

# **A look at the Cypherpunks Manifesto through Islamic Eyes**

A look at privacy, secrecy and the nature of  
information

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After attending the 9th episode of “Satoshi’s Round Table”, I was forwarded the cypherpunks manifesto to have a glance over. I’ve heard of this for many years, but never really taken the time to look at what it was all about, and due to the small nature of this manifesto, it seemed to be a low hanging fruit to review how much these ideals are in line with Islam.

Without further delay, lets get cracking:

# *A Cypherpunk's Manifesto*

For a Muslim, our 'manifesto' or 'code of conduct' is Islam. Islam has given us guidelines of how we should conduct ourselves both in the public space and in private. The aim of this write-up is to discover how much this manifesto is in line with Islam and hopefully put forward ideals that all who read can benefit from.

*by Eric Hughes*

Review by Mu'aawiyah Tucker

*Privacy is necessary for an open society in the electronic age.*

Privacy has been important for Muslims from the very start. In Islaam there is a very clear idea that *"what is done in public returns to public scrutiny, but what is done in private is between the individual and Allaah"*. There are many examples and demonstrations of this throughout the mission of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. One clear example of this is how the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم dealt with those known as the 'Munaafiqoon'. There were a collection of non-Muslims who outwardly claimed islam but secretly plotted to actively fight against Islam and the Muslims. The Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم knew exactly who they were due to revelation, but did nothing about it because it was done 'in secret'. Another example is found in the Qur'aan where Allaah said:

***"Oh you who believe, stay away from many examples of suspicion, because some types of suspicion is sinful, and DO NOT spy on one another..."***

The scholars have said that the reason why spying was mentioned after suspicion is because spying only stems from the belief that someone is doing

something wrong. So we are prevented from having bad thoughts of each other, and forbidden from acting upon it to infringe on peoples privacy. So privacy is extremely important in Islam, and this manifesto begins with that same premise.

*Privacy is not secrecy. A private matter is something one doesn't want the whole world to know, but a secret matter is something one doesn't want anybody to know. Privacy is the power to selectively reveal oneself to the world.*

Here there is a distinction made between privacy and secrecy, and this distinction is important to fully grasp. In the real world, privacy is the default position of all information in relation to human beings. Their actions, beliefs, and even interactions are known to only themselves or a few, and an active decision has to be made to publicise it. A secret is the intent to keep that private information private and to actively prevent what is private to become public. Another way of phrasing this is:

Privacy is the state of affairs before a decision is made to make public,  
Secrecy is the decision to maintain privacy.

This distinction becomes increasingly important as we progress to what I believe is the purpose behind this manifesto.

*If two parties have some sort of dealings, then each has a memory of their interaction. Each party can speak about their own memory of this; how could anyone prevent it?*

This is the nature of human interactions in the real world.

*One could pass laws against it, but the freedom of speech, even more than privacy, is fundamental to an open society; we seek not to restrict any speech at all.*

From an Islamic paradigm, there are some important nuances to note. The most important of this is the domain of speech, and the impact of that speech on others. This is where modern day liberalism and 'freedom of speech' doctrine are at odds with Islamic values. According to Islamic values, each person is free to hold whatever views they wish, and even express those views to those who share those views in private as much as they want. However once those views and that speech is made public, it is not free from the law. There are restrictions on what can be said publicly, in relation to how that speech impacts others and the wider society. So in Islam, there are strict rules that forbid, backbiting, slander, insulting, belittling and harming other people.

Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

***O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; maybe those being ridiculed are better than those doing the ridiculing; [likewise] let not women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.***

Allaah also says:

***O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.***

So in Islamic teachings, we have the idea that some speech can be harmful, and Islam seeks to prevent all forms of harm.

This is even seen in regards to absolute truths that Islam condones. Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

***“Dont curse those whom are invoked in worship besides Allaah, so that they, as a result, curse Allaah in enmity out of ignorance”.***

Allaah strictly forbids insulting false gods even though, by definition, they deserve to be insulted. There was even an incident where some of the disciples of the prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم were speaking ill of one of the main enemies of Islam at the time, and they were forbidden, because his son, who was a believer, was there. The harm received from speaking bad about his father was enough to prevent such a speech around those who are harmed by it.

Islam even forbids ‘backbiting’ which was defined by the Prophet صلى الله عليه وسلم as *“Speaking about your brother in a manner they dislike”*. So some of the companions asked *“But what about if what we say is true?”*. ie is it ok to speak about someone in that which is true while we acknowledge the speaking lies is bad, and he صلى الله عليه وسلم replied *“if it is true, it is backbiting, and if it is not, then it is slander”*. Both slander and backbiting is forbidden. Speech is a blessing given to us by Allaah, and we are therefore not allowed to wield that sword against others.

This is where modern day liberalism is in direct odds with Islam. So statements like *“freedom to insult”* is directly forbidden in Islam, and strongly so. Much like a child cannot insult their parents, a person cannot insult another. This is even more so for false accusations, and even ‘tail carrying’, such as to carry information between people with the specific intent of causing dissent between them.

So in closing this point, the statement “we seek not to restrict any speech at all”, only works in that which is said in private, and can be accepted the public sector, from an islamic perspective, if it doesn’t directly or indirectly harm another.

*If many parties speak together in the same forum, each can speak to all the others and aggregate together knowledge about individuals and other parties.*

The main purpose for the 'freedom of speech' doctrine is to allow and facilitate public dialogue. This includes clarification of incorrect ideas and actions done in public. Islam protects such public conversations, and is protected, even if it may upset someone. An open place where ideas can be shared, and discussed openly, and Muslims have a long tradition of such public conversation. What is forbidden is public insults, and making public what is private.

An example of how public discussion is protected is demonstrated with Umar, a successor leader of the prophet Muhammad, where he said in a public sermon that women should not take large marriage dowries and should instead take small modest amounts. A woman from the crowd stood up and rebuked Umar and reciting the verse of the Qur'aan:

***If you wish to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a Cantar (of gold i.e. a great amount of gold, the like of a mountain) as Mahr (marriage dowry), do not take any of her bride-gift back; would you take it wrongfully without a right and (with) a manifest sin?***

Umar didn't rebuke her for making this public correction, but rather he said his famous statement "Umar was wrong and this woman was right". So public dialogue is protected, as long as it doesn't involve breaching the peace with offensive speech.

*The power of electronic communications has enabled such group speech, and it will not go away merely because we might want it to.*

Here is where we arrive at the purpose behind this manifesto. How do we as humans, navigate this new domain of ‘electronic communications’. We now have a domain whereby such communication, that used to be private, is now by design public. Before electronic communication, a conversation between two is by design private, and between those involved, but now those who people who wish to have a private conversation by design becomes public. Public by the sending of data packets across a public network which can be viewed by uninvolved parties. This is where this manifesto becomes important and opens up a valuable discussion. Does such speech maintain its private nature, or enters into the public domain?

*Since we desire privacy, we must ensure that each party to a transaction have knowledge only of that which is directly necessary for that transaction.*

In the real world, the people we interact with only have access to what is made visible at that moment and time. Everything else is private by design. But in the electronic world, should we emulate those same properties?

This manifesto also now delves into how one should behave, and codes of conduct. It now enters into the world of being ‘prescriptive’ of ones behaviour. The prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

***“Two parties who conduct a business transaction have the right to cancel that transaction as long as they dont part company, so if they make clear necessary information for the transaction and is truthful, then blessing is placed in their transaction, but if they hide necessary information, and deceive, then the blessing is removed from the transaction”***

So just like this manifesto suggests, being honest and clear in transactions is necessary, and in Islamic law deception in transactions is sufficient to

warrant cancelling a transaction, but Islam doesn't encourage or mandate privacy. It just preserves it if one chooses to maintain it.

*Since any information can be spoken of, we must ensure that we reveal as little as possible.*

This specifically encourages privacy, whereas islam is indifferent about it. You can be private if you want and you can reveal what is private if you choose.

*In most cases personal identity is not salient. When I purchase a magazine at a store and hand cash to the clerk, there is no need to know who I am.*

In most cases this is true, but one cannot ignore the virtue of building a social network of trust through the combination of fair trade and good character. One could say that knowing who you interact with is as necessary as having fair and sound money. But its not a requirement for trade. Its just the lubricant that facilitates it. The manifesto seems to suggest that privacy is a must, whereas Islam simply suggests that privacy should be respected if one wishes to have it.

*When I ask my electronic mail provider to send and receive messages, my provider need not know to whom I am speaking or what I am saying or what others are saying to me; my provider only need know how to get the message there and how much I owe them in fees.*

This is where I feel the meat of his manifesto begins. Communication between two is by definition private. Whether that be face to face, via a written letter or sign language. This is how we communicate, and by default this is a private interaction. Likewise, if someone is able to hear a conversation between two people, that doesn't necessarily invite them into

the conversation. Their privacy is still protected, and should be respected. But when communicating over long distances or via an electronic medium, this communication doesn't by necessity invite others who were not invited into the conversation. That includes all of those who help carry these messages between the involved parties. That would mean that 'end to end encryption' would be an important tool to emulate the same level of privacy we have through real world interaction. The use of electronic communication should not strip away ones right to private interactions. If an application makes it clear that a 3rd party will have access to this private conversation and both parties agree to this, then thats fine if they agree to these terms, but that doesn't mean that one should be stripped from this option if they indeed seek to get it, such as banning the use of encryption in online communication. Just like someone has the right to invite someone into their home to have a private conversation, likewise that right should be made available online.

This is where I see the main purpose of this manifesto. A declaration that what happens face to face should be the same online.

*When my identity is revealed by the underlying mechanism of the transaction, I have no privacy. I cannot here selectively reveal myself; I must always reveal myself.*

This is in reference to the inherent nature of using electrical forms of communication. Whether it be via radio, telegram, over the internet or over a cellular network. The very nature of the technology means that those who interact with it broadcast themselves and reveal information, and this manifesto suggests that this need not be the case.

*Therefore, privacy in an open society requires anonymous transaction systems.*

We could rephrase this by saying *“Just like in the real world privacy is necessary, likewise in the cyber world, this should be the same”*

*Until now, cash has been the primary such system.*

ie the physical world has included privacy by default and by design. Gold and Silver has no memory of who owned it and what reason it was exchanged. This is the nature of money in the real world, and this is what we should have in the cyber world.

*An anonymous transaction system is not a secret transaction system. An anonymous system empowers individuals to reveal their identity when desired and only when desired; this is the essence of privacy.*

Making a private payment system simply means that if one wants to reveal who they are, they have that choice to make when they want to, as oppose to the active intention for concealing information. This is much like Bitcoin transactions. We can all see the transactions but have no idea by design who is behind that. We can choose to reveal that information, who are the owners of the UTXO, if we want to. In contrast, with Monero or Liquid Bitcoin, where a conscious decision has been made to hide amounts, and in the case of monero, obscure the sources and destinations. But even if secrecy is desired from a monetary system, Islam is not opposed to that. If someone chooses to use that to conduct criminal acts, then they no doubt have fallen into sin, but privacy and secrecy doesn't always equate to criminal activity, and criminality should not be used to justify infringing ones right to privacy.

*Privacy in an open society also requires cryptography.*

In an open society on a digital network where information packets move across multiple 3rd party servers and platforms.

*If I say something, I want it heard only by those  
for whom I intend it.*

Like in the real world.

*If the content of my speech is available to the  
world, I have no privacy.*

As without cryptography, any one of the many third party servers have access to what is being said uninvited. Without cryptography, it would push private speech into the 'public domain'.

*To encrypt is to indicate the desire for privacy,  
and to encrypt with weak cryptography is to  
indicate not too much desire for privacy.*

To encrypt means to take back the right given to us by Allaah to direct our speech to those intended, and to announce to 3rd parties that they are not involved in this conversation.

*Furthermore, to reveal one's identity with  
assurance when the default is anonymity requires  
the cryptographic signature.*

Meaning, to reveal that private speech requires active permission in the form of a cryptographic signature. The signature is the 'permission to read'.

*We cannot expect governments, corporations, or  
other large, faceless organizations to grant us  
privacy out of their beneficence.*

This is the nature of mankind. Wherever the opportunity arises to infringe someone's rights, they take it. Information is power over someone, and by design people will always seek power over others. This is why Islam preserves those rights, so as to preserve that balance between individuals in society and to prevent any oppression.

*It is to their advantage to speak of us, and we  
should expect that they will speak. To try to*

*prevent their speech is to fight against the realities of information. Information does not just want to be free, it longs to be free. Information expands to fill the available storage space. Information is Rumor's younger, stronger cousin; Information is fleeter of foot, has more eyes, knows more, and understands less than Rumor.*

Information is the complete opposite of the 'tangible real world'. Real things can only possess a single point in space and we can therefore use that quality to enforce property laws and possession. But information infinitely spreads without limitation. This is the problem that Bitcoin solved as it relates to using 'information' as 'money'. How do you make something that is information based 'possess-able'? How do you allow the transfer of ownership of 'information' without the need for a 3rd party? That's the innovation of Bitcoin.

*We must defend our own privacy if we expect to have any. We must come together and create systems which allow anonymous transactions to take place. People have been defending their own privacy for centuries with whispers, darkness, envelopes, closed doors, secret handshakes, and couriers. The technologies of the past did not allow for strong privacy, but electronic technologies do.*

The enforcement of possession of information through privacy (of ones private keys) and cryptography was made possible through Bitcoin. It solved the 'double spend' problem in the cyber world, and by virtue of that, Bitcoin is a tool that can be used to allow for the simulation of real world rights in the cyber domain. The use of 'Proof of work' is an additional tool used to enforce that tie between the 'cyber' and the 'real' by requiring real world activity to

add 'value' to the system and protect it. The social consensus is the collective approach to enforcing these rules and ideals and if Bitcoin is the only way to achieve this censorship resistant, private borderless money, then Islamic rules of 'ordering the good and forbidding the evil' would come into play and mandate the participation, development and support of that system. Support such as running a node, developing publicly available wallets and applications, acceptance of this currency as payment and resistance of all that seeks to destroy this system.

*We the Cypherpunks are dedicated to building anonymous systems. We are defending our privacy with cryptography, with anonymous mail forwarding systems, with digital signatures, and with electronic money.*

By the use of these tools, the cypherpunk ideology can better simulate real world interactions on a public system. But like all tools, they shouldn't be used for illegal acts. But just like Islam doesn't forbid someone from owning a knife, just because it can be used for murder, one cannot forbid tools for privacy because it can be used to protect criminal behaviour.

There was an example of this from one of the successors of the prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم , who's name was Umar. One person walked by someone's home and heard music playing and laughter. So he went to look into his home to see what was this about. What he found was a man enjoying himself with a woman who was not his family or wife. Such an act is forbidden in Islam due to its strict laws to preserve the family unit. So he went to the leader Umar and told him about what he saw requesting he be punished. However Umar refused and rebuked him for invading his privacy and exposing his sins. What can be taken from this is that surveillance into peoples private lives is not justified to prevent what we consider sins. The

government only has jurisdiction on the public domain and on protecting the individual, their wealth and their intellect in the private domain.

*Cyberpunks write code. We know that someone has to write software to defend privacy, and since we can't get privacy unless we all do, we're going to write it. We publish our code so that our fellow Cyberpunks may practice and play with it. Our code is free for all to use, worldwide. We don't much care if you don't approve of the software we write. We know that software can't be destroyed and that a widely dispersed system can't be shut down.*

What can be understood from this is that 'code' is simply a collection of instructions. Code in a program or computer is no different than a manager giving his employees tasks to do, or a poet reciting his poetry, and as 'speech' is to be protected at all costs according to this manifesto, then likewise so should code. But from an Islamic perspective, words have consequences, and those consequences enter into Islamic jurisdiction. So a person who authors code with the intent to steal money would carry the same ruling as if they instructed someone else to steal on their behalf or stole directly themselves. Code itself would be protected speech, much like actual speech, but the use of it to harm others would likewise warrant the watchful glance of the law.

So Nostr, an open platform where anyone can use it to anonymously post their speech online, is perfectly fine to use, but that doesn't then give permission to the users to harm others with it.

*Cyberpunks deplore regulations on cryptography, for encryption is fundamentally a private act. The act of encryption, in fact, removes information from the public realm.*

When one encrypts data that traverses the public network, it draws it back into the private space. To remove encryption is to force private speech into the public space against the wishes of the one speaking. As this manifesto seeks to state that the realm of electronic communications should be treated the same as real world communications, then restricting the use of tools of privacy is the same as mass surveillance and whole sale abuse of ones right to privacy. Even if someone built a communication application, and informed its users that their speech would be surveilled, this would not remove ones right to privacy, and inherent within that is the promise not to make public what they've seen or heard.

*Even laws against cryptography reach only so far  
as a nation's border and the arm of its violence.*

The role of government fundamentally is the use of violence to establish justice. Allaah says in the Qur'aan

***“We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice.”***

So Allaah informed us that one of the purposes of revelation is to establish justice. Mankind is incapable of achieving this goal due to the inherent shortsightedness in a limited created being. Allaah describes the revelation as establishing fairness and balance. In the middle between being too strict to the point of oppression, or being too free so as to infringe on individual rights.

***“And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.”***

Then Allaah continues by indicating that the gift of metals, iron, sent down to earth, can cause harm to mankind but also many benefits to society. The

scholars have highlighted the purpose of mentioning the sending down of iron (either in meteorites or whatever, who knows) right after mentioning justice is that Iron can be a tool used for establishing justice. Justice and force are not mutually exclusive. One needs the other.

*Cryptography will ineluctably spread over the whole globe, and with it the anonymous transactions systems that it makes possible.*

Any useful tool and all knowledge have the property of spreading by its nature. As stated above, Islam has no negative stance towards tools and knowledge, except in how it is used.

*For privacy to be widespread it must be part of a social contract.*

And as we have demonstrated above, privacy was already in the social contract of Islam and the islamic environment from the start.

*People must come and together deploy these systems for the common good. Privacy only extends so far as the cooperation of one's fellows in society.*

This stands shoulder to shoulder with the islamic principles of ‘ordering the good and forbidding the evil’. In an Islamic society, enforcement of justice has been decentralised to all individuals in accordance to their abilities. Allah’s Messenger صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

**“Whoever amongst you who sees an evil, then let him change it with his hand, and if he is unable, change it with his tongue, and if he is still unable to change and stop it, then he must at least [change] it with his heart, and that is the lowest state of faith”**

This is why you find in Muslim societies, Muslims are active in preventing evil, even if all they can do is speak. And if we are not even able to speak, then we shouldn’t allow the prevalence of that evil to change us from who we

are, we need to resist in our heart and soul. We are even ordered as muslims to leave the land where we reside if the evil is too overwhelming and if that evil is forced on our limbs and speech. Muslims are ordered to stand for justice on an individual level before the government level, as justice is decentralised. So there is no reason to believe this does not extend to preserving the privacy of the individual.

*We the Cypherpunks seek your questions and your concerns and hope we may engage you so that we do not deceive ourselves.*

And so it should be that we are open to discover the true merit of our views, ideals and ideas.

*We will not, however, be moved out of our course because some may disagree with our goals.*

But we, as Muslims, much like the cypherpunk movement, will not compromise in our ideals that we know to be divine and sanctioned by Allaah.

*The Cypherpunks are actively engaged in making the networks safer for privacy. Let us proceed together apace.*

*Onward.*

And let us Muslims join in fulfilling our shared goal of transferring the rights given to us in the real world, to the realm of electronic communication.

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## Questions from the Public



**doby mick** ⌚ ⌚ @citizenk1n · 11h

Honest question. Is the exercise of finding common ground between BTC (I'm a maxi & Muslim) and Shirah a kind of bid'ah? Or one can argue that the notion of ribaa-free money (as exchange of value and unit of account) has always been there and bitcoin is the latest manifestation

I think the best way to answer this is to first look at the 'practice' & not specifically btc.

Islam is a way of life. That's the claim. So for that claim

to be valid we, as Muslims, need to know how to navigate this world upon based upon the divine guidance given to us. That means acting in accordance to Islamic values in all things.

This leads Muslims to always reflect on their actions, behaviours and beliefs in their surroundings. This requires us to constantly be looking for 'Islam's take' on the situation.

So if we have fiat, we need to look at what Islam says about it, if we're looking at AI, we need to understand what Islam has to offer in terms of our interaction with it, and so on.

My goal here, and in the public space, is to help Muslims to primarily understand what Bitcoin is, the network, it's function and use case, and to then help Muslims navigate this new space upon Islamic teachings. That requires taking a close look at this space and pointing out where it is aligned with Islam, and where they diverge. If we, as a community, don't do this, then we would have Muslims adopting foreign ideas and practices that contradict Islamic values of family, community, etc without any guidance or instruction. That would expose Muslims to negative actions such as buying coins and tokens that oppose Islamic values and expose them to the harms that result from that divergent behaviour.

An innovation, however, would be to adopt foreign ideas as though they were Islamic. Much like what the mu'tazilah (an early sect of Islam) did when they translated works from the Greeks. They brought over useful knowledge from a previous nation, but also adopted some of their principles and ideas, and then from that formed innovated unislamic ideas and beliefs.

There is a genuine risk that Muslims could jump into this 'crypto space' and unknowingly fall into harmful actions to themselves and others, and adopt foreign ideas. So due to that, I try my best to always give the Islamic perspective as much as I'm able. And I do so publicly so that anyone can correct me if they feel I have said something incorrect. That's how Islam is. We check each other all the time.

One final point, I often point out similarities between Bitcoin and Islam as an aid to help explain how the Bitcoin network functions. It isn't to suggest that Bitcoin is "divine" or anything like that, it's just an aid to explain a concept. So maybe you've heard me say that the Bitcoin's consensus is like ijmaa (religious consensus on an islamic ruling). Not that it is Islamic legislation, but just so it's easier to explain the concept of consensus.

I hope that's answered your question.



One thing that is really important to realise when discussing 'Islamic values and laws' is that Islam has a comprehensive legal system, and we are not just talking about 'Islamic ideas'. So if we were to say that in an islamic society one does not have the 'freedom to insult' people, thats not just an idea, it's a

law. With that, we have a detailed legal system on how to address when this law is broken. So, as an example, accusing someone of illegal sexual acts, such as infidelity, carries a punishment, to be carried out by the state. Allaah says in the Qur'aan:

***“Those who accuse chaste women ‘of adultery’ and fail to produce four witnesses, give them eighty lashes ‘each’. And do not ever accept any testimony from them—for they are indeed the rebellious sinners—”***

This is because such an accusation has consequences, and therefore false accusations likewise have consequences. Islam gives a strong emphasis on the family unit, in preserving it and the institution, and anything that jeopardises this institution is addressed accordingly.

It needs to be noted here two things:

#### **1) Punishments in Islam**

Not everything in Islam has a punishment from the state. Most things that are sinful don't have a worldly punishment, and its punishment is given in the next life if one does not repent. However, generally things that have real world consequences have real world punishments or at least compensation. So a muslim man should preserve his beard, but there is no punishment in this life if he doesn't, but if he abuses his wife, that has real world consequences, and therefore we have a legal framework that addresses that.

#### **2) Forbidding evil**

Islamic punishments are only allowed to be handed out by those of authority. So when the prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم said:

***“Whoever sees an evil then let him change it with his hand, and if he can't, then with his tongue, and if he can't then with his heart and that is the lowest of faith”***

What is meant by 'changing it with ones hand' is only if you can, without causing a greater harm and in most cases, if you have the authority to do so.

There are comprehensive rules about ‘*ordering the good and forbidding the evil*’ in Islam, and from those rules and guidelines is that the change cannot result in a harm greater than the one being prevented.

There is a common example given in Islamic text of the event that happened at the time of the Prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم. A Bedouin man came into the Masjid (Mosque) and began to urinate there. The companions rushed up to grab him, to eject him from the Masjid, but the prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم stopped them. He let him finish what he was doing, and when he was finished, the prophet Muhammad صلى الله عليه وسلم ordered that one of the companions throw a bucket of water on the urine (ie to clean it away) and called the bedouin over to have a chat with him. He told him that this was not the place for one to go toilet, and educated him about Islam. As a result of that, the bedouin said “*May Allah have mercy upon Muhammad and nobody else*” because he saw how the others were going to deal with him and how Muhammad dealt with him.

The point of mentioning this event was that if he was grabbed, mid action, and forced out of the masjid, his urine would have spread everywhere, not just where he began. But instead, the harm was localised in that area, addressed once concluded and the harm was contained. So if a muslim wished to stop someone from doing harm, that could only be valid if there is a good chance the harm would be stopped and not cause a greater one.

**Does that mean Islam condones vigilantism?** No, because it is not for the general people to apply islamic punishments. That is for the state. But that doesn’t mean they can’t be active in stopping evil. Even if that is to hold someone down, record the crime so as to report it to the authorities, shout and call for help, and so on. If two people are fighting, we must stop it. If a son is publicly insulting his mother, he must be rebuked, and so on. Islam

preserves the family unit, and anything that seeks to harm that is prevented, in action or in speech.

The primary role and purpose of the government is to protect the nation from foreign enemies, resolve local disputes and engage in various “social good endeavours” such as Zakaat distribution, taking care of travellers etc. There isn’t really a role for the government besides this. As for the rest, that’s down to us and our community to deal with. If a Muslim is in a situation where the state cannot or does not resolve a crime, then we are not supposed to take the law into our own hands. If that harm is ongoing and we cannot stop it from happening to us, then we are ordered to leave and migrate elsewhere where possible.

Resistance to change: Your work touches on potential resistance to technological changes within the Islamic community. I'm curious if you've considered strategies to overcome this resistance and address potential conflicts between traditionalist perspectives and modern technology? Encouraging dialogue and collaboration with religious leaders could be a helpful approach in promoting the adoption of technology while ensuring it aligns with Islamic values. Yet we both know that a grass root approach is not what works in our Arab world.

One of the reasons why I authored this commentary was to help demonstrate the boundaries and intersections between the internet and the real world. Framing the situation to deliver the correct perception.

I don’t believe there would ever be a conflict between technology and Islamic values as technology is only a tool. The only thing technology can do is to amplify things, not really bring

something new. So bitcoin only really amplifies the behaviour of Gold, allowing one to do what Gold does but better, faster, easier. So we don’t need new rules to deal with Bitcoin, just look at the rules of Gold. Social media doesn’t allow us to communicate differently, it just allows us to do it better, faster, easier, etc.

So when it comes to the wider community and their resistance to change, I see it could be for many reasons. It could be due to ignorance, and the fear of the unknown. For that we need education and familiarity. It could be for many a fear of losing ones income. There no greater fear than for a man to lose his purpose and means to earn money. So to address this fear, they need to learn how Bitcoin can be used to help them do what they already do, but better. But for some they would just have to adjust their business strategy. Once one can see how Bitcoin can help them do what they do better, they will accept.

So for our community, I feel we need to focus on building systems for people to be able to use, and begin using Bitcoin ourselves. Start demanding payment in Bitcoin and building the circular economy.

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Ethical concerns: The ethical implications of using technologies, particularly in the context of Islamic education, could be worth discussing. Developing guidelines for the ethical use of these technologies and implementing privacy-enhancing solutions might alleviate concerns and build trust within the Islamic community. But having worked with the Lebanese educational sector which is far more open minded than the rest of the Arab world was very challenging due to the political/religious conservatism. I also worked closely with governmental officials in Lebanon (again more open minded than other places in the region) and it's not something realistically achievable before at least a decade imo. This timeframe is obviously approximate yet taking into consideration few cycles of "elections" of young bitcoin educated people who will become officials.

Again, I feel that our problem is that we are trying to convince people that life would be better on the Bitcoin standard, but we mostly haven't produced the infrastructure needed to have Bitcoin become a real replacement, and we mostly ourselves are lacking in that implementation in ourselves. So if I wanted to run a business on Bitcoin, how would I store my Seed phrase? Use my wallet? Manage access to deposit addresses? Log payments in my accounting software? Make utility payments? Pay staff? And the list goes on. We know it can be done, but there is no easy streamlined way to do it. We

haven't got a simple 'package' we can hand to any company and they just implement it. This is what is needed and why most don't. It's seen as too much a mammoth task to implement when our current system has it already there available for us.

So if one was to ask me how to get adoption in the Muslim world, I would say we need to produce solutions like the above such that one can get up and running and fully trained within an hour.

As for the 'ethics', especially from 'conservative' Muslims, then I think what is closer to reality is that people are just cautious, and that it has little to do with being 'conservative'. There are a great number of people who would love to dive into Bitcoin, but because they don't know of any clear cut opinions from reputable scholars, they hold back, and most reputable scholars aren't confident enough to give such an opinion. Anyone who knows anything about Bitcoin knows that its such a major shift from the current ideas of money that it takes a while to comprehend Bitcoin. So that will just take time in my view, and I don't think there is a way to speed that process up.

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Underestimation of central authorities: I noticed that you suggest the use of technologies like blockchain and e-democracy could reduce the influence of centralized authorities. However, the potential for central authorities to adapt or co-opt these technologies isn't explored in depth. It would be interesting to examine the motivations of central authorities and how they might respond to such changes.

If I'm honest, my general stance is that I have no idea how governments work, why they do what they do and I don't try to understand them. They are humans and therefore have motivations that we mostly would never know. But I believe the game theory of Bitcoin is a powerful thing, and that people will eventually

capitulate at some point. The key is to make compliance more profitable than defiance.

As for alternatives to run government, then I am currently working on a book to explore that topic further.

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Misalignment of values: While you argue that the cypherpunk movement aligns with Islamic values, potential conflicts between the two might need further examination. For example, the cypherpunk movement often promotes a libertarian, anti-authoritarian ideology that may not align with certain Islamic principles regarding governance and social order (here I'm personally with the cypherpunk principles on this one). To address this issue, a nuanced and critical engagement with the cypherpunk movement could help identify points of convergence and divergence between cypherpunk ideals and Islamic values, and ensure that only the compatible aspects are considered for integration within the Islamic community.

This is one of the reasons why I wanted to add a commentary on this work here. I wanted to highlight where they overlap, where they differ and also to bring to light, somewhat, exactly how much an Islamic governance is involved in our lives. I think people have the perception that the Islamic government is a lot more involved in their lives than it actually should be. I agree, a detailed breakdown of how they differ in practice would help reveal that difference.

However the main issue in comparing libertarianism and Islam is that libertarianism is not a wholistic legal framework, and Islam

is. There is no specific 'legal code' for a libertarian. A libertarian doesn't know how inheritance should be dealt with, how to deal with murder, rape, theft, substance abuse, hygiene, marriage, divorce, etc. It has an 'ideology' but doesn't have a 'system'. Islam has both the ideals and the system. So that being the case, one can only really compare the ideals of the two and not the system or shariah of Islam, as there isn't a 'libertarian system' to compare it to. If we do that, then I believe the comparison could be summarised as "Islam, like libertarianism, preserves the rights of the individual and doesn't interfere with people in their private domain, but not at the expense of that individual, their family or the wider society".