



Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization (JITC)

Volume 10 Issue 2, Fall 2020

pISSN: 2075-0943, eISSN: 2520-0313

Journal DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc>

Issue DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.102>

Homepage: <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC>

Journal QR Code:



Indexing Partners



Article:

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Published:

Fall 2020

Article DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.102.11>

QR Code:



Muhammad Mushtaq

To cite this article:

Mushtaq, Muhammad, and Muhammad Riaz Mahmood. "Governing Diversity: Reflections on the Doctrine and Tradition of Religious Accommodation in Islam." *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 10, no. 2 (2020): 190-205.

[Crossref](#)

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Publisher Information:

Department of Islamic Thought and Civilization, School of Social Science and Humanities, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.

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Governing Diversity: Reflections on the Doctrine and Traditions of Religious Accommodation in Islam

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Abstract

The *problématique* of governing diversity has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, but this literature has largely overlooked the challenges appertaining to the growing religious diversity in many places. The contemporary secular power-sharing models and multicultural policies fall short of expectations to foster peaceful coexistence in multi-religious societies. The primary concern of this paper is to realize how religion could help us to lessen the religion-based violence. It is argued that religious traditions may offer valuable insights to design more inclusive governance. With this backdrop, this paper evaluates the Islamic values of religious accommodation to gauge how much helpful they are for designing inclusive policies in religiously diverse societies. The analysis illustrates that Islamic doctrine contemplates the politics of accommodation and forbearance. The pluralistic approach of Islam offered religious autonomy to the non-Muslims in the state of Madinah. The millet system established by the Ottoman Empire is widely admired for granting non-territorial autonomy in the matters related to religion, culture, and personal laws to the non-Muslims. This display of Islamic pluralistic approach at different junctures of the Muslim history attests the capacity of Islamic values of accommodation to nurture peaceful coexistence in modern societies. However, it requires more unbiased and rigorous analysis to convince the global audience in this regard.

Introduction

Diversity appears in various forms, of which ethnicity, language, and religion are prominent examples. Governing diversity continues to be a challenge in plural societies. As a result, it has attracted enormous scholarly attention. Although the management of ethnolinguistic diversity has been the subject of several studies, far less attention has been paid to the accommodation of religious diversity that manifests itself in many modern societies. By and large, the contemporary power-sharing systems appear inept to keep the religious minorities content in many palces. Equally, the normative analyses and policies of religious accommodation have overlooked the role that religious traditions might play

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in this regard. Usually, the Muslim scholars have claimed that Islam is quite generous and tolerant to the religious difference, and offers a viable scheme for the accommodation of religious diversity. But, there is a dearth of unbiased literature to corroborate this argument. For the most part, the Muslim scholars have failed to convince the global audience since their accounts lack scientific rigour and objectivity. Islam unequivocally confers the rights upon the non-Muslims by attesting that “there is no compulsion in the religion.” It is also widely acknowledged that this spirit was witnessed in the Charter of Medinah and the early years of Islam.

In the wake of sectarian conflicts in the Muslim world, many scholars have contested the capacity and propensity of Islamic traditions to manage religious diversity. Hence, the argument that Islamic doctrine envisages accommodative and conciliatory spirit requires more credible evidence and logical reasoning.

This paper is an attempt to revisit and understand the strength of Islamic traditions concerning religious accommodation in modern societies. The paper is structured around four sections: The next section presents the state of global religious diversity and summarizes the power-sharing model's ineptness for the accommodation of religious diversity. The subsequent sections investigate the Islamic doctrine and the Muslim traditions of religious accommodation. Finally, the paper puts forward some concluding comments.

2. Religious Diversity and Politics of Accommodation

The increasing globalization and contemporary flows of migration and emigration elsewhere have significantly increased global religious diversity. This growing religious diversity has challenged the modern state system in many ways. While some have viewed it as an asset, many consider it a menace for the existing social fabric.¹ In the developing world, many states are religiously diverse. Equally, the developed world hosts sizable global faith and it is expected that minority religions will grow significantly in the coming decades. Many cases of religious persecution have been recorded in the developing as well as the developed world. The Reports of Pew Research Center, a Washington based organization, suggests that the religious restrictions and social hostilities involving religion in the world have been consistent over the years.²

Contrary to the expectations of secular theorists that religion will no longer be an issue in the modern global world, religion has surfaced as an issue of contention in many respects. It has been claimed that religious diversity is becoming increasingly a major issue

¹Anna Halafoff, and Paul Hedges, “Globalisation and Multifaith Societies,” *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 25, no. 2 (2015): 135-161.

²Katayoun Kishi, “Key Findings on the Global Rise in Religious Restrictions,” (<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/23/global-restrictions-on-religion-2/>).

in democratic societies after the “collapse of communism and the rise of fundamentalism.”³ For this reason, the management of diversity has “shifted ground in most democracies from concern with language and welfare services to anxiety about religion, values and loyalty.”⁴ Gary D. Bouma also acknowledges the fact that “management of religious diversity remains a vital and is fraught with issues for societies.”⁵

Many power-sharing models have been prescribed for plural societies to deal with the challenge of diversity. Brendan O’Leary has identified four ways to accommodate linguistic, religious, and ethnic diversity. These approaches include multiculturalism, centripetalism, consociationalism, and federalism.⁶ The common ground among these models is the accommodation of diversity. However, the primary interest of these models has remained to deal with the ethnolinguistic identities that are territorially concentrated in most of the cases. While federations and consociations successfully settled the questions ascribed to the opposing denominations within Christianity for example in Switzerland, Austria, the Netherlands and Belgium, they failed to prevent inter-faith tensions worldwide for example in India, Lebanon, and Cyprus. Even, the so-called multicultural approaches continued to be unable to design inclusive policies for religious minorities.

Arend Lijphart advocated a consociational solution for the diverse societies to practice democracy. Consociationalism provides executive power-sharing to all segments; allocates representation and resources on proportional grounds to the groups; grants segmental autonomy in matters related to religion, language, and personal laws; and ensures minority rights protection through a mutual veto. It has been argued that this model has managed diversity in many divided societies including but not limited to the Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, and Lebanon. However, the consociational arrangements proved short-lived and failed to prevent conflict for an indefinite period.⁷ It is noteworthy that consociationalism provides non-territorial autonomy to the geographically dispersed groups. This feature makes it more relevant to the religious accommodation as the religious groups are geographically dispersed in most cases. However, beyond the original cases, the consociational solutions are mainly employed as post-conflict peacebuilding measures.

³Bryan S. Turner, “Managing Religions: State Responses,” *Contemporary Islam* 1, no. 2 (2007): 123-137.

⁴James Jupp, “Religion and Integration in a Multifaith Society,” In Michael Clyne and James Jupp, (Eds.), *Multiculturalism and Integration: A Harmonious Relationship* (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2011): 135-150, 141.

⁵Gary D. Bouma, “From Hegemony to Pluralism: Managing Religious Diversity in Modernity and Post-Modernity,” *Australian Religion Studies Review* 12, no.2 (1999): 7-27.

⁶Brendan O’Leary, “Governing Diversity,” In Steven Vertovec, (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Diversity Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015): 203-215), 205.

⁷Muhammad Mushtaq, “Consociationalism and Multiethnic States: Post-1971 Pakistan-A Case Study,” (PhD Thesis: Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, 2011), <http://pr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/bitstream/123456789/2722/1/1232S.pdf> .

Federalism is a relatively more popular constitutional design that accommodates diversity by granting autonomy at the local level and power-sharing at the national level. So far, there are twenty-eight federations that host forty-percent of the world's population. It has been observed that while most federations accommodate ethnic and linguistic diversity, they do not adequately entertain religious diversity. The Canadian Federation, for example, embraced the linguistic diversity and designed the language policies that satisfied the French-speaking minority of Quebec.⁸ Also, the federation adopted the *Multiculturalism Act* in 1988 to accommodate cultural diversity that is considered a step towards more inclusive federalism in Canada.⁹ But, it is worth mentioning that this Act does not entail any provision for religious accommodation.

The Swiss federation is well-known for recognizing linguistic diversity. It grants substantial autonomy to its German, French, and Italian speaking Cantons. It has also successfully managed the Catholics-Protestants conflict and harmonized relations between Christianity and Judaism. But, the federation failed to accommodate the global faiths. In a referendum, the Swiss electorate banned the construction of minarets in Switzerland.¹⁰ It has been reported that the federation is facing serious challenges in connection with the religious accommodation as the radical groups in Switzerland are “politicizing the religious differences for political gains and are stirring up troubles.”¹¹ Belgium is another federation that provides territorial autonomy to its three regions of Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels. Being a secular consociational federation, it upholds neutrality in religious affairs for the major religions but does not offer any safeguards for religious minorities. Religious minorities are facing discrimination in the developing world too. For example, the Indian federation that is often commended for being the world's largest democracy appears failed to accommodate religious diversity. The federation recognized linguistic identity and carved out many new states on linguistic basis. But, it did not entertain the demand of a Sikh-state, Khalistan on religious grounds. In India, though the constitution provides sufficient protection to the minorities, the discriminatory treatment of various regimes have marginalized the minority groups. For instance, the Citizenship Act adopted in December 2019, “introduces a clear differentiation to the rights of citizenship for Muslims coming to

⁸Milton J. Esman, “The Politics of official Bilingualism in Canada,” *Political Science Quarterly* 97, no. 2 (1982): 233-253.

⁹Alain-G. Gagnon, and Richard Simeon, “Canada,” In Luis Moreno and César Colino, (Eds.), *Diversity and Unity in Federal Countries* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2010), 110-138., 128.

¹⁰Dina Wyler, “The Swiss Minaret Ban Referendum and Switzerland's International Reputation: A Vote with an Impact,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no.4 (2017): 413-425.

¹¹Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, “Accommodating Religious Diversity in Switzerland,” In Paul Bramadat and Matthias Koenig, (Eds.), *International Migration and the Governance of Religious Diversity* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009): 225-257.

India from outside and challenges the secular nature of the Indian state.”¹² It is also reported that the Hindu Nationalist regime has not only introduced discriminatory policies but also patronized the Hindu militias that “have imposed novel types of brutal cultural policing on the Muslims and the Christians.”¹³ The Pakistani federation has been in the same way confronting serious challenges concerning religious accommodation. However, in the recent past, the federation appears relatively accommodative. The Kartarpur Corridor is a significant shift in the state policies. This Corridor provides an opportunity to the Sikh pilgrimages from India to visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib without any visa requirements. Also, the state appears more vigilant to protect religious minorities from any sort of maltreatment on religious grounds. Many schemes have been planned to promote inter-faith harmony and religious tolerance. Despite the opposition of some religious groups¹⁴, the government has allowed constructing a Hindu temple in Islamabad¹⁵.

It is quite a worrying situation that in the age of modern democracy and the politics of accommodation, religious minorities are suffering from government restrictions and social hostilities. One reason for the failure of the modern state system to accommodate religious diversity is perhaps the ascendancy of secular traditions in the contemporary politics of accommodation. This paper does not claim that non-secular traditions are a panacea to prevent religion-based violence. However, it attempts to examine whether or not religious traditions might be able to help us to mitigate the religious conflicts in diverse societies. With this backdrop, the paper analyzes if the Islamic doctrine and traditions might be useful to increase the likelihood of peaceful co-existence in religiously diverse societies.

2.1. The Islamic Doctrine of Religious Accommodation

This section underscores the Islamic doctrine in connection with religious accommodation. It presents the Qur’ānic perspective on religious difference and reveals the conduct of the Holy Prophet SAW with the non-Muslims of His time. This account would elucidate the spirit and approach of Islam to deal with religious diversity. The crux of Islamic ideology is expounded in this verse of the Qur’ān, “there is no coercion in religious matters.”¹⁶ This decree designs the framework for the Muslims to take care of religious minorities in the Muslim political entities.

¹²Katharine Adeney, “How can We Model Ethnic Democracy? An Application to Contemporary India,” *Nations and Nationalism* (2020), Accessed 08 08, 2020. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1111/nana.12654>.

¹³Christophe Jaffrelot, “India’s Democracy at 70: Toward a Hindu State?” *Journal of Democracy* 28, no. 3 (2017): 52-63.

¹⁴Kalbe Ali, “Construction of Hindu Temple Opposed,” *DAWN* (2020), 7 02. Accessed 7 20, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1566418/construction-of-hindu-temple-opposed>.

¹⁵Amir Wasim, “Real Issue Funding, not Construction of Hindu Temple: Noorul Haq Qadri,” *DAWN*, (2020) 07 08. Accessed 07 18, 2020. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1567777>.

¹⁶al-Baqarah 2:256.

It is widely argued that Islam adheres to the principles of religious forbearance and accommodation. The Qur'ān explicitly commands to respect the worship places of all religions. The protection of worship places has been regarded as the will and pleasure of Allah. The Qur'ān states, "...Had it not been for God's repelling some people through the might of the others, the monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which God is very often worshipped would have been utterly destroyed...".¹⁷ It has been argued that the reference of "churches and synagogues" in this verse demonstrates the Islamic spirit of religious diversity.¹⁸ Islam validates the right to life and asserts that the state should safeguard the lives of non-Muslims. Islam commands that if a Muslim murders a non-Muslim, the killer will be hanged as an act of revenge.¹⁹ Equally, in a Muslim polity, the respect for honour and protection of the assets of non-Muslims is the prime responsibility of the Muslim community²⁰. It has been admired that Islam takes care of the respect and rights of the leaders of different religions²¹. The Qur'ān forbids the forced conversion and warns that "If it had been the Lord's Will, they would all have believed - All who are on earth! Will you then compel mankind against their will to believe"²²? Islam disallows coercing people into adopting any particular religion and everybody has been given the right to adopt a religion or belief of his choice.²³ Islam orders to respect the dignity and honour of the non-Muslims. It forbids abusing the non-Muslims or to whom they pray. The Qur'ān orders, "Abuse not those to whom they pray, apart from God, or they will abuse God in revenge without knowledge. So We have decked out fair to every nation their deeds; then to their Lord they shall return, and He will tell them what they have been doing."²⁴

Building on the Qur'ānic perspective and *Sunnah*, Mashood Baderin, argues that "Islamic law clearly prohibits any legal distinctions based on race or ethnicity or faith."²⁵ Responding to the reported prejudice and practices of race and ethnic superiority at certain points in Islamic history, he termed it as a breach of Islamic injunctions.²⁶ The entitlement of citizenship rights and pursuit for a more equitable status of non-Muslims in an Islamic state illustrates the conciliatory and accommodative strength of Islam. Islamic law, "as a

¹⁷al-Haj 22:40.

¹⁸Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, "Religious Diversity: An Islamic Perspective," *Islamic Studies* 49, no. 4 (2010): 493-519.

¹⁹Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn Ibn 'Alī ibn Mūsa al-Khosrojerdi al-Bayhaqī, *Al-Sunan Vol.4* (Beruit: Dar ul Kutab Al-Ilmia, 1990), 176.

²⁰Imam Abu Yusuf, *Kitab ul Kharāj* (Beruit: Dar ul Maarifa, 1996), 219.

²¹William Muir, *The Life Mahomet* (London: Smith Elder and Company, 1958), 158.

²²al-Yūnus 10:99.

²³al-Kāfirūn 06:109.

²⁴al-An'ām 6:108.

²⁵Mashood Baderin, "Islamic Law and International Protection of Minority Rights in Context," In Marie-Luisa Frick and Andreas Th Müller, (Eds.), *Islam and International Law: Engaging Self-Centrism from a Plurality of Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 2013): 309-348.

²⁶Baderin, "Islamic Law and International Protection of Minority Rights in Context," 2013. 321-322.

matter of principle, protects the life, property, honour and religious freedom of all citizens of an Islamic state irrespective of their religious affiliations.”²⁷

The norms and values of an Islamic society stimulate the accommodation of diversity. Islam forbids any maltreatment of the non-Muslims and advocates cordial relations between the Muslims and non-Muslims. The Qur’ān says, “Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity.”²⁸ Many instances from the Muslim history could be cited to corroborate the argument that the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his companions had some very good friends among the non-Muslims. For example, Hakeem-Bin-Hazzam Asdi, who embraced Islam relatively late after the migrating to Madinah, was a close friend of the Holy Prophet (SAW). Similarly, Hazrat Abdur-Rahman-Bin Auf, a famous companion of the Holy Prophet (SAW) was a good friend of Ummayya Bin Khalaf Jamhi, a non-Muslim.²⁹ The Holy Prophet (SAW) maintained cordial relations and exchanged gifts with the Persian King Qisra and the Christian King Maqukas.³⁰ The conduct of the Holy Prophet (SAW) illustrates that He was very generous and kind towards non-Muslims. The Qur’ān states, “(Muhammad), We have sent you for no other reason but to be a mercy for mankind.”³¹ The Holy Prophet (SAW) used to visit the non-Muslims patients³² and advised Muslims to respect the funeral of the non-Muslims³³. Zia-ul-Haq concludes that Islam not only embraces religious diversity but also protects it³⁴. The denial of diversity by the Muslim states or some Muslims groups do not accord with the principles of Islam. Islam does not force to abandon cultural or religious characteristics. It is envisaged that the compliance of the Islamic doctrine in connection to the diversity would bring peaceful solutions to many conflicts associated with ethnicity and religion in the Muslim world.³⁵ In short, there is sufficient evidence to proclaim the pluralistic and accommodative outlook of Islam. The next section summarizes the application of this pluralistic approach by the Muslim regimes at different junctures of history.

2.2. The Muslim Traditions of Religious Accommodation

The treatment of Muslim regimes with the non-Muslim residents, during the medieval period, should be understood while keeping in mind the canons and traditions of that particular period. It is also pertinent to mention that this paper does not emphasize that the

²⁷Zia-ul-Haq, “Religious Diversity: An Islamic Perspective,” 2010.

²⁸al-Mum’tahanah 60:08.

²⁹Muhammad b Ismail Bukhari, *Al-Jamai al-Sahih* (Beruit: Dar ul Maarifa, 2015), 2301.

³⁰Ibn-e-Athir, *Usudul Ghaba Fi Maarifa Tus Sahaba*, Vol. 1, (Egypt: Dar ul Kutab, 2016), 659.

³¹al-Anbiya 21:107.

³²Abdur Razzaq, Al-San’ani, *Al-Musaanaf*, Vol. 4 (India: Al-Majlis ul Ilmi, 2016), 472.

³³Muhammad b Ismail Bukhari, *Al-Jamai As-Sahih* (Beruit: Dar ul Maarifa, 2015), 1312.

³⁴Zia-ul-Haq, “Religious Diversity: An Islamic Perspective,” 2010.

³⁵Muhittin Ataman, “Islamic Perspective on Ethnicity and Nationalism: Diversity or Uniformity?” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 23, no.1 (2003): 89-102.

accommodative and pluralistic approach of Islam was practised for most of the time during the Muslim history. However, considering the limited scope of this paper, it is more appropriate to avoid the details in this regard and move forward to address the central concern of the paper: whether or not the Islamic traditions are worthwhile to increase the likelihood of peaceful co-existence in contemporary religiously diverse societies.

The first and foremost application of Islamic doctrine about religious accommodation appears in the state of Madinah. Yetkin Yildirim proclaims that the Charter of Madinah was the “first documented case of constitutional law” that laid foundations for a “city-state between the Muslims and the Jews in the medieval Muslim city of Madinah.”³⁶ The Charter of Madinah provided religious autonomy to the non-Muslim communities of the city. Patmawati admires the conduct of the Holy Prophet (SAW) with the non-Muslims.³⁷ She believed that the inter-faith relations during His period were congenial and considerate. Referring to “the cases of Priest Bahira with Abu Talib, Waraqa bin Naufal, King Negus in Habsyi (Ethiopia), and the Christians who came from Bani Najran,” she asserts that although theological differences persisted, He embraced and honoured the delegates. The Holy Prophet (SAW) had signed several treaties with the non-Muslims that brought interfaith harmony and guaranteed peaceful coexistence of Muslims and non-Muslims. These treaties not only served during the life of Holy Prophet (SAW) but worked as guiding principles for His Caliphs and the Muslims who ruled non-Muslims. It has been claimed that the treaties not only manifested great tolerance and religious freedom but also provided equal rights for Muslims and non-Muslims once the “*Dhimma* pact” was concluded.³⁸

The Holy Prophet (SAW) was very kind and generous towards the non-Muslims. In his period, a delegation of Najran’s Christians visited Madinah and had a dialogue with Him. Although, the Holy Prophet (SAW) and the Najrans could not reach “common ground on all theological issues,” He honoured them by providing accommodation space near His home, and even “ordered Muslims to pitch their tent.” More importantly, they were allowed to pray in *Nabawi* mosque where the Muslims also prayed. The delegation was much impressed by the hospitality and religious tolerance they witnessed during the stay at Madinah. Therefore, while leaving Madinah, “the Najrān Christian leaders told Muhammad (SAW): “O, Abu al-Qasim, we decided to leave you as you are and you leave us as we are. But send with us a man who can adjudicate things on our properties, because

³⁶Yetkin Yildirim, “The Madinah Charter: A Historical Case of Conflict Resolution,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 20, no.4 (2009): 439-450.

³⁷Patmawati, “Inter-Religious Relations in the Period of Prophet Muhammad,” *Al-Albab* 5 (2): 175-193.

³⁸Maher Younes Abu-Munshar, “A Historical Study of Muslim Treatment of Christians in Islamic Jerusalem at the Time of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Salah Al-Din with Special Reference to Islamic Value of Justice,” (PhD Thesis: University of Abertay Dundee, UK, 2003), 260.

we accept you.” Finally, it was agreed that “Prophet Muhammad (SAW) would protect their lives, property, and freedom to practice Christianity.³⁹

After the death of Holy Prophet (SAW), the four caliphs for the most period and the rulers of Umayyads and Abbasids occasionally continued practising the Islamic rules and regulations established by the Qur’ān and the Sunnah as a guideline for accommodating diversity in the Muslim world. It has been argued that the Muslims’ conduct with non-Muslim subjects of the Islamic state, for an extended period of time and in many places, was unprecedented in its candidness and generosity.⁴⁰ Hazrat Abu-Bakr, the successor to the Holy Prophet (SAW), continued to follow the obligation of guarding religious freedom and tolerance. During his Caliphate, an agreement was signed with the people of *Hira* (an Iraqi city conquered by the Muslims) neither to demolish their shrines and churches nor disallow them to blow “Naqoos” and to organize religious processions.⁴¹ Hazrat Umar (RA), the successor of Hazrat Abu-Baker (RA), had ordered his commanders and governors to adhere to the Islamic principles while dealing with people of the territories conquered by the Muslims. He directed to abide by the contracts agreed upon with the non-Muslims in true letter and spirit.⁴² During Hazrat Umar (RA) period, the Islamic state was generous enough to offer vital portfolios to the non-Muslims. For a canal project that stretched from Cairo to the Red Sea, he appointed a non-Muslim engineer to design the plan.⁴³ He provided financial assistance to the non-Muslims from the state resources.

Certain provisions of the pacts signed by the Muslims and non-Muslims during the caliphate period have been contested by some scholars. It has been argued that “under the rule of the caliphs those who did not confess the Muslim faith were under certain restrictions both in public and private life. This was the price they paid for the privilege of living under Muslim government.”⁴⁴

Bruce Masters disregarded these assertions and emphasized that most of the allegations about the “pact of Umar” are raised without taking into account the prevailing circumstances at that time and “pre-modern codes regulating relationships between the

³⁹Considine, Craig, “Pluralism and the Najrān Christians: How Prophet Muhammad Went Beyond Tolerance,” Accessed 7 12, 2020. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/pluralism-and-the-najran-christians_b_9235554.

⁴⁰Richard Khuri, “True and False Pluralism in Relation to the West and Islam,” in Plamen Makariev, (Eds.), *Islamic and Christian Cultures: Conflict or Dialogue* (Washington DC: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2001): 225-244, 238.

⁴¹Ysuf ibn Abd Allah Ibn-e-Abdul Barr, *Al-Istiāb Fi Marifatul Ashāb*, Vol. 3 (Egypt: Maktaba tul Kuliyyat ul Azharia, 1990), 185.

⁴²Muhammad b Ibn-e-Jarīr Tabari, *Tareekh ul Ummam wal Mulook* (Cairo: Matba‘a al-Istikāma, 2017), 2467.

⁴³Abdul Wahab, *Al-Khulafa Al-Rashidūn* (Beruit: Dar ul Kutab Al-Ilmiya, 2018), 146.

⁴⁴Arthur Stanley Tritton, *Caliphs and their Non-Muslim Subjects: A Critical Study of the Covenant of ‘Umar* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 5.

conqueror and the conquered.”⁴⁵ He maintained that the pact of Umar (RA) should be compared with the “statutes of Kilkenny, promulgated in Ireland in 1366 by the Anglo-Norman.” While the statutes “sought to stop the assimilation of the ruling French-speaking elite into the culture of the ruled by prohibiting the use of Gaelic language, music, dress, and sport among the Normans, the pact of Umar displays no such fears.” He continues that “if anything, the injunctions seem designed to ensure that non-Muslims remained distinct from Muslims by their dress and by limiting their assimilation into the culture of the Muslims.” Hazrat Umar (RA) guaranteed the Christians that their churches will be protected and “would neither be changed into dwellings nor destroyed.” He assured that their religious rights would be safeguarded and “no compulsion would be exercised against them.”⁴⁶

Hazrat Ali (RA), the fourth pious caliph, seems more adherent to the rule of law and justice than his predecessors. During his caliphate, he was defeated in the court against a Jew owing to the insufficient evidence in favour of his claim that his body armour was stolen by the Jew. Hazrat Ali (RA) accepted the court verdict and the Jew was so impressed that he not only returned the armour to Ali but also embraced Islam.⁴⁷ Hazrat Ali (RA) paid much heed to the distresses among non-Muslims, and ordered Amer Bin Maslima, one of his governor to take protective measures for their contentment.⁴⁸

Overall, the Ummayyid’s period (661-750 A.D) witnessed reasonable religious tolerance and harmony. Hazrat Ameer Muawiyah, the founder of the dynasty, appointed many non-Muslims on certain positions. For instance, Mansoor Bin Serjooon, a Christian finance expert served as a custodian of the government’s revenue. Many non-Muslim architects were hired by the regime.⁴⁹ Ibn-e-Aasāl, a Christian physician served as a royal doctor.⁵⁰ Hazrat Umar Bin Abdul Aziz is well-known for his responsiveness and kindness to the public notwithstanding the faith or creed. He had fixed stipends for the poor and needy old persons among the non-Muslims.⁵¹ When a non-Muslim was murdered by a

⁴⁵Bruce Masters, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

⁴⁶Maher Younes Abu-Munshar, “A Historical Study of Muslim Treatment of Christians in Islamic Jerusalem at the Time of ‘Umar Ibn Al-Khattab and Salah Al-Din with Special Reference to Islamic Value of Justice,” (PhD Thesis: University of Abertay Dundee, UK, 2003), 260.

⁴⁷Abu Nuyam Al-Asfahani, *Hilya tul Auliya wa Tabqatul Asfiya*, Vol. 4 (Beruit: Dar ul Fikar ul Arabi, 1992), 139.

⁴⁸Shah Mueen Ali din Nadvi, *Tareekh e Islam*, Vol. 1 (Idara Islamiat Lahore: Lahore, 2009), 274.

⁴⁹Ahmad ibn-e-Yahya Al-Buladhari, *Ansāab ul Ashrāf*, Vol. 3 (Egypt: Dar ul Muarif, 2016), 137.

⁵⁰Ghulam Jillani Barq, *Europe per Islam kay Ihsān* (Lahore: Sheikh Ghulam Nabi and Sons, 2005), 137.

⁵¹Ibn-e-Athīr, *Al-Kamil fit Tareekh*, Vol. 5 (Beruit: Dar-e-Sadar, 2014), 195.

Muslim, he handed over the culprit to the victim family. The family was allowed to forgive or kill the murderer as an act of revenge. Finally, the murderer was killed.⁵²

The position and role of non-Muslims in state affairs during the Abbasid period appear as a mixed bag. It has been argued that many non-Muslims were elevated to superior positions for their expertise and ability to deal with state affairs. Al-Mu'tasim is famous for appointing plenty of Christians to public office. His Christian vizier, Salmuyah who was appointed as secretary of state was so influential that "no royal documents were valid until he had countersigned them." In addition, Ibrahim who was brother of Salmuyah, "was entrusted with the care of the privy seal, and was set over the Bayt al-Mal or public treasury, an office that, from the nature of the funds and their disposition, might have been expected to have been put into the hands of a Muslim." In contrast, the Abbasid caliphs particularly Al-Manṣūr, Al-Mutawakkil, and al-Muqtadir "sought to remove non-Muslims from public office."⁵³ Haroon-ur-Rashid employed the non-Muslims in his army. The Christians had contributed significantly in fields of architecture, engineering, and medical during this period.⁵⁴ Abbasid rulers not only paid attention towards the education and training of the non-Muslims but also appointed them at the upper echelons of power in educational institutions.⁵⁵ Many festivals of the non-Muslims, embedded within the religious traditions, were patronized by the Abbasid's regime.⁵⁶ Interfaith dialogue and debates were very common during the period of Haroon, Mehdi, and Mamoon.⁵⁷ It has been reported that the Christian population of Spain had admired the religious freedom they were provided during the Muslim rule. They were too contented to refuse to become a part of any drive against Abdul Rehman Second, the then ruler of Spain.⁵⁸ The people had the freedom to celebrate religious rituals. It is noteworthy to mention that Peter York Mekhail entered Alexandria with a big procession celebrating Christian symbolism such as crosses, lights and Bibles in front of him.⁵⁹

The Ottoman Caliphate (1281-1922 A.D) much alludes to the religious autonomy that is provided for the non-Muslims. The Ottomans valued and honoured the religious diversity and granted senior administrative and judicial positions to the non-Muslims. The Millet system in Turkey allowed the religious communities to rule itself under its laws. The Muslims, the Christians, and the Jews were subject to separate laws, each consistent with

⁵²Ibn-e-Jawzi, *Seerat Umar Bin Abdul Aziz* (Beruit: Dar ul Kutab ul Ilmiya, 2013), 95.

⁵³Mun'im Sirry, "The Public Role of Dhimmīs During 'Abbāsīd Times," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 74, no. 2 (2011): 187-204.

⁵⁴A. R. Kan Puri, *Al-Baramqa* (Karachi: Nafees Academy, 1990), 137.

⁵⁵Shibli Nomani, *Al-Farūq* (Lahore: Idara Islamiat, 2015), 153.

⁵⁶Ibrahim Hassan, *Musalmāno ka Nazm-e-Mamlakat* (Translated by Molvi Aleem Ullah) (Karachi: Dar ul Isha'at, 1995), 2/598-599.

⁵⁷Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970), 473.

⁵⁸Stanley Lane-Poole, *The Moors in Spain* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1960), 901.

⁵⁹Mustafa Sabbaee, *Islami Tehzeeb kay Chand Darakhshan Pehlu*, [Islamic Civilization and Its Salient Features, translated by Maroof Shah Shirazi] (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1988), 135-136.

their millet.⁶⁰ The sociable relations among different faiths resulted in the upward trend of intermarriages.⁶¹ Additionally, the non-Muslims were not burdened with taxes.⁶² It has been argued that during Ottomans rule the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews were provided with cultural and religious autonomy. The legal traditions and practices of each group, especially about “death, marriage, and inheritance were respected and enforced through the empire.” A variety of languages and works of literature flourished and equal opportunities for advancement and prosperity were provided to all the empire’s subjects.⁶³

The Muslims also ruled India for centuries and demonstrated a great deal of respect for indigenous religions and faiths. Many Hindus were provided prominent positions in the polity. The Mughal dynasty had a profound predisposition towards Hindus. The Mughal rulers married non-Muslims ladies and set superb examples of religious tolerance. Hindu-Muslims relations for the most of the period remained exemplary.

This account of Muslim history illustrates that several Muslim regimes at different periods and many places have manifested the accommodative spirit of Islam. Nevertheless, some times, the Muslim rulers were found engaged in the persecution of not only the non-Muslims inhabitants but also in the ruthless oppression of the Muslim opponents. This brutality and non-accommodation are attributed to particular regimes and not to the Islamic doctrine and traditions. This phenomenon does not undervalue the accommodative capacity of Islamic traditions to foster peaceful coexistence among multi-religious societies.

3. Conclusion

Governing diversity has remained a challenge for plural societies over the period. The power-sharing models invented institutions for territorial autonomy and adopted multicultural policies for the accommodation of ethnically and culturally distinctive groups. Being geographically dispersed in most of cases, religious minorities remained without autonomy. Equally, on account of the prevalence of secular ideology, many modern democracies did not oblige the religious minorities by entertaining their demands in state policies. This exclusionary nature of governance has marginalized minority religious identities in many places. The resultant dissatisfaction and resentment are the primary reason for tensions between majority-minority religions in most of the multi-religious societies. This paper argues that religion could help to lessen the religion-based violence. It proclaims that religious traditions may offer valuable insights to plan

⁶⁰William Spencer, *Turkey: Sarzameen aur Bashinday* (Translated by Ghulam Rasool Mehar) (Lahore: Fiction House, 2000), 50.

⁶¹William Martin Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 49.

⁶²Thomas W. Arnold, *the Preaching of Islam* (Lahore: Idara Islamiyat, 1995), 153.

⁶³Bernard Lewis, and Benjamin Braude, *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: The Functioning of a Plural Society* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 1.

accommodative policies for religious groups in multi-religious societies. Being one of the major religious traditions, Islamic values of accommodation deserve to be assessed how much helpful they are for designing inclusive policies in religiously diverse societies. The analysis of Islamic doctrine regarding the religious accommodation and the application of Islamic pluralistic approach at different junctures of history by the Muslim regimes attest the capacity of Islamic values of accommodation to nurture peaceful coexistence in multi-religious societies.

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