the Prophet. The understanding of these two sources is governed by principles that have been established and elaborated upon by scholars. Moreover, the meanings of some texts of the Sunnah, after verification of their authenticity, fall under the categories of absolutely clear and lucid (*qat'i*) or ambiguous (*dhanni*) in their meaning. Scholars mention this fact as one of the reasons for differences among them.

One of the well-known technical terms in the science of hadith is "problematic hadith" (*al-hadith al-mushkil*) or "problematic reports" (*mushkil al-athar*). Among the works and publications on this subject is *Mushkil al-Hadith* by Ibn Qutaybah, and Imam al-Tahawi also authored a work titled *Mushkil al-Athar.*

Problematic hadith (*al-hadith al-mushkil*) refers to a hadith whose meaning is difficult to understand or reconcile because it appears to contradict other established sources of Islamic knowledge, such as the Qur'an, other hadiths, consensus (*ijma'*), or logical reasoning. The problem may arise from several factors, including:

1. Apparent contradiction between the hadith and a verse of the Qur'an.
2. Apparent conflict between two or more hadiths.
3. Conflict with scholarly consensus (*ijma'*).
4. Conflict with analogical reasoning (*qiyas*).
5. Contradiction with reason or rational principles.
6. Ambiguity in the wording or meaning of the hadith, requiring external context or evidence to clarify its interpretation.

Scholars have developed methods to resolve these apparent contradictions by examining the chains of narration (*isnad*), contextual clues, linguistic analysis, and reconciling different reports to ensure that a correct and consistent understanding of the hadith is reached.

Notable works on this topic include *Mushkil al-Hadith* by Ibn Qutaybah and *Mushkil al-Athar* by Imam al-Tahawi, both of which deal with resolving such issues in hadith interpretation[1].

The study of the hadith has revealed an issue regarding the intended meaning of "the Arabian Peninsula" and the variation in the narrations about who is to be expelled: the polytheists or the People of the Book? One aspect of the complexity is that the majority of scholars hold the view that only the *Hejaz* region is subject to this expulsion, and not the rest of the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, they argue that this ruling does not apply to other parts of the Islamic world. Additionally, Al-Tahawi included this hadith among the problematic hadiths in his work, under the chapter: "Explanation of the Problematic Narrations from the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) Regarding His Command to Expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula."

It is well-known among scholars that Islam is founded on firm principles in dealing with others and that the legal texts concerning this matter revolve around peace, which is the general principle governing Muslim and non-Muslim relations, and war, which is an exception with specific rulings that differ from the general principles.

This research will address the following questions:

1. What are the various sources and interpretations of the hadith in the six major hadith collections?
2. What are the general characteristics that highlight the problematic aspects of this hadith, and what positions have the hadith commentators taken in resolving these issues?

## Part 1: Narrations of the Hadith in Sources of the Six Major Hadith Collections

**Firstly: The Narration of the Hadith in Sahih *al-Bukhari*:**
Ibn `Abbas said, "Thursday! What (great thing) took place on Thursday!" Then he started weeping till his tears wetted the gravels of the ground. Then he said, "On Thursday the illness of Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) was aggravated and he said, "Fetch me writing materials so that I may have something written to you after which you will never go astray." The people (present there) differed in this matter and people should not differ before a prophet. They said, "Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) is seriously sick.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Let me alone, as the state in which I am now, is better than what you are calling me for." The Prophet (ﷺ) on his death-bed, gave three orders saying, "Expel the pagans from the Arabian Peninsula, respect and give gifts to the foreign delegates as you have seen me dealing with them." I forgot the third (order)" (Ya'qub bin Muhammad said, "I asked Al-Mughira bin `Abdur-Rahman about the Arabian Peninsula and he said, 'It comprises Mecca, Medina, Al-Yama-ma and Yemen." Ya'qub added, "And Al-Arj, the beginning of Tihama" [2].

The hadith appears three times in *Sahih al-Bukhari* as follows:

1. **Book of Military Expeditions** (Kitab al-Maghazi), Chapter on "The Illness and Death of the Prophet (peace be upon him)"
2. **Book of Jihad (Fighting for the Cause of Allah)** (Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar), Chapter on "Can Intercession Be Made for the People of the Covenant *(Dhimmi)* and How to Deal with Them"
3. **Book of Jizyah and Mawaada'ah** (Kitab al-Jizya wa al-Muwada'a), Chapter on "Expelling the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula" without mentioning Christians.

These instances in *Sahih al-Bukhari* put forward the following points:

- In all three places where Imam al-Bukhari compiled the hadith, he used the phrase **"Expel the polytheists"** rather than **"Expel the Jews and Christians"**.
- The context of the hadith is of war and jihad, as indicated by its inclusion in the *Books of Jihad, Military Expeditions,* and *Jizya.*
- Interestingly, the hadith appears as the Prophet's (peace be upon him) **recommendation or advice** to his *ummah*, rather than as a direct command from the Prophet himself. This is further clarified in other hadith sources in the six major collections.
- The latter part of the hadith provides a description of the boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula, which offers additional insight into the geographical context.
- The hadith explicitly commands the expulsion of polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula, yet Imam al-Bukhari's chapter title focused on the **expulsion of the**

**Jews**, creating a clear distinction between the phrasing of the hadith and the chapter heading.

**Secondly: The narration of the Hadith in Sahih *Muslim:***
The hadith appears in two locations in *Sahih Muslim*, as follows:[3]
1. **Book of Wills** (Kitab al-Wasiyya), Chapter on "Leaving No Inheritance for Those Who Have Nothing to Leave." This version aligns and harmonizes with the wording of the narrations in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
2. **Book of Jihad** (Kitab al-Jihad wa al-Siyar), Chapter on "Expelling the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula." However, the wording here differs from Imam al-Bukhari's: **"Jabir b. 'Abdallah said he was told by 'Umar b. al-Khattab that he had heard God's Messenger say, "I will certainly expel the Jews and the Christians from Arabia so as to leave only Muslims in it." Muslim transmitted it. A version has, "If I live, God willing, I will certainly expel the Jews and the Christians from Arabia."**

Notable points regarding Imam Muslim's narration of the hadith include:
- The narration unique to *Sahih Muslim* presents the statement in the form of a **plan or intention** of the Prophet (peace be upon him), indicating his determination to expel the Jews and Christians. It does not appear as a **recommendation or advice**, as it does in *Sahih al-Bukhari*.
- Imam Muslim includes both narrations: one regarding the expulsion of polytheists and another specifically mentioning the **expulsion of Jews and Christians**, whereas Imam al-Bukhari did not include this latter wording, either in the chapter titles or the text of the hadith.
- Imam Muslim's chapter title refers to the **expulsion of both Jews and Christians**, while Imam al-Bukhari's chapter title focuses solely on the expulsion of the **Jews**.

This analysis highlights the subtle differences in the approach taken by Imam Muslim and Imam al-Bukhari in presenting the same hadith, which influences both the interpretation and the broader understanding of its meaning and application

**Thirdly: The narration of the Hadith in *Sunan Abi Dawud:*[4]**
- It is worth noting the **similarity between Imam Muslim's compilation of the hadith and that of Imam Abu Dawood**, as the latter also included both narrations: one with the wording referring to the **polytheists** and the other mentioning **Jews and Christians**. The first appears as a **recommendation**, and the second as a **firm decision** by the Prophet (peace be upon him), much like what was explained earlier in the commentary on Imam Muslim's compilation of the hadith.
- However, **Imam Abu Dawood included the hadith in a chapter titled: "On Expelling the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula,"** similar to Imam al-Bukhari's title, without mentioning Christians, as Imam Muslim did.

**Fourthly: The narration of the Hadith in *Jami` at-Tirmidhi*:**
1. *Imam al-Tirmidhi* also narrated the hadith in the **Book of *Siyar***, in the chapter titled "What Has Been Narrated About Expelling the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula."
2. The text of the hadith in ***Sahih al-Bukhari*** mentions the expulsion of polytheists without mentioning Jews or Christians, whereas **Imam Muslim** and **Imam Abu Dawood** included narrations that mention both the expulsion of polytheists and the expulsion of Jews and Christians.
3. The specific wording that includes Jews and Christians instead of polytheists is as follows: It is narrated by *'Umar bin Al-Khattab* that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: **"If I live - if Allah wills - I will expel the Jews and the Christians from the Arabian Peninsula."**[5]
4. Thus, ***Imam al-Bukhari*** differed by not mentioning Jews and Christians in the text of the hadith, instead his narrations focused on polytheists. In contrast, ***Imam al-Tirmidhi's*** approach excluded the mention of polytheists altogether, focusing solely on Jews and Christians.
5. Furthermore, ***Imam al-Tirmidhi*** narrated the hadith in a manner that reflects the Prophet's determination to carry out the expulsion, rather than as a recommendation. This contrasts with Imam al-Bukhari's approach, who presented the hadith as a recommendation rather than a firm intention of the Prophet (peace be upon him). Thus, Imam al-Tirmidhi differs by portraying it as a decisive action rather than a bequest.
Lastly, I did not find any references to *Imam al-Nasa'i* or *Ibn Majah* compiling this hadith in their respective *Sunan*.

**Comparative Analysis of the hadith narrations in the six major hadith collections:**
Upon comparing the narrations of the six major hadith collections that include this hadith, the following observations can be made:
**First:** The notion of **determination** (ʿazīma) and **recommendation** (waṣiyya) regarding the expulsion of Jews and Christians appears in *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abi Dawood*. However, in *Sahih al-Bukhari*, it is mentioned solely as a recommendation, not as a firm intention. In contrast, *Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi* presents it as a firm **determination** rather than a recommendation. The narration indicating determination is reported by **Jabir narrating it by Umar**, while the one indicating recommendation is reported by **Ibn Abbas**.
**Second:** As for the chapter titles, both *Sahih al-Bukhari* and *Sunan Abi Dawood* use the title: **Chapter on the Expulsion of the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula**, without mentioning the Christians. Meanwhile, *Sahih Muslim* and *Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi* title their chapters as **Chapter on the Expulsion of the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula**.
**Third:** The text of the hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhari* specifies the **expulsion of polytheists** without mentioning Jews or Christians. In contrast, both *Sahih Muslim* and *Sunan Abi Dawood* include narrations that mention **the expulsion of polytheists as well as Jews and Christians**. However, *Jamiʿ al-Tirmidhi* focuses exclusively on the expulsion of **Jews and Christians**, without mentioning polytheists, which is directly opposite to the approach taken by *Sahih al-Bukhari*.

## Part 2: Hadith Analysis: Features of the Hadith and the Interpretation of the Commentators in Resolving its Problematic Aspects:

**This part is going to be discussed in several sections as follows:**

<u>Section 1: Issue in the Chain of Transmission (Isnad)</u>

One peculiar and unique aspect of *Sahih al-Bukhari's* narration of this hadith is the transmission by **Qubaysa on Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna**. It is notable that the same hadith, with the same chain of narrators, is also transmitted by **Qutayba** in the *Book of Maghazi* (Military Expeditions). Ibn Hajar mentions this in *Fath al-Bari*:

"Qubaysa narrated to us from Ibn 'Uyayna—this is how most of the narrators transmitted it from al-Farbari, as well as in the narration of al-Nasafi. There is no other instance in *Sahih al-Bukhari* where Qubaysa narrates by Sufyan ibn 'Uyayna except in this hadith, although his narrations from Sufyan al-Thawri are numerous. Al-Jiyani mentioned that in Ibn al-Sakan's narration from al-Farbari, **Qutayba** appears in place of **Qubaysa**, and the narration of this very hadith by Qutayba is well known."

This observation highlights an inconsistency in *Sahih al-Bukhari's* isnad, where most versions have Qutayba in the chain, yet here it appears as Qubaysa, adding a degree of complexity to the isnad's authenticity and how it was transmitted.[6] Indeed, **al-'Ayni** also confirmed this issue. In his commentary on *Sahih al-Bukhari*.[7]

<u>Section 2: Issues of Appropriateness in regards to the Hadith Chapter Title</u>

It has been previously mentioned that *Imam Bukhari* included this hadith in the *Book of Jihad and Military Expeditions*, under the title **"Chapter on Whether One Can Seek Intercession for the People of the Covenant and Their Treatment."** Notably, in some versions, there exists another chapter title either preceding or following this one without the inclusion of a hadith. This suggests that the hadith was presented in relation to both chapters.

**Ibn Hajar** elaborates on this, noting that in all versions of *Sahih al-Bukhari* through al-Farbari, the chapter headings are as follows:

- **Chapter on accepting and respecting foreign delegates**
- **Chapter: Can one intercede for the Dhimmi or deal with them?**

However, in the narration of **Abu Ali ibn Shabuyh** from al-Farbari, the order is reversed:

- **Chapter: Can one intercede for the Dhimmi or deal with them?**
- **Chapter on accepting and respecting foreign delegates**

In this arrangement, **Ibn Hajar** argues that the confusion is resolved, as the hadith of **Ibn Abbas** aligns with the chapter on accepting and respecting foreign delegates, where he states, "And honor the delegations." This contrasts with the other chapter title, suggesting that the chapter was intended to include a relevant hadith but did not achieve this alignment.

Moreover, **al-Nasafi** omitted the chapter on the gifts of delegations entirely, retaining only the title on intercession, where he included the mentioned hadith of Ibn Abbas. Conversely, this is not the case in the narration of **Muhammad ibn Hamzah** by al-Farbari.[8]

**Al-'Ayni** similarly commented in his book *Al-'Umdah*:

In seeking a correlation between the two chapters, there is an element of forced interpretation. Some scholars have attempted to justify this correlation by suggesting that

the command to "expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula" implies a cessation of intercession, while the emphasis on honoring delegations necessitates good treatment. Alternatively, they suggest that the phrase "whether one can seek intercession for them" might be understood in the sense of "to" meaning "for"—that is, "whether they can be interceded for according to the Imam, and how they are to be treated."

Al-'Ayni then clarifies that the assertion that it necessitates the cessation of intercession implies that intercession is permissible only in cases of necessity, and that there is no such necessity in this context. The meaning of expulsion is clear and does not carry the implication of necessity "*Eqhtidha*" [9]

## Section 3: Who is Intended for Expulsion: The People of the Book or the Polytheists?

A prominent issue that arises at first glance is that some narrations command the expulsion of polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula, while others specifically mention the expulsion of the People of the Book, particularly the Jews. It is noteworthy that the term "polytheists" is not legally applied to the People of the Book, even though their belief system may contain elements of polytheism from an Islamic perspective.

The author of *Umdat al-Qari* discusses the issue of *Imam Bukhari* titling the chapter **"Chapter on Expelling the Jews from the Arabian Peninsula,"** while including a hadith that refers to the polytheists rather than the Jews. He states: "The Jews are mentioned in the chapter title because most of them affirm the oneness of Allah. If these are deemed deserving of expulsion, then others among the disbelievers are even more so."[10]

This analysis reveals the complexities and nuances in interpreting the texts, highlighting the need for careful consideration of the terminology used and the implications of such classifications within the Islamic legal framework".

Ibn Hajar pointed out a similar reasoning: "It seems that the author limited his mention to the Jews because they affirm the oneness of Allah, except for a few among them, and yet they were commanded to be expelled, which implies that the expulsion of others among the disbelievers is even more warranted."[11]

However, this interpretation is not without its complications, especially when considering the established texts that refer to both polytheists and the People of the Book, as previously discussed. Qur'an differentiates between the People of the Book and polytheists.

It is noteworthy that Ibn Hajar favored the narration regarding the expulsion of polytheists over that of the People of the Book, despite his interpretation that the hadith could apply to both polytheists and the People of the Book by extension: "The command to expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula appears in the narration of Al-Jurjani as 'expel the Jews,' while the former is more established."[12]

This highlights the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding the hadith, illustrating the tensions between various interpretations and the distinctions made within Islamic jurisprudence

In contrast to *Ibn Hajar's* view, *Imam Al-Tahawi* argues that the narration concerning the expulsion of the Jews is the correct interpretation, not that of the polytheists. He elucidates that "this hadith contains a contradiction with what we have narrated earlier in this chapter. Who were the ones that the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him)

commanded to be expelled from the Arabian Peninsula? For those whom he commanded to be expelled, as we have narrated previously in this chapter, are the Jews and Christians, while the polytheists are contrary to the Jews and Christians."

He expresses concern that this misunderstanding may have originated from *Ibn Uyaynah*, who reported the hadith by memory, and it is possible he mistakenly replaced "Jews and Christians" with "polytheists" without possessing sufficient legal knowledge to distinguish between them. *Al-Tahawi* emphasizes that the majority's preservation of the text is preferable to that of a single narrator who diverges from them.

He further asserts that the correct narration is that of expelling the Jews and Christians, not the polytheists, as they were the ones present during the time of the Prophet's death. The polytheists, having either converted to Islam or been fought against, had no remaining presence in the Arabian Peninsula. According to *Al-Tahawi's* reasoning[13].

Generally, based on this explanation and these texts, there should be no Jews or Christians in the Arabian Peninsula, let alone polytheists, which contrasts with the reality during the time of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the era of the four Rightly Guided Caliphs, and the entirety of Islamic governance.

This line of inquiry invites a deeper examination of historical contexts and textual interpretations, challenging established narratives and inviting critical reflection on the legacy of interfaith relations in Islamic history.

## Section 4: The issue of the concept of the Arabian Peninsula:

In terms of the "Arabian Peninsula" referenced in the Hadith, there are several points of view in Islamic tradition, including the following:

**First:** Almost **all Arab countries**, except for the Maghreb region, which includes the Gulf states and much of the Levant, including Palestine and Jordan.[14]

**Second:** In a **narration by Al-Bukhari**, the boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula are specified as follows: "Yaqoub ibn Muhammad reported that I asked Al-Mughira ibn Abdul Rahman about the Arabian Peninsula. He said, 'It comprises Mecca, Medina, Al-Yama-ma and Yemen." Ya'qub added, "And Al-Arj, the beginning of Tihama'"[15]

**Third:** According to Malik ibn Anas, narrated by Ibn Shuhab, the Arabian Peninsula is synonymous with **Al-Madinah**.[16]

In the book *"Awn al-Ma'bud,"* it states: "Malik ibn Anas meant by the Arabian Peninsula Medina itself."[17]

This understanding of the Arabian Peninsula suggests a specific geographical and cultural context, emphasizing the centrality of Makkah and Al-Madinah.

## Section 5: Discussion of relevant Issues to the Hadith: The Perspective of Scholars

The scholars of hadith have extensively discussed the meaning of the Arabian Peninsula, yet they have not sufficiently addressed the implications of expelling non-Muslims from it, nor the rationale behind such actions. Moreover, they have largely overlooked the numerous Qur'anic principles that advocate for non-coercion and have not considered the Prophet's (peace be upon him) approach to dealing with dissenters.

Yet, the central issue with this hadith is its apparent contradiction with broad Qur'anic principles, many of which emphasize tolerance and coexistence. Key verses include:

- "If they withdraw from you and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then Allah has not granted you a way against them." 4:90.

- "Allah forbids you from being righteous to those who do not fight you in religion and do not expel you from your homes; you may be just towards them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly." 60:08.
- "Allah only prohibits you from turning to those who fought you in religion and expelled you from your homes, and supported others in your expulsion. Whoever turns to them is among the wrongdoers." 60.81.
- "There is no compulsion in religion." 2:256.
- "To you be your religion, and to me my religion." 109:6.
- "You are not a guardian over them." 4:80.

**These principles emphasize a fundamental approach to interactions with non-Muslims and stand in stark contrast to historical practices in Islamic history and the opinions of scholars across different schools of thought.**

As noted in "*Awn al-Ma'bud*," the directive to "expel the polytheists" implies that all polytheists, whether Jews, Christians, or Zoroastrians, should be removed from the Arabian Peninsula.[18]

However, the actual views of scholars reveal a more nuanced understanding, including the following points:

1. **Differentiation Among Non-Muslims**: Scholars generally differentiate between polytheists and the People of the Book, recognizing that the latter have a distinct status in Islamic law.
2. **Historical Context**: Many scholars emphasize the historical context of the hadith, suggesting it addressed specific circumstances during the Prophet's lifetime rather than establishing a universal principle applicable across all times and places.
3. **Principles of Coexistence**: The prevailing scholarly consensus leans toward the importance of coexistence and justice, aligning more closely with the aforementioned Qur'anic verses than with a strict application of this hadith.
4. **Interpretive Flexibility**: Scholars employ various interpretative methods to reconcile the apparent contradictions between the hadith and broader Islamic principles, demonstrating the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence.

In conclusion, the complexities surrounding this hadith require a careful analysis that considers both the specific historical context and the overarching principles of justice and tolerance in Islam.

However, the reality of the scholars' opinions can be summarized as follows:

**Firstly:** The ruling is specific to the Arabian Peninsula and does not extend to other Muslim lands. This implies that regions outside the Arabian Peninsula are considered legally suitable for the concept of peaceful coexistence between Muslims and non-Muslims, and that this hadith pertains solely to the Arabian Peninsula. There are differing views regarding the geographical boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula, with some scholars providing detailed delineations while others offer more concise definitions.

It should be noted that al-Tabari generalized the ruling of the hadith to encompass all Muslim territories, not just the Arabian Peninsula. However, as al-Tahawi pointed out, there is no evidence to support this generalization. He also affirmed that restricting the ruling to the Arabian Peninsula is the view of the early scholars and the salaf, which should not be altered[19].

**Secondly:** The ruling is not applied literally; rather, it is restricted to certain regions within the Arabian Peninsula, specifically the Hijaz. This perspective is held by the majority of scholars from the four major schools of thought. While this may seem peculiar, the strangeness diminishes when one considers that the hadith itself is problematic and contradicts the established principles of dealing with dissenters in Islam, as well as the established practices of the Prophet Muhammad in his interactions with them.

The hadith calls for expulsion, yet the scholars maintain that it is permissible for them to enter. Ibn Hajar states: "The prohibition on the presence of polytheists applies specifically to the Hijaz, which includes Mecca, Medina, al-Yamama, and their surrounding areas. There is a consensus that Yemen, despite being part of the Arabian Peninsula, does not fall under this prohibition." This is the position of the majority. Malik holds that polytheists may enter the sacred precincts for trade, while al-Shafi'i argues that they should not enter the sacred precincts at all without the permission of the Imam, specifically for the benefit of Muslims.[20]

Al-Nawawi states: "The accepted view attributed to Malik is that the Arabian Peninsula includes Mecca, Medina, al-Yamama, and Yemen. Malik, al-Shafi'i, and other scholars based their stance on this hadith, asserting the necessity of expelling non-Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula and prohibiting them from residing there. However, al-Shafi'i limited this ruling to certain areas of the Arabian Peninsula, specifically **the Hijaz**, which includes Mecca, Medina, al-Yamama, and their surroundings, excluding Yemen and other regions of the Arabian Peninsula based on other well-known evidence. Scholars assert that non-Muslims are not prohibited from passing through the Hijaz as travelers, but they are not allowed to stay for more than three days, according to *al-Shafi'i* and his supporters, except in Mecca and its sacred precincts, where it is impermissible for a non-Muslim to enter under any circumstances"[21].

Al-Nawawi further favored the limitation of this ruling in another context, indicating that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) intended the expulsion of Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula to **apply specifically to the Hijaz**. This is evidenced by the fact that *Umar ibn al-Khattab* exiled them to Tayma and Ariha, both well-known towns located in the Arabian Peninsula but not within the Hijaz.[22]

**Thirdly: The Principle is to Expel Non-Muslims from Muslim Lands Except in Cases of Necessity:**

Imam Ibn Hajar cites Al-Tabari on this matter: "Al-Tabari mentions in his legal commentary that the lawgiver has made it clear to the Muslim community that they should expel anyone who does not follow the religion of Islam from every town that belongs to Muslims, whether it is a land that its people accepted Islam or a land conquered by force. However, this is only required if there is no necessity for them, such as their role in developing or cultivating lands, or similar reasons."

He continues: If one were to argue that this ruling was specific to the city of the Prophet (peace be upon him) "Medina" and the Arabian Peninsula, and not applicable to the rest of the Islamic lands, since otherwise, this would have been clarified, I would respond by saying that we have already mentioned that if there is a necessity for them, they should not be expelled. Consider, for example, how the Prophet (peace be upon him) allowed the Jews of *Khaybar* to remain after their defeat by the Muslims in order to cultivate the land due to necessity. Similarly, *Abu Bakr* (may Allah be pleased with him) permitted the

Jews of *Khaybar* and the Christians of *Najran* to stay, and *'Umar* (may Allah be pleased with him) did the same with the Christians of Syria. He allowed them to remain because the Muslims were engaged in jihad, and there was a need for their contribution to the cultivation of the land.[23]

This text illustrates the principle that expelling non-Muslims from Muslim lands is the default, except in cases where their presence is necessary for economic or social reasons.

**Fourthly: The View of Those Who Do Not Fully Apply This Hadith**

*Al-Qurtubi* states: *Abu Hanifa* did not take this hadith into consideration, as he permitted non-Muslims to reside in the Arabian Peninsula.[24]

*Ibn Hajar* adds: According to the *Hanafi* school, it is generally permissible for non-Muslims to enter the Arabian Peninsula, except for the mosque. *Malik* allowed them to enter the Haram (sacred precinct) for trade, while *Al-Shafi'i* prohibited them from entering the Haram altogether, except with the permission of the Imam, and only for the benefit of the Muslims.[25]

*Al-'Ayni* comments: The *Hanafi* school permits the People of the Covenant (*Ahl al-Dhimma*) to enter the Sacred Mosque. This is based on the fact that the Prophet (peace be upon him) hosted the delegation of *Thaqif* in his mosque, even though they were still disbelievers, as narrated by *Abu Dawud*. The verse [in the Qur'an prohibiting them] is interpreted as preventing them from entering while having authority over it or dominating the Muslims regarding its governance and the maintenance of the mosque. Before the conquest of Mecca, they had this authority, but that ended after the conquest. Alternatively, the verse may refer to their entering the Kaaba while performing t*awaf* in a state of nudity, as was their ritual in the pre-Islamic period.[26]

This section highlights the differing opinions among Islamic scholars regarding the application of the hadith concerning non-Muslims entering the Arabian Peninsula and the sacred areas, particularly in relation to their roles and historical practices.

**Fifthly: It may be important to add this opinion, which suggests that the application of this hadith falls under the domain of *siyasah shar'iyyah* (Islamic governance) and rests in the hands of the ruler, rather than being an absolute, permanent ruling. Its application is depending on factors such as hostility, enmity, and the greater interest of the community. This view may be particularly relevant in the modern context.**

Supporting this opinion is the fact that Imam Muslim organized his *Sahih* with the following chapter headings: "Chapter on Expelling Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula," followed by "Chapter on Expelling the Jews from the Hijaz," and then "Chapter on the Permissibility of Fighting Those Who Break a Covenant." By considering these chapters together, it becomes apparent that the matter lies in the hands of the ruler and is contingent on considerations of public interest or enmity.

This interpretation emphasizes that the enforcement of this hadith is flexible and dependent on the ruler's discretion, balancing between issues of public safety, political strategy, and communal benefit.

**Conclusion:**

The key findings of this study are as follows:
1. The hadith regarding the expulsion of non-Muslims is reported by four of the six authors of the hadith collections. Some versions of the hadith explicitly mention the expulsion of polytheists, while others specify the expulsion of People of the

Book. *Ibn Hajar* favored the first view, while *Al-Tahawi* leaned toward the second. Some scholars considered the hadith as a directive (wasiyyah) from the Prophet (peace be upon him), while others viewed it as a decisive command that the Prophet intended to implement. The chain of transmission in *Al-Bukhari's* collection is odd, as there is no known report of *Qabisa* narrating by *Sufyan* in other hadith.

2. The hadith presents a complex issue, as it does not override the well-established principles of Islam's tolerance in dealing with non-Muslims within Muslim lands. The holy cities (Mecca and Medina, or the Hijaz) are sacred spaces for prayer and therefore, are treated as mosques, which non-Muslims are traditionally prohibited from entering.

3. Among the points of controversy regarding this hadith is whether it mandates the expulsion of all non-Muslims, based on the combination of various narrations, or whether it only applies to People of the Book or polytheists specifically. If only one group is meant to be expelled, then what is the purpose of the textual distinction? Another issue is the geographical scope: what are the precise boundaries of the Arabian Peninsula from which non-Muslims are to be expelled? If we conclude that the hadith applies only to the Hijaz, the ruling would not extend to other Islamic territories, where treaty agreements and the *dhimma* (protected status) system are applied according to established principles in Islamic jurisprudence.

The most likely conclusion I have reached is to interpret the hadith as an explanation of the verse: "O you who believe! The polytheists are impure, so let them not approach the Sacred Mosque after this year" 9:28). The commentators explained it as follows:

The lands of Islam, with respect to non-Muslims, are divided into three categories:

1. The Sacred Mosque (Al-Haram), where it is absolutely prohibited for non-Muslims to enter, whether they are under a covenant (dhimmi) or seeking security (musta'min), based on the apparent meaning of this verse. If a messenger from non-believer lands comes to the leader and the leader is in the Sacred Mosque, he does not permit him to enter. Instead, he sends someone outside the Sacred Mosque to hear the message. The scholars of *Kufa* allowed those under covenant to enter the Sacred Mosque.

2. The second category is the rest of the Hijaz region. Non-Muslims may enter with permission but may not stay longer than the duration of travel, which is three days. This is based on a narration from *Umar ibn Al-Khattab* (may Allah be pleased with him) who heard the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) say: 'If I live, God willing, I will expel the Jews and Christians from the Arabian Peninsula until I leave none but Muslims in it.' The Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away, but he left this instruction, saying: 'Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula.' *Abu Bakr* (may Allah be pleased with him) did not have the chance to carry this out, but *Umar* (may Allah be pleased with him) did so during his caliphate and granted traders from among them three days.

3. The third category is the rest of the lands of Islam, where non-Muslims may reside under a covenant or with security but may not enter mosques without the permission of a Muslim.[27]

I recommend further studying the hadith in the books of Islamic jurisprudence, the books of Quranic exegesis, and other hadith collections beyond the six famous ones.

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