

## **The Rigid Flexibility Model for Strategic Outcomes: Lessons Learned from the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah**

*(Model Keluwesan Tegar untuk Keberhasilan Strategik: Pelajaran dari Perjanjian Hudaibiyyah)*

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This article discusses simplicity and discipline, the two elements of rigid flexibility model to explain strategic outcomes using an important historical event. The objective is to strengthen the validity of the model and provide constructive arguments for the model to be applied in a new setting. In theory refinement, the richness and in-depth descriptions of constructs under consideration are highly sought. A historical event called the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah is portrayed; with decisions and actions that came out of the treaty are explained using the rigid flexibility framework. Analyzing this historical case, we proposed that there are related concepts, important practices and procedures that match the concepts of simplicity and discipline comparatively. It shows that the strategic outcomes could be realized using concepts and practices such as tolerance, consultations, giving preference for strategic outcomes, discipline in following order, simplified and easy-to-understand communication approach and emphasis on standard performances.*

*Keywords: Operations management; organizational flexibility; historical case; Treaty of Hudaibiyyah*

### **ABSTRAK**

*Artikel ini membincangkan simplisiti dan disiplin, dua elemen model keluwesan tegar untuk menerangkan keberhasilan strategik sebuah peristiwa bersejarah yang penting. Objektif artikel ini adalah untuk menguatkan kesahihan model dan menawarkan hujah yang membina supaya model ini dapat diaplikasikan pada persekitaran yang baru. Untuk memperelokkan sesuatu teori, penelitian mendalam sesuatu konstruk perlu dibuat. Sebuah peristiwa penting yang digelar Perjanjian Hudaibiyyah telah dipaparkan dengan mengambilkira keputusan dan aksi yang berlaku yang dianalisa dengan menggunakan rangkakerja model ini. Daripada analisa peristiwa ini, kami mencadangkan bahawa terdapat konsep-konsep yang berkaitan, amalan dan prosedur penting yang serupa dengan konsep simplisiti dan disiplin. Ia menunjukkan keberhasilan strategik dapat direalisasikan dengan mengamalkan konsep dan amalan tertentu seperti toleransi, perundingan, mengutamakan keberkasilan yang strategik, diikuti dengan disiplin untuk mematuhi perintah, pendekatan komunikasi yang ringkas dan mudah difahami, dan penekanan kepada piawai prestasi*

*Kata kunci: Pengurusan operasi; keluwesan organisasi; kes bersejarah; Perjanjian Hdaybiyyah*

## INTRODUCTION

It is very critical for organizations to adapt and adjust to constant changes in the environment where they operate. Business organizations, for example, need to manage the external influencing factors such as the changes in customer preferences, new competition, and new regulations by authorities. This requires organizations to have the ability to develop appropriate internal capability. Because of the importance of this capability, organizational flexibility in business organizations has been discussed for quite some time yet remains the trickiest one. Flexibility is seen as more of a potentiality rather than outcomes. It is not the destination, but more appropriately a continuous journey (Sushil 2001). Related studies on service operations flexibility, for example, have been conducted quite recently (Idris, Hassan & Rahman 2010; Alolayyan, Ali & Idris 2011a, 2011b, 2012). In general, experts agree that flexibility could be used to enhance business performance (Swamidass & Newell 1987; Fiegenbaum & Karnani 1991; Narasimhan & Das 1999).

Collins and Schmenner (1993) proposed the rigid flexibility model with their study on manufacturing industries, concentrating on strategies and their responsiveness to the market's requirements. These are made possible through simplified processes and discipline in procedures. In addition, the author of the present article personally contacted and engaged with the original main author of the rigid flexibility model, who agreed that the principles could potentially be applied to any organization, albeit requires adaptation and adjustments. Sushil (2001) offered 14 principles that 'demystify' flexibility, and seem to indirectly support the rigid flexibility principle.

This exploratory study using a historical case will focus on a single important event - the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah - an important event in the history of Arabia and Islam. After the accord, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was able to strengthen and solidify his position, creating competitive advantage and strategic outcomes for his newly established community. From the surface, the points of agreement in the treaty seemed to place him at a disadvantage. But strategically, it brought benefits that would lead to the conquest of Mecca, a clear victory for Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers. The strategic outcomes for Muslim are that the treaty (1) guaranteed a 10-year peace, (2) forced the opponents to officially acknowledge the rights of Muslims, and (3) quickened the conquest of Mecca which happened in the following year.

This article aims to find and highlight the practices and actions that deem to fit the characteristics of simplicity and discipline, two core ideas of the model. In a nutshell, this study intends to demonstrate that simplicity and discipline are universal concepts that are being practiced to gain competitive advantage in a different setting. Using historical events to illustrate an important decision making-process is not without basis. For instance, Gratan (2005, 2004) illustrated the Battle of Britain and the Cuban missiles crisis to demonstrate decision-making process in different situations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Before explaining the concepts of simplicity and discipline, which will be used to explain events relevant to the treaty, we will start this review with the organizational flexibility evolution in business in both the manufacturing and service context followed by the narrative of the treaty.

### ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

In many circumstances, organizations are forced to compromise their short-term gains for a more strategic outcome. In strategic planning, organizations set plans to achieve strategic goals such as gaining market share and maintaining leadership positions. However, during the implementation stage, many unexpected events occur. Some are more critical than others. For example, the entry of a new competitor in the market or a spike in oil prices because due to volatility of supply. In Malaysia, the entry of the newly established airline called Malindo threatens the market leader AirAsia. AirAsia now needs to concentrate on its strategic planning of regional expansion and fortify its present position in the present market. However, in general, AirAsia has organizational flexibility to navigate through the tide so that its expansion will not be interrupted.

Recently, Liu, Li and Wei (2009) studied the effects of organizational flexibility on new product development in an uncertain environment. Using manufacturing firms in China, organizational flexibility is divided into resource flexibility and operations competence capability (OCF). Resource flexibility, according to the authors is the 'inherent versatility' of the firm's resources; while OCF refers to the mobility to apply resources in the new field.

Upton (1995) argued that capital and information systems alone are insufficient to achieve flexibility and must be added up with additional important dimensions like workforce and the management itself as an important integration of flexibility. According to Correa and Gianesi (1994), firms sought manufacturing flexibility when facing environmental uncertainty and variability of output and found that uncertainty together with variability formed a rationale for the operations' interest in flexibility. Slack (2005) noted on the emerging importance of IT and other organizational sources, the so-called "infrastructural" flexibility; and also observed that the flexibility concepts "have resonance" in both manufacturing and service. A study was done by Aranda (2003) on the mediating effects of operations flexibility on service performances, whereby he adapted flexibility dimension taken from manufacturing studies.

At an operational level, managers can opt for two main flexibility dimensions: speed and variety (Verdu-Jover et al. 2004). The former refers to the ability to activate response in time, whereas the latter relates to the amount of capabilities firms have to respond to the demands of the environment. Gerwin (1987) related to specific levels of manufacturing processes such as individual performance, machine performance, manufacturing systems, warehousing management, production line, and others. In addition, flexibility is linked to seven sets of uncertainties, including mix, changeover, modification, rerouting, volume, material and sequencing. In another development, Slack (1987) grouped flexibility into four main types: product, mix, volume, and delivery. In addition, managers perceive and understand the concept based on their responsibilities, type of manufacturing, and resources availability.

As of late, the relationship between operations flexibility and other operations construct has also been addressed. For example, Wilson and Platts (2010) addressed the question of how mix flexibility is achieved during day-to-day operations, and found that at operational level, mix flexibility is achieved through shared resources, floor dependency, and simultaneity constraints.

In another study, Hallgren and Olhager, (2009) investigated the relationship between volume and product mix flexibility. They found that based on high or low levels of volume and mix flexibility combinations, flexibility configurations have demonstrated significant differences both in terms of operational performance and in the emphasis that was put into different flexibility-sourced factors. Hutchison and Das (2007) used a case study approach to examine and analyze the decision process that a firm undergoes in acquiring an advanced manufacturing system to obtain manufacturing flexibility for its operations. Meanwhile, Cousens, Szejczewski and Sweeney (2009) came out with a new conceptual framework to improve manufacturing flexibility by developing and testing a procedure that enables organizations to establish a competitive capability and progress toward manufacturing flexibility.

In the context of service firms, operations are being done in the presence of both customer and service personnel (Ramli, Fun & Idris 2009). Harvey, Lefebvr and Lefebvre (1997) argued that it is the intangibility of the service that enables firms to respond to environmental changes accordingly. This also corresponds to Johnston's (1994) definition of flexibility in service context as "a willingness of the service personnel to alter the nature of service to meet customer requirement." Therefore, as a result of high variability and uncertainties in the environment due to changing market needs, service providers are required to have better understanding of customer demand. Considering the changes in business environment, service organizations have no option but to consider being flexible in operations to maintain their competitive advantages.

Recently, Aranda (2003) studied flexibility in engineering service firms by adapting manufacturing flexibility terms such as flexibility in expansion; distribution of information; routing; equipment and personnel; market; services; and servuction, process, programming, and volume flexibility. Silvestro, Fitzgerald, Johnston & Voss (1992), on the other hand, proposed three dimensions of service flexibility—volume, delivery/speed flexibility, and specification flexibility and adopted the manufacturing flexibility concept for the service environment.

In their study of service operation and analyzing flexibility, Correa and Ganesi (1994) associated uncertainty and variability with unplanned change attributes. The critical concept is called the unplanned change. Managing unplanned change can be divided under two dimensions. One is labeled flexibility in dealing with change after the unplanned change has occurred. The second dimension is the ability in dealing with a certain amount of change and reducing the effect of change. This can be done by finding ways to control the changes by implementing strategies such as forecasting technique, maintenance system, parts standardization, and manufacturing focus. These strategies are to prevent and avoid change before it occurs.

Adler (1985) agreed that flexibility in service organizations is a useful tool to improve firms' competitive position in relation to the use of technologies in implementation and the decision-making process. Upton (1994) supported the idea and added that firms should create an infrastructure that allows system flexibility. As a result of the technological improvement and changes in customer preferences, service operations have become flexible, and this requires adjustment in the delivery process. Upton also pointed out that customers expect and prefer to get services at their convenient time and location. For example, cellular phone companies offer services for broader coverage and different time zones in countries with wide geographical area.

In this development, service organizations have to understand customers' activity patterns; and design accurate service delivery processes that meet customers' changing patterns. Changes in information technology have resulted in a significant change in service delivery processes that help service personnel to perform better while interacting with customers. Davis and Heineke (2005) proposed that reduction in customers' waiting time at counter services by improving

better service management of process design can certainly reduce customers' dissatisfaction and defection.

Technologies have been proven to be able to offer more opportunities in improving services processes. Collier (1994) had studied the electronic devices for check-in and check-out systems in the hotel industry, automatic toll booth in transportation and electronic fund transfer in banking services. He also found that the practices of "e-ticketing" in the airline business had a huge impact on ticket purchasing system, airport checking process, and service industries. Therefore, for effective response to customers' demand variations, improvement in services process design through the utilization of technology is another approach to increase flexibility of the service system.

#### RIGID FLEXIBILITY MODEL

The earlier version of the model focused on the benchmarking study of manufacturing practices and performance of 800 plants in five European countries (Collins, Cordon & Julien 1998). Collins and Schmenner (1993) defined flexibility as the realization of explicit statement of customers and end users' requirement that have to be met - for instance, shorter delivery time and product customization. Among all, the objective of their study is to determine the degree of differences in adopting a rigid flexibility model between the countries studied. The study helps future researches in forming a deeper understanding of the rigid flexibility model. Collins et al. (1998) found that the variables used in inventory management-warehousing, product cycle times, and total cycle times in manufacturing - are strongly supported by simplicity dimension. The authors also determined that product cycle time depends on the idea of lean attitude, management systems, and process capability. Finally, they also found that strategic and quality management has a great influence in achieving flexibility, whereby the findings supported that new product developments are strongly dependent on simplicity and discipline. The research also proved that high simplicity and high discipline lead to better flexibility in manufacturing operations.

In the manufacturing perspectives, simplicity is about the firms' initiative to streamline information and simplify material flow processes. Simplicity puts together all the processes involved - for instance, product concept and design, manufacturing processes, and distribution processes. In contrast, discipline is about the implementation of steady and dedicated procedures in regard to the processes. This is a result of improvements or changes made in several areas such as planning, technology used, labor development, scheduling, changes in product design, and controlling processes due to changes in environment. Examples of discipline are the standardization of procedures, allocation of adequate employee training, periodical machine maintenance, implementation of inventory management, and warehousing.

A study on this model was replicated by da Silveira (2005), with some modifications by using a broader international database, including the technology and organization programs dimension and moderating the role of dedicated line layout in the relationship between simplicity, discipline, and flexibility. The study found that companies frequently implement simplicity and discipline programs concurrently in achieving flexibility. This proves that simplicity programs appear to have a positive relationship with flexibility, and it is significant in three out of four flexibility dimensions used. The same result is true for discipline, where it is found that discipline programs are positively related to the flexibility dimension.

Idris (2002) extended the application of the model in a service setting by studying the operations of AirAsia. The study concluded that few practices and procedures are related to both

concepts. In general, both principles are equally important to realize the outcome of organizations in becoming a more flexible organization, leading to a strategic advantage.

#### A HISTORICAL CASE -THE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYYAH

The Muslim world, as it is known today, has almost one-fifth of its population widely spread from Morocco to Indonesia. A recent study found that Islam is the fastest growing religion in England and Wales [Islam: Fastest-Growing Religion in Britain: Gatestone Institute 2013]. It could be due to its uncomplicated message of oneness of God, consistency in the teaching of the prophets, inclusiveness, and moderation. The society started humbly in the desert of Mecca in the present-day Saudi Arabia when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) preached that he was the last messenger of God, completing a series of messengers who had been sent before him, including Jesus, Moses, and Abraham. His people opposed him. Finally, in the year AD 622, the prophet and his followers migrated to Medina and started a new life in the new place. A series of battles between this new community and the Meccans took place thereafter.

A chain of events had led to this treaty. A few years after leaving his birthplace and migrating to a new place, in AD 628, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) envisioned entering Mecca and performed umrah, the practice of circumambulating the Kaaba (Tawaaf) and performing specific Islamic rituals. Together with a number of his followers, he marched to Mecca. Upon arriving at a place called Hudaibiyyah, they were informed that the Quraish, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)'s tribe that opposed his call and teachings, did not give him and his followers the permission to enter Mecca; and preparations were being made to stop them. Battle was looming. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) sent a prominent companion, trusted by both parties, to negotiate with the Quraish. The representative was allowed to enter Mecca and talked to the heads of the tribe. A basic principle was established, leading the Quraish to send an envoy to negotiate the details.

The main agreements of the treaty were as follows:

1. There will be no fighting for 10 years.
2. Those who desire to join Muhammad (pbuh) and to enter into agreement with him are free to do so.
3. Those who desire to join the Quraish and to enter into any agreement with them are free to do so.
4. A young man, or one whose father is alive, if he goes to Muhammad (pbuh) without obtaining the permission from his father or guardian, will be returned to his father or guardian. But if anyone goes to the Quraish, he will not be returned.
5. The Muslims will not be permitted to enter Mecca in that year. But instead, the following year, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers were allowed to perform the Tawaaf for three days upon which the Quraish will withdraw to the surrounding hills. Muhammad (pbuh) and his followers, when entering Mecca, will not be armed except for sheathed swords [Treaty of Hudaibiyyah - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. 2013].

A few points that incline favorably toward the Quraish are the following:

1. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) compromised to strike his name referred to the messenger of Allah. Thus, he instructed his cousin Ali, replace the phrase with his name instead [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Peacemaking". 2013].

2. Muslims who left Medina to join the Meccans were not supposed to be returned to the Muslims, but the opposite was agreed that if any Meccans joined the Muslims they were supposed to be returned to the Meccans. [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Conditions" 2013]. This point was not specific, where disputes surfaced later as to whether women were also subjected to this condition.
3. Muhammad and his companions were not allowed to enter Mecca that year. Instead, they would come again next year to perform the umrah. The Meccans would then agree to vacate the city for three days for the Muslims. The Muslim were, however, very frustrated as they had made the preparations to perform the umrah that year [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Conditions" 2013].

Following to the agreement, there was an isolated event where a tribe that had alliance with the Muslims was attacked by the tribes allied with the Meccans. Due to this new development, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had considered this as a breach of the treaty and sought justifications from the Meccans to choose either to cease alliance with the tribes, pay compensation, or dissolve the treaty. The Quraish chose the third option, thus dissolving the treaty. The following year in AD 630, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) marched with his 10,000 followers to conquer Mecca.

## DISCUSSION

Recall that the objective of this paper is to discuss simplicity and discipline, the two elements of rigid flexibility model to explain strategic outcomes using an important historical event. By doing this, we intend to demonstrate that the model can explain strategic outcomes from a historical perspective. It has been suggested earlier that Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) actions depicted a very important principle of flexibility for strategic outcomes whereby organizations need to be flexible and compromise small annoying events for greater long-term strategic benefits. Sushil (2001) stated, flexibility does not mean shifting to the extremes but dynamically balancing them. Furthermore, Sushil (2001) pointed out that "flexibility is not to create chaos, but to bring a natural organic order out of it." In the treaty, Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) actions demonstrated the elements of simplicity and discipline in actions in a volatile situation.

### SIMPLICITY

First, logical and common sense is the essence of this concept. The principle of simplicity requires the management to streamline information and simplify material flow processes. Firstly, by agreeing to the points of agreement, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had indirectly simplified the process of achieving his strategic vision. He eliminated one factor, which is a persistent direct threat from Quraish, easing him to concentrate on other menaces. It is about minimizing waste (Sushil 2001); a diversion of energy and resources in order to provide safety. Routine capability would be enhanced if one is able to control the influencing factor (Peng, Schroeder & Shah 2008). It is true that the agreements were in favor of his opponents. Nevertheless, the overall outcomes of getting recognition and maintaining peace were much higher in strategic value. Furthermore, the concept of strategic alliances was also realized. In this treaty, each party could ally with outsiders, which had resonated well and created good mutual benefits for both parties (Todeva & David 2005); thus, expanding the influence of the Muslims.

Second, the points of agreement of specific terms also simplify the decision making. For example, it was agreed that there would be 10 years of peace. This helped the strategic planning, whereby in the process of crafting and designing strategies, one must specify the time, path to take and resources needed to execute them.

Third, according to this principle, simple but understandable signs must be provided for instruction. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) shaved his hair, indicating that he was ending his quest to enter Mecca that year which was easily understood by his followers; thus preparing his followers to comprehend on the change of plan, from going into Mecca to returning to their Medina [Sahih Bukhari : Book of "Conditions" 2013]. Managers must communicate using a simple, clear term to the subordinates. Generally, it has always being the practice of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), according to the tradition, to simplify instructions so that it would be easy for his community to understand and practice. One of his favorite sermons;

“The Prophet said, "Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them, and make them calm (with glad tidings) and do not repulse (them)." [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Good Manners" 2013].

#### DISCIPLINE

First, reflecting from this principle, strong leadership is needed to instill discipline. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) had not changed his position, although few of his trusted companions requested him to reconsider some of the agreement's terms [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Conditions" 2013]. It is a determined conviction in the demanding present reality (Sushil 2001). In a business organization, the late Steve Jobs of Apple had shown the characteristics of a firm leader in many decision-making processes. Sushil (2001) pointed that “flexibility does not mean wild freedom, but the rights with duties.” Thus, the first lesson is to create discipline in a delicate but volatile condition, a leader must be strong and persistent. Nevertheless, his decisions were always consistent in the spirit of tolerance through consultations, thus reducing the negative oppositions stemming from disagreement to the few points of agreement in the treaty.

Second, the treaty also exposed the level of discipline of Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) followers. Discipline would lead to true freedom (Sushil 2001). When they realized that they were not going to enter Mecca and saw their leader shaving his hair, they followed; although many of them had opposing views on this issue. This event exposed the discipline they had in following their leader. This treaty further strengthened the internal discipline of the Muslim community. According to Sushil (2001), it captures ambiguity. Sushil (2001) further stated that “flexibility is not changing side as per convenience, but evolving your value system.”

Finally, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) set standards to actions and behaviors. The dos and don'ts were clearly specified. In general, the Muslim community is exposed and encouraged to achieve greater performance, personally and collectively. For example, praying five times daily in congregation has been set to be the standard practice. Generally, when an organization or a community is familiar and trained to follow instructions, they become more disciplined and consistent. In a factory, manufacturing practices have put in place quality assurance standard such as the ISO 9000 standards to ensure the level of quality of processes and eventually products' quality. Standard testing procedures with established equipment and procedures are the norms of the industry. According to tradition, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) liked to repeat his sentences three times so that everybody would understand his teachings. [Sahih Bukhari: Book of "Asking Permission" 2013]. The summary of examples of practices related to the concepts is shown in the following Table 1.

TABLE 1. Simplicity and discipline in actions in different settings

Rigid flexibility models	Best Practices in Manufacturing	Best Practices in services	Reflections of practices shown in the Treaty
Simplicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• problem solving</li> <li>• supplier lead times</li> <li>• supplier relations</li> <li>• kanban</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• using the same equipment</li> <li>• simplifying the booking and sales through IT</li> <li>• simplifying the operations through limited choices of products</li> <li>• Simple organizational structure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simple but understandable sign for instructions</li> <li>• prioritizing in solving critical factor, which is a persistent direct threat</li> <li>• specific terms of agreements also simplify the decision making</li> </ul>
Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standardization of procedures</li> <li>• allocation of adequate employee training</li> <li>• periodical machine maintenance</li> <li>• implementation of inventory management, and the warehousing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• quality or excellence culture</li> <li>• training and development, performance measurement</li> <li>• discipline of the staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• strong leadership</li> <li>• consistent decision in the spirit of tolerance through consultations</li> <li>• discipline of Muhammad's (pbuh) followers</li> <li>• encouraged to achieve better performance</li> <li>• standard practices such as Prophet Muhammad repeating his sentences three times and meeting five times a day for prayer.</li> </ul>

#### IMPLICATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Using this historical case, we simply argue that the model with its elements of simplicity and discipline has a broad application in nonbusiness organizations. Idris (2012) applied the model in a service setting. This study went further by adopting the model to a case of historical significance that changed history, thus potentially expanding its application to nonbusiness organization.

The first lesson is that the practice of simplicity could help organizations attain better strategic outcomes. This study highlights the importance of tolerance for the less critical factor and looking at the bigger picture of vision and mission, which simplify decision-making process. Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) envisioned what he wanted to achieve in the long term. So he tolerated the fact that he did not procure what his followers wished. The treaty guaranteed peace for 10 years as long as both parties agreed to the terms. Being the newer community, the Muslims were in a dire need of having stability to strengthen their position. Previously, a lot of energy and efforts had been utilized to defend Medina from the threat of Quraish's attacks. In the context of strategic management, organizations need to set a clear direction through inspiring vision and mission so that all organizational elements will strive to achieve them. A recent

political turmoil in Egypt where military coup d'état took over the government could have been avoided had the Muslim Brotherhood “tolerated” to have a referendum. It is in sharp contrast to the path taken by the Ennahda party in Tunisia, who agreed to step down and let the technocrats to take over the government as it strategically placed the party to continually play important roles in governing the country [Islamist Party in Tunisia to Step Down - NYTimes.com. 2013].

Second, the original rigid flexibility model emphasized both internal robustness and external flexibility equally. We believe, as shown in this historical event, that when situation is volatile and the external threat is high, such as in the time before the treaty was signed, it is important to stabilize the threat. Thus, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) made a strategic decision to enter into the treaty, although the agreed terms were not very favorable. Internal robustness assists internally by providing discipline of structure, system, and people. The treaty established a period of calmness where they could devote their resources for a strategic mission. As agreed, any external parties could ally themselves with the Muslims or the Arabs. Thus, such stability provides the quality of time to build up capability. The practices of strategic alliances between firms are now gain increasing acceptance as firms gain mutual benefits from the alliances. For example, in the context of airlines, groups such as one world or star alliances have benefited their members from the expanded network, as compared with one airline operating alone. Within two years, Muslim had grown from merely about 1400 faithful during the treaty to 10,000 Muslims at the time of Mecca conquest. This is a tenfold increase within a short time span of two years. Thus, for 13 years in the early days of Islam, together with a few more years in Medina, could not match the 10 years' period of stability after the treaty of Hudaibiyyah was signed. In sum, to create flexibility capability for strategic outcomes, management should consider practicing simplicity and discipline. To establish external flexibility capability one can use practices such as tolerance, consultation, giving preference to strategic outcomes, using simplified and easy-to-understand communicating approach; and that must be followed by strong leadership, discipline to follow orders, and emphasis on standard performances.

Future research could apply the model in a different setting such as non-profit organization and non-governmental organization (NGO). In additions, the effects of innovative capability on organizational flexibility could be explored because organizations need to embrace innovations in order to be flexible. Finally, empirical study should be conducted to validate all related practices and concepts suggested in this article.

## CONCLUSION

Flexibility is a multidimensional concept that could be analyzed at different levels. In this article, we suggest that compromising through being flexible in a wider context has resulted in a better position for the organization or community seeking competitive advantage. In today's business environment, companies and organizations should be able to compromise their short-terms benefits for longer-term strategic outcomes. By being flexible, it is argued that organizations or communities may be able to (1) enhance internal discipline, (2) reduce uncertainty – establish stability, and (3) expand capacity, which would result in better strategic outcomes.

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