

Pluralistic Islamic Cities and the Significance of Marrakesh Declaration

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ABSTRACT

If Quran offers the timeless guidance and Sunnah (the way of Prophet Muhammad) is the truthful way, the study on how to improve the planning methods according to Islamic Principles would be of immense help to a nation. Without a doubt, Exemplary Islamic City is the goal of this study. But how are we going to deal with pluralism in our planning methods while balancing modernity and Islamic notions? The Medina Charter, prepared as the basis for the Medina city-state, was introduced by Prophet Muhammad, the first written constitution in Islam and arguably, the first instance of constitutional law in society. A large number of officials from more than 100 predominantly Muslim countries participated in this conference. The objective of this study is to revive Medina Charter for the modern day Islamic City planning which would enable the states to develop better and more appropriate planning methods for pluralistic societies and highlight the importance of Marrakesh Declaration. A qualitative method will be implemented in this study with content analysis method.

Keywords: Islam and pluralism, Islamic city planning, Marrakesh declaration, Medina charter, revive

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Pew Research Centre, there are around 50 Muslim majority countries in the world. Most of these countries are politically unstable and could not provide safety to their citizens, resulting in more and more families migrating to the West despite the bitterness and resentment

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towards the Muslims on those foreign lands. The resentments, Islamophobia and the negative perceptions of the people around the Western world generally targeting Islam is taking on global proportions. America, the most celebrated Democratic Nation, just elected a white supremacist President Donald Trump who threatened the safety of minorities, immigrants and Muslims.

The Slate Magazine and several others reported that within one week of election, more than 300 incidents of harassment or intimidation have been reported against the Muslims and according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, most of them targeting minorities and Muslims. The Huffington Post reported that Steve Bannon, Donald Trump's chosen chief strategist, expressed dismay at the number of tech executives who are immigrants from Asia. More and more discriminations have occurred against Muslim communities and at the same time, extremist groups, like ISIS, are pouring fuel into fire. Several reporters documented the situations in different part of the world and they comment that 'Being a Muslim in many parts of the world currently is like being a Jew in 1933 Germany'.

The purpose of this research is to develop the pluralistic aspect of city planning for a more successful Islamic Society just as the first Islamic city created by Prophet Muhammad. This can be done by reviving 'Medina Constitution'. This study focuses on reviving the true essence of value-centred Islamic City This is to ensure better relationships among different groups

within the society and create the peaceful equilibrium.

This is a path to achieve an Islamic nation where everyone can be included in managing the affairs of their own society, in accordance with their rights and duties, to be outlined by a reasonable constitution that seeks harmonious living, the rule of law, and redressing political grievances with fairness and equity; city planning which favours *Pluralism* came to the importance. *The Medina Charter*, prepared as the basis of the Medina city-state established by Prophet Muhammad, was the first written constitution in Islam and arguably the first instance of constitutional law in society. It was an agreement that was reached without war, fighting, violence, or compulsion and voluntarily due to their commitment to the shared principles contained therein, within the sphere of positive cooperation, the context of their conditions, and the various elements of the Medinan society.

Moroccan King Muhammad VI held a prime conference in Marrakesh City in the Kingdom of Morocco in order to study more deeply on the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries, both in theory and practice. According to the report by (Muslim Peace Forum, 2016), the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, based in the U.A.E., jointly organised the conference from 25th – 27th January. A great number of officials from political and religious

background participated in discussions including Ministers, Muftis, Religious Scholars of different schools of thought and Academics of different background and field. Concerned representatives of several religious background and various international organisations also attended the conference. The conference was entitled as 'Religious Minorities in Muslim Lands: It is Legal Framework and a Call to Action.' This Marrakesh Declaration was a remarkable incident for contemporary Muslim societies and it urges the participants and scholars across the world to revive the Medina Constitution. However, many individuals worry that it would be ignored after an initial outburst of enthusiasm. Scholars should put more effort in reviving the Medina Constitution and politicians and planners ought to put more effort in its application to modern day Islamic society.

METHODS

After reviewing the steps of how to plan, propose and conduct research according to (Creswell, 2014) and (Yin, 2009), *Case Studies* are most suitable in inquiring especially evaluation, in which researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case according (Creswell, 2014). The case study for this research is carried out on Medina Charter and establishment of the first Islamic city by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in year 622 CE of Medina. It is a critical approach of content analysis on case study with in-depth analysis approach.

Since the research is based on Transformative Worldview approach,

Qualitative method is most suitable according to (Creswell, 2014). The research procedure is to examine issues related to marginalized groups of pluralistic society, to collect the data stories and determine the collected data. It will focus on a single concept or phenomenon: Islamic city planning and reviving its true essence. It is to bring values into the study of Medina Charter and Pluralistic Islamic City Planning and to study the context and setting of participants (marginalized groups of minorities in Muslim predominant lands). After doing so, it is to validate the accuracy of findings. After making interpretation of data from content analysis, it is to propose a most suitable framework. Extended results and further recommendations is to collaborate with city planners for fruitful results of the research.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Although it is a fact that no matter how well we do we work towards peace and justice policies, not all conflicts on earth will be resolved. Some conflicts will still lead to war. That is why a practical theories and realistic solutions offered in Islam are so much different from a utopian one desire. Islamic principles are based on either pacifism or *just war* theories. According to (Rahman, Sami, & Memon, 2016), Islamic pacifism is largely based on Sunnah (practices of the Prophet Muhammad) that teaches us to deal our enemies on humanitarian ground. The profound philosophical and even insightful spiritual teaching of the Prophet is based on a state of mind that looks for a reciprocated

vision and discourse. It goes with the peacemaking rather than waging war.

After suffering tortures at the hands of the Meccans, in the year 622 CE, Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina. This event of Hijrah by the Prophet is considered to be of great importance in the Islamic history. It would be wrong to interpret it as an act of fleeing from death threat. Shaykh Hamza Yusuf pointed out, at the Marrakesh conference, that the Muslims usually overlook the fact about Islam can be severe to others. He reminded that the Prophet experienced first-hand persecutions and knew what it was like. The Prophet saw his Sahabas tortured and murdered. Even after 13 years of bearing this prosecutions, a beautiful Sunnah (Yusuf, 2016) reminds us there's a meaning to the suffering of Prophet. Many of us were caught up in the misconception of division and tend to forget the tolerance part of Islam. Yusuf (2016) reminded in the same conference that the very 3 Sunnah that people usually forget is that: (1) The Sunnah of being oppressed; (2) the Sunnah of living under the just non-Muslim government, like the Ethiopian government where Prophet sent his followers; and (3) the Sunnah of Power. All three were a part of Sunnah. And if we look at Surathul-Haj in Quran, when the permission early-on in Prophet's migration to Medina is given which said that the permission was granted 'for those to defend themselves, *because they were oppressed.*'

The religious sanctity attached to the Migration to Medina and it gave an

importance as it has been referred in the Qur'an as a deed performed in the path of God. Furthermore, this event marks out the great qualities of Prophet's character and some of the most splendid aspects of his personality as the leader of one of the greatest historic revolution. Subsequently, he developed the first written Constitution of Medina (also known as the Medina Charter). It focused addressing the disputes and issues among the people of Medina. It covered the issues of not only Muslim immigrant and local Muslims but also Jews, other non-Muslims and their non-Muslim allied tribes. The philosophy and the values of medina charter is not specifically for Islam or Muslims but rather, it refers to universal doctrine of peace-making regardless of religion, race and ethnicity (Rahman et al., 2016). It acts as a harbinger to address the present-day questions, offering approaches to solve diverse issues between the pluralistic societies. It is not only important as a first constitution, but still timeless and applicable to contemporary issues and conflicts occurring in the pluralistic society. The key focus of the charter was relationship rather than group dynamics. As Hamidullah (1975) rightly indicated, "...this new constitution...brought with it importance, and...to Arabia at least...very revolutionary change and improvement, by providing the people with a central public institution for seeking justice, in place of everyone seeking it with the power of his own hand or, at best that of his family. This epoch-making innovation...brought an end for all times

to the chaos of tribalism and which laid the basis for a wider institution, viz a State.” The Medina Charter is a prominent example and should be emphasized in relation to current global conflicts. Overall, the Medina charter can represent the best model of conduct to develop and maintain a successful pluralistic society and establish better political and social relations among diverse groups (Rahman et al., 2016).

Bayyah (2016) claimed in Marrakesh Declaration that the accusation that Islam oppresses minorities has no basis in sacred law or in history. History itself testifies that there was no religion except that minorities experienced calamities living amongst them at some point in history and in some place on the earth. That lesson necessitates that all of us work together and that we should all be members of the “majority,” for if justice reigns, equality is guaranteed, and mercy spreads; then the concept of “majority or minority” will no longer have any significance. Hundreds of academics and scholars of various faiths pledge to collaborate and work on in reviving the historical Medina Charter that may serve as a basis for contemporary conceptualisations of citizenship in Marrakesh Declaration. The dream of having a just Islamic constitution and developing a constitutional citizenship, has no concept of majority or minority that would lead to infringing upon the rights of others. That citizenship would be committed to a mutuality that ensures freedom and guarantees societal peace. Such is a sound foundation, accepted by both religion and the pursuit of the commonwealth. To

quote the famous theologian Hans Küng, ‘There can be no peace in this world without peace among the religions’. I would like to urge the scholars in Islamic City Planning to give more thoughts on reviving Medina Charter according to the Marrakesh Declaration. (Bayyah, 2016) and hundreds of scholars called for peoples of all faiths to establish an alliance for peace—spiritual and psychological peace, the kind that inspires us to do good in the world. John Lenon would say ‘A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.’

Among many other concerned persons is Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, Washington’s retired archbishop. He urged that the Marrakesh Declaration, drafted in January to have the same effect, not remain ignored (Pattison, 2016). McCarrick, during an assembly at the National Press Club in Washington, discussed about the Medina Charter proposed by the Prophet Muhammad which allowed Muslims and non-Muslim tribes, including Jews, to live in Medina in peace and to come together for common defence. Those principles, he said, have been distorted by groups in different parts of the Muslim world, “taking the Quran and taking the writing of the Prophet and using them for their own agenda ... for power over their own people. This declaration can change the whole face of Islam.... Not change it, but bring it back to where it was. Don’t let this declaration die,” McCarrick told the assembled journalists “Let this be a living challenge.”

This study strongly believes reviving the Medina Charter will lead the nation to a path of rationality, nobility, wisdom, virtue, and benefit.

RESEARCH OUTPUT AND BENEFITS

This research was aimed at developing a better and more appropriate planning framework for a more successful Islamic Pluralistic Society. This study will also help in reviving the true essence of value-centred Islamic City Planning to adapt to the modern Islamic society which will also results in having better relationships among different groups within the society and create the peaceful equilibrium. Since it focuses on reviving one of the most important documents of Islamic history, the *Medina Charter*, according to Marrakesh Declaration 2016 (The Forum for Peace, 2016), it will immensely help in reviving traditional and authentic Islamic notions to enhance our modern day city planning.

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