



La-Net

ISS 406

ISLAM AND PLURALISM



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ISS 406: ISLAM AND PLURALISM

Course Code: ISS 406

Course Title: Islam and Pluralism

Course Credit Load: 2 Units (C; LH 30)

List of Series

1. **Series 1:** Society in Islam and Social Justice
2. **Series 2:** Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth Provisions on Peaceful Coexistence
3. **Series 3:** The Madinan Charter and Islamic Values of Coexistence
4. **Series 4:** Contemporary Challenges Between Islam and the West
5. **Series 5:** Muslim Scholars and Civilizational Dialogue

1 Society in Islam and Social Justice

Series Outline

- **1.1 The Concept of Society in Islam**
 - 1.1.1 Meaning and foundations of society in Islam
 - 1.1.2 Individual and collective responsibilities
 - 1.1.3 Social relationships and community life
- **1.2 Social Justice in Islam**
 - 1.2.1 Meaning and principles of social justice
 - 1.2.2 Equality, fairness and human dignity
 - 1.2.3 Eradication of injustice and protection of rights
- **1.3 Cultural Diversity and Pluralism**
 - 1.3.1 Meaning of cultural diversity and pluralism
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 - 1.4.1 Cooperation in matters of common good
 - 1.4.2 Universal brotherhood and human solidarity
 - 1.4.3 Applying Islamic values in a plural society

Introduction

Human beings live in communities and depend on one another for security, learning, economic activity and social development. Islam therefore gives considerable attention to the organisation of society and to the responsibilities individuals have towards other people. These responsibilities include justice, respect for human dignity, cooperation and the protection of the rights of others.

The aim of this Series is to introduce you to the Islamic conception of society and examine how social justice, cultural diversity, mutual respect and cooperation contribute to peaceful community life. The Series will help you relate Islamic principles to the realities of living with people who may differ from you in religion, culture, language or social background.

You will begin by examining the concept and foundations of society in Islam and the relationship between individual and collective responsibilities. You will then study social justice, equality and human dignity before considering cultural diversity and pluralism. Finally, you will examine cooperation, universal brotherhood and practical ways of applying these values in a plural society.

Series Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 1.1: explain the Islamic concept of society and the responsibilities of individuals towards the wider community;

SLO 1.2: analyse the principles of social justice, equality and human dignity in Islam;

SLO 1.3: explain Islamic perspectives on cultural diversity and pluralism;

SLO 1.4: apply Islamic principles of cooperation, mutual respect and human solidarity to situations in a plural society.

1.1 The Concept of Society in Islam

1.1.1 Meaning and foundations of society in Islam

A **society** is a community of people who interact with one another and share systems, relationships, institutions and responsibilities. In Islam, society is not viewed simply as a collection of unrelated individuals. People are understood to have responsibilities towards one another and towards the wider community.

Islamic social thought is founded on principles derived from the Qur'ān and the Sunnah. These principles include justice, mercy, responsibility, mutual assistance and respect for human dignity. They provide a framework for organising relationships between individuals, families and wider communities.

The Islamic conception of society also recognises the importance of the family and other social institutions. Individuals have responsibilities as members of families and communities, while communities have responsibilities to protect their members and promote justice.

This means that your conduct towards other people is part of your religious and moral responsibility. Worship and personal devotion are therefore connected with ethical behaviour and social relationships.

In-text question: In Islam, society involves both individual responsibilities and _____ responsibilities.

1.1.2 Individual and collective responsibilities

Islam recognises both personal and collective responsibilities. An individual is accountable for personal actions, but this does not mean that a person can ignore the needs of other members of society.

Individual responsibility refers to the obligation of a person to act responsibly and observe moral and religious principles. Examples include honesty, keeping promises, respecting other people's property and avoiding injustice.

Collective responsibility refers to responsibilities shared by members of a community. These may include supporting vulnerable people, promoting education, maintaining social order and working to address injustice.

The two forms of responsibility complement each other. A society characterised by justice and cooperation requires individuals who act responsibly, while individuals need a social environment in which their basic rights and dignity are protected.

Consider a situation in which a member of your community is experiencing difficulty. Islamic social values encourage you not to regard that person's problem as completely unrelated to your own responsibilities. Helping others where possible contributes to the welfare of the wider community.

1.1.3 Social relationships and community life

Islam places importance on maintaining good relationships. These relationships include those between members of a family, neighbours, friends, fellow Muslims and other members of society.

Good social relationships involve qualities such as honesty, kindness, respect, patience and fairness. These values become particularly important in a plural society where people may hold different religious and cultural beliefs.

The principle of good relationships does not require everyone to have identical beliefs. Rather, it provides a basis for living peacefully despite differences. You can maintain your own religious convictions while treating people who hold different convictions with dignity and fairness.

The Qur'ān also recognises human diversity. In Qur'ān 49:13, humanity is described as having been created as peoples and tribes so that people may know one another. This provides an important basis for thinking about diversity as a feature of human society.

In-text question: According to Qur'ān 49:13, people were created as peoples and tribes so that they may _____ one another.

Figure 1.1: Foundations of society in Islam

[Insert figure here]

Description: A conceptual diagram showing justice, responsibility, mutual respect, cooperation and human dignity as interconnected foundations of Islamic social life.

Caption: Interconnected foundations of society in Islam.

AI prompt: Create a clean educational concept diagram showing five interconnected foundations of Islamic social life: justice, responsibility, mutual respect, cooperation and human dignity. Use a neutral academic design and include no decorative religious imagery.

Search string: Islamic social ethics justice cooperation human dignity OER

Pilot Questions 1.1

6. Which of the following is a foundation of Islamic social life?
A. Justice
B. Exploitation
C. Discrimination
D. Injustice
7. Individual responsibility refers to:
A. A person's obligation to act responsibly
B. Government ownership of all property
C. Avoidance of all social relationships
D. Rejection of community life
8. Collective responsibility refers to:
A. Responsibilities shared by members of a community
B. Personal worship only
C. Private business activity only
D. Individual entertainment
9. Qur'ān 49:13 presents human diversity as:
A. A basis for people to know one another
B. A reason for permanent conflict
C. Something that should be eliminated
D. A justification for injustice

1.2 Social Justice in Islam

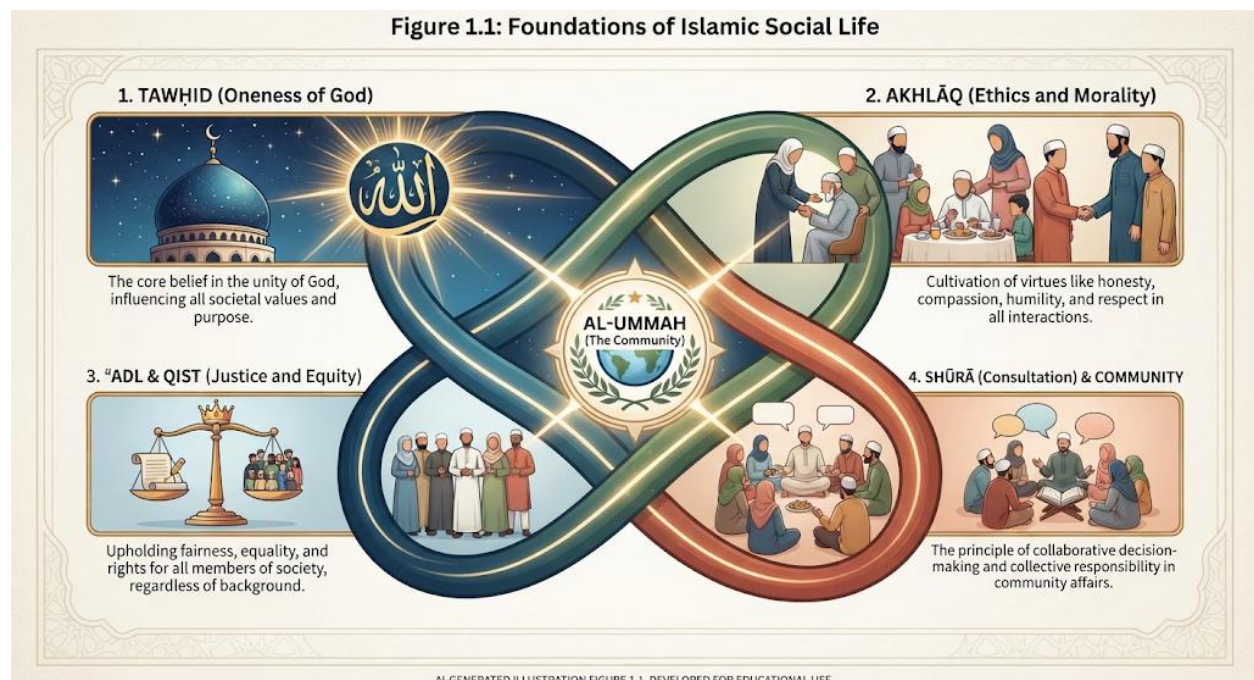
1.2.1 Meaning and principles of social justice

Social justice refers to the fair treatment of people and the protection of their rights and dignity within society. In Islamic thought, justice is a fundamental moral principle that applies to relationships between individuals and communities.

The Qur'ān repeatedly commands justice. Qur'ān 16:90, for example, identifies justice and good conduct among the values commanded by Allah. Qur'ān 4:135 instructs believers to stand firmly for justice, even when doing so may conflict with their own interests or the interests of relatives.

Justice therefore requires more than treating people fairly when it is convenient. It requires a commitment to fairness even in difficult circumstances.

You can apply this principle in ordinary situations. If you are involved in a group assignment, for example, justice means recognising the contributions of group members fairly rather than giving credit only to your closest friends.



1.2.2 Equality, fairness and human dignity

Islam teaches that human beings possess dignity. Qur'ān 17:70 speaks of Allah honouring the children of Adam. Human dignity therefore provides an important foundation for ethical relationships.

Human dignity means recognising the inherent worth of human beings and treating them with appropriate respect. It does not mean that all people have identical abilities, roles or circumstances. Rather, it requires that people should not be treated as though they are without value.

Fairness also requires that differences should not become excuses for unjust treatment. Religious, ethnic, cultural or social differences do not justify denying another person's basic dignity.

The Prophet Muhammad's teachings and practice provide examples of concern for justice, good treatment and social responsibility. These principles are relevant when Muslims interact with people from different backgrounds.

1.2.3 Eradication of injustice and protection of rights

Islamic social ethics places strong emphasis on opposing **injustice**, meaning unfair or harmful treatment that violates the rights of others.

Injustice can occur in many forms. It may involve discrimination, exploitation, dishonesty, abuse of power or denial of legitimate rights. Islamic teachings call believers to avoid such behaviour and to promote justice.

The responsibility to oppose injustice does not mean that individuals should respond to every disagreement with hostility. Instead, justice should be pursued through appropriate, lawful and constructive means.

In a plural society, this principle has particular importance. Muslims may live alongside people of different religions and cultures, and justice requires fair treatment of all members of society.

In-text question: The opposite of justice is _____.

Table 1.1: Selected principles of social justice

Principle	Meaning in social life	Practical example
Justice	Fair and impartial treatment	Applying the same rules fairly
Human dignity	Recognising the worth of every person	Treating others respectfully
Equality	Avoiding unjust discrimination	Giving people fair opportunities
Responsibility	Accepting duties towards others	Supporting vulnerable members
Protection of rights	Respecting legitimate claims and freedoms	Avoiding exploitation

Pilot Questions 1.2

1. Social justice primarily involves: A. Fair treatment and protection of rights
B. Favouritism
C. Exploitation
D. Social exclusion
2. Qur'ān 4:135 strongly emphasises: A. Justice
B. Commercial competition
C. Military expansion
D. Cultural isolation
3. Human dignity means: A. Recognising the inherent worth of human beings
B. Giving everyone identical abilities
C. Ignoring people's rights
D. Treating some people as worthless
4. Which of the following is an example of injustice? A. Exploitation
B. Fairness

C. Honesty

D. Respect

1.3 Cultural Diversity and Pluralism

1.3.1 Meaning of cultural diversity and pluralism

Cultural diversity refers to the existence of different cultures, languages, customs and social traditions within a society or across societies. Nigeria provides a clear example of cultural diversity because its population includes many ethnic, linguistic and cultural communities.

Pluralism refers to the coexistence of different groups and viewpoints within a society, together with the recognition that differences exist. In the context of this course, pluralism is particularly concerned with how people with different religious, cultural and ideological identities can live together peacefully.

Pluralism should not be confused with the idea that all beliefs are identical. People can maintain different convictions while cooperating in matters of common social interest.

Islamic perspectives on human diversity provide an important foundation for considering such relationships. Qur'ān 49:13 recognises the existence of peoples and tribes, while also directing attention towards moral qualities rather than ethnic superiority.

1.3.2 Recognition of differences in Islam

Human beings differ in language, culture, background and religious belief. These differences are visible in everyday life and should be approached responsibly.

Recognition of difference does not require abandoning one's own identity. A Muslim can remain committed to Islamic beliefs while learning to communicate respectfully with people who hold other beliefs.

This distinction is important because peaceful coexistence requires both **conviction** and **respect**. Conviction means remaining committed to one's principles, while respect means recognising the right of other people to be treated with dignity.

For example, students in a university group may have different religious backgrounds. They can still collaborate on a research project by agreeing on the academic objective, sharing responsibilities and respecting one another's beliefs.

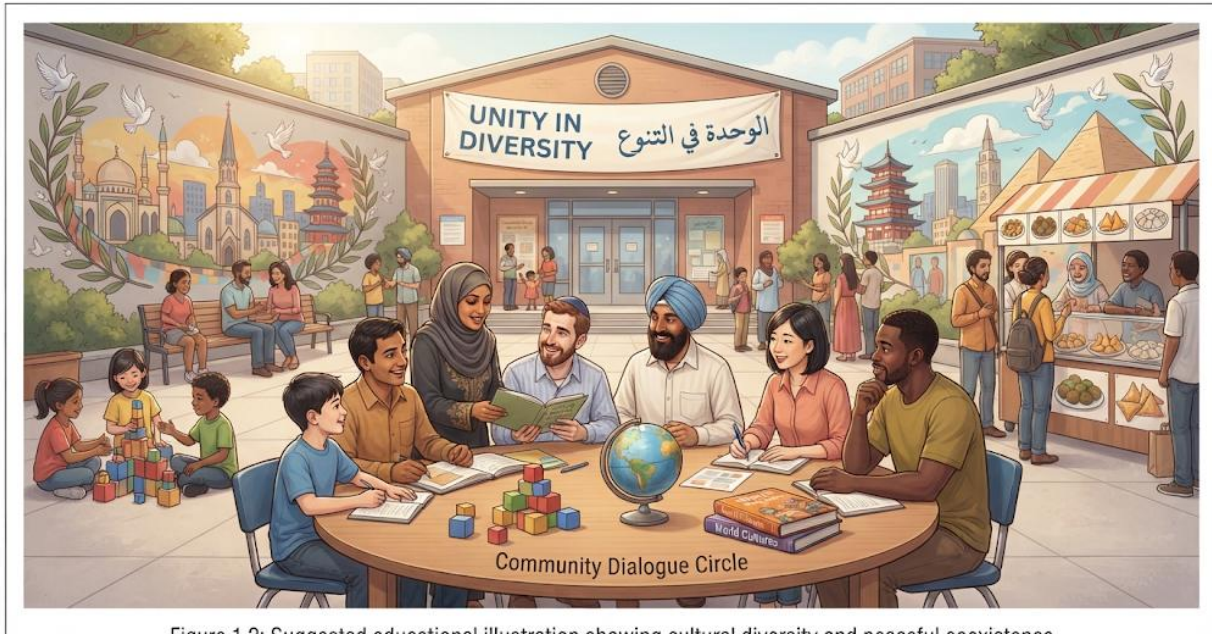


Figure 1.2: Suggested educational illustration showing cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence

1.3.3 Managing diversity through mutual respect

Mutual respect means that people recognise one another's dignity and avoid unnecessary hostility even when they disagree. It is an important practical principle for plural societies.

Managing diversity requires communication. When disagreements arise, you should distinguish between disagreement with an idea and hostility towards the person expressing that idea.

Dialogue can also reduce misunderstanding. People are more likely to cooperate when they have opportunities to explain their beliefs and listen to others.

Mutual respect does not mean that every viewpoint must be accepted as correct. It means that disagreements can be expressed without insults, discrimination or violence.

Figure 1.2: Cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence

[Insert figure here]

Description: An educational illustration showing people from different cultural and religious backgrounds interacting through dialogue, cooperation, education and community activities.

Caption: Cultural diversity can be managed through dialogue, respect and cooperation.

AI prompt: Create a neutral educational illustration showing culturally and religiously diverse people participating respectfully in dialogue, education and community cooperation. Avoid stereotypical clothing and avoid depicting any specific religious figure.

Search string: cultural diversity peaceful coexistence OER education

Pilot Questions 1.3

1. Cultural diversity refers to: A. The existence of different cultures and traditions
B. The elimination of cultural differences
C. The rejection of all traditions
D. The existence of only one culture
2. Pluralism concerns: A. The coexistence of different groups and viewpoints
B. The elimination of differences
C. Political competition only
D. Religious isolation
3. Mutual respect requires: A. Recognising the dignity of others
B. Agreeing with everyone
C. Avoiding all communication
D. Rejecting differences
4. Peaceful disagreement requires: A. Respectful expression of differences
B. Personal insults
C. Hostility
D. Discrimination

1.4 Cooperation and Peaceful Community Life

1.4.1 Cooperation in matters of common good

Cooperation means working together to achieve a shared or beneficial objective. Islamic teachings encourage cooperation in matters of righteousness and good conduct. Qur'ān 5:2 instructs believers to cooperate in righteousness and piety and not to cooperate in sin and transgression.

This principle is highly relevant in a plural society. People do not need to share every belief before they can work together on common concerns such as education, environmental protection, community safety and assistance to vulnerable people.

Consider a university community. Muslim and non-Muslim students can cooperate on a literacy project, environmental campaign or academic activity without requiring everyone to adopt the same religious beliefs.

Cooperation therefore provides a practical way of turning the principle of peaceful coexistence into everyday action.

1.4.2 Universal brotherhood and human solidarity

The Islamic concept of human solidarity encourages concern for other people. The Qur'ān presents humanity as originating from a common human family and repeatedly emphasises justice and good conduct.

Human solidarity refers to a sense of shared responsibility and concern for the wellbeing of other human beings. It encourages people to respond constructively to suffering, injustice and social problems.

Within Islamic thought, Muslims are described as a brotherhood in faith, but Islamic ethical responsibilities also extend to relationships with wider humanity. This distinction is important when discussing pluralism because Muslim social life includes interactions with people who do not share the Islamic faith.

Human solidarity can be demonstrated through helping people in need, protecting the dignity of others and cooperating on issues that benefit society.

1.4.3 Applying Islamic values in a plural society

The principles discussed in this Series become meaningful when applied to real situations. You can practise Islamic values of justice and coexistence in your classroom, workplace, neighbourhood and wider community.

Suppose you belong to a group containing people from different religious backgrounds. A constructive approach is to establish shared objectives, divide responsibilities fairly, listen to different opinions and resolve disagreements respectfully.

Similarly, if a person expresses an opinion with which you disagree, you can challenge the idea without attacking the person's dignity. This distinction between disagreement and disrespect is essential for peaceful coexistence.

Pluralism therefore requires practical skills as well as theoretical knowledge. These include communication, cooperation, patience, fairness and the ability to express disagreement constructively.

In-text question: Qur'ān 5:2 instructs believers to cooperate in _____ and piety.

Box 1.1: Practical principles for peaceful coexistence

[Insert box here]

Description: A learner-friendly checklist presenting five practical principles: respect human dignity, communicate respectfully, cooperate for common good, oppose injustice and resolve disagreements peacefully.

Caption: Practical principles for applying Islamic values in a plural society.

AI prompt: Create a simple educational checklist titled “Principles for Peaceful Coexistence” with five items: respect human dignity, communicate respectfully, cooperate for common good, oppose injustice and resolve disagreements peacefully. Use a neutral academic style.

Search string: peaceful coexistence interfaith cooperation Islamic ethics OER

Pilot Questions 1.4

1. Qur'ān 5:2 encourages cooperation in: A. Righteousness and piety
B. Injustice
C. Hostility
D. Exploitation
2. Human solidarity refers to: A. Shared concern for human wellbeing
B. Rejection of all social relationships
C. Isolation from society
D. Competition between religious groups
3. Which is an example of cooperation in a plural society? A. Muslims and non-Muslims working together on a community project
B. Refusing to work with anyone of another religion
C. Insulting people with different beliefs
D. Preventing others from participating in community activities
4. Which approach best supports peaceful disagreement? A. Respectful discussion
B. Personal attacks
C. Discrimination
D. Threats

Series Summary

In this Series, you examined the Islamic concept of society and the responsibilities individuals have towards the wider community. You began by considering the foundations of Islamic social life, individual and collective responsibilities and the importance of good social relationships. You then analysed social justice, equality, human dignity and the need to oppose injustice. These discussions directly address **SLO 1.1 and SLO 1.2**.

You next explored cultural diversity and pluralism, recognising that people can maintain different religious and cultural identities while living together peacefully. Finally, you examined cooperation, human solidarity and practical ways of applying Islamic values in plural societies. These discussions address **SLO 1.3 and SLO 1.4**. The central lesson is that Islamic social ethics provides principles for justice, dignity, cooperation and peaceful interaction across differences.

Glossary of Terms

Collective responsibility: Responsibilities shared by members of a community towards the welfare of the wider society.

Cooperation: Working together to achieve a shared or beneficial objective.

Cultural diversity: The existence of different cultures, languages, customs and traditions within a society or across societies.

Human dignity: Recognition of the inherent worth of human beings and the requirement to treat them with appropriate respect.

Human solidarity: Shared concern and responsibility for the wellbeing of other human beings.

Individual responsibility: The obligation of an individual to act responsibly and observe moral and religious principles.

Mutual respect: Recognition of the dignity of others despite differences in beliefs, culture or opinions.

Pluralism: The coexistence of different groups and viewpoints within a society while recognising their differences.

Social justice: Fair treatment of people and protection of their rights and dignity within society.

Concept-Check Questions 1

Objective Questions

1. Which principle is central to Islamic social life? **[SLO 1.1]**
 - A. Justice
 - B. Exploitation
 - C. Discrimination
 - D. Social isolation
2. Which of the following best describes social justice? **[SLO 1.2]**
 - A. Fair treatment and protection of rights
 - B. Favouritism towards one's friends
 - C. Denial of human dignity
 - D. Unequal treatment based on prejudice
3. What does cultural diversity refer to? **[SLO 1.3]**
 - A. The existence of different cultures and traditions
 - B. The elimination of cultural differences
 - C. The rejection of all cultural identities
 - D. The existence of only one cultural tradition
4. Which of the following is an example of cooperation in a plural society? **[SLO 1.4]**
 - A. Working with people of different religions on a community project
 - B. Refusing to communicate with people of other religions
 - C. Preventing others from participating in community activities
 - D. Insulting people who hold different beliefs
5. What does mutual respect require? **[SLO 1.3, SLO 1.4]**
 - A. Respecting people's dignity despite differences
 - B. Agreeing with every opinion
 - C. Rejecting one's own beliefs
 - D. Avoiding all disagreement

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain two foundations of society in Islam. **[SLO 1.1]**
7. State three principles of social justice in Islam. **[SLO 1.2]**
8. Explain the difference between cultural diversity and pluralism. **[SLO 1.3]**
9. Give two examples of how Muslims and people of other religions can cooperate for the common good. **[SLO 1.4]**

Long-Answer Questions

10. Discuss the importance of social justice, human dignity and protection of rights in the Islamic conception of society. **[SLO 1.1, SLO 1.2]**
11. Evaluate how Islamic principles of mutual respect and cooperation can contribute to peaceful coexistence in a religiously and culturally diverse society such as Nigeria. **[SLO 1.3, SLO 1.4]**

Answers to Pilot Questions 1

Pilot Questions 1.1

1. A
2. A
3. A
4. A

Pilot Questions 1.2

1. A
2. A

3. A

4. A

Pilot Questions 1.3

1. A

2. A

3. A

4. A

Pilot Questions 1.4

1. A

2. A

3. A

4. A

References and Attributions

1. The Qur'ān, particularly 4:135, 5:2, 16:90, 17:70 and 49:13.
2. Abū Zahrah, M. (1997). *Islamic Society*. Cairo: Dar al-Fikr al-Arabi.
3. Kamali, M. H. (2008). *The Right to Education, Diversity and Tolerance in Islam*. London: Islamic Texts Society.
4. Ramadan, T. (2009). *Radical Reform: Islamic Ethics and Liberation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
5. Sachedina, A. (2001). *The Islamic Roots of Democratic Pluralism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
6. Figure 1.1: Suggested educational illustration showing the foundations of Islamic social life. AI-generated illustration prompt prepared for educational use.
7. Figure 1.2: Suggested educational illustration showing cultural diversity and peaceful coexistence. AI-generated illustration prompt prepared for educational use.
8. Box 1.1: Suggested educational checklist for applying Islamic principles of peaceful coexistence. AI-generated illustration prompt prepared for educational use.
9. General attribution: Explanations of Islamic social ethics, justice, diversity and cooperation are based on Qur'ānic teachings and established scholarship in Islamic studies.

Parts and Sub-Parts

2.1 Qur'ānic Foundations of Peaceful Coexistence

- 2.1.1 Human Diversity and Recognition of Others
- 2.1.2 Freedom of Religious Choice
- 2.1.3 Dialogue and Communication with Others

2.2 Justice, Kindness and Respect for Others

- 2.2.1 Justice as an Islamic Obligation
- 2.2.2 Kindness towards Peaceful Non-Muslims
- 2.2.3 Prohibition of Religious Insult and Provocation

2.3 Prophetic Teachings on Interreligious Relations

- 2.3.1 Respect for Neighbours and Guests
- 2.3.2 Protection from Harm
- 2.3.3 Good Conduct in Relations with Others

2.4 Applying Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth Principles to Peaceful Coexistence

- 2.4.1 Managing Religious Differences
- 2.4.2 Cooperation in Matters of Common Good
- 2.4.3 Balancing Religious Commitment and Social Harmony

Introduction

Plural societies bring people of different religions, cultures and convictions into regular contact with one another. Such contact can produce mutual understanding and cooperation, but it can also generate tension when religious differences are treated as reasons for hostility or exclusion.

The Islamic tradition provides principles for dealing with such differences through justice, good conduct, dialogue and peaceful relations.

The Qur'ān addresses human diversity and establishes principles for dealing with people whose beliefs differ from those of Muslims. It recognises that faith cannot properly be imposed through coercion and directs Muslims to engage others with wisdom and appropriate conduct. The Qur'ān also establishes justice as a principle that should not be abandoned because of disagreement or hostility. For example, Qur'ān 2:256 rejects compulsion in religion, while Qur'ān 60:8 permits kindness and justice towards those who do not fight Muslims on account of religion or expel them from their homes.

The Sunnah complements these Qur'ānic principles by showing how they can be expressed in everyday relationships. Prophetic teachings emphasise good treatment of neighbours, avoidance of harm, hospitality and responsible speech. Sahih Muslim records the Prophet's instruction that a believer should treat the neighbour with kindness and show hospitality to the guest.

The aim of this Series is to enable you to understand the principal Qur'ānic and Prophetic foundations of peaceful coexistence. You will first examine Qur'ānic teachings on human diversity, freedom of religious choice and communication. You will then study justice, kindness and responsible relations with people of other faiths. Next, you will examine selected Prophetic teachings concerning neighbours, guests and avoidance of harm. Finally, you will consider how these principles can guide Muslims in managing religious differences and cooperating for the common good.

Series Learning Outcomes

Upon completing this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 2.1: Explain Qur'ānic principles that support peaceful relations among people of different religious backgrounds.

SLO 2.2: Analyse the importance of justice, kindness and responsible conduct in Islamic relations with others.

SLO 2.3: Examine selected Prophetic teachings concerning peaceful and respectful relations with others.

SLO 2.4: Apply Qur’ānic and Ḥadīth principles to situations involving religious difference and social interaction.

2.1 Qur’ānic Foundations of Peaceful Coexistence

2.1.1 Human Diversity and Recognition of Others

Human beings live in different communities, possess different languages and cultures, and follow different religious traditions. The Qur’ān does not present human diversity as an accidental feature of human existence. Rather, it directs attention to the purpose and moral significance of diversity.

Qur’ān 49:13 states that humanity was created from a male and a female and made into peoples and tribes so that they may know one another. The verse therefore provides a basis for recognising human difference without making difference itself a justification for contempt. The emphasis is on knowing one another, while moral distinction is connected to righteousness rather than ethnicity, social origin or group identity.

This principle is particularly important in a plural society. A Muslim may maintain commitment to Islamic beliefs while recognising that other people have different religious and cultural identities. Recognition does not require abandoning one’s faith. Instead, it requires learning how to relate to others without unjust discrimination or hostility.

The Qur’ānic perspective therefore distinguishes between **religious conviction** and **social conduct**. A Muslim can disagree with another person’s beliefs while still dealing with that person fairly and respectfully.

Think About It

Why is recognising the existence of religious differences different from accepting every religious belief as equally true?

Answer: Recognition means acknowledging that people hold different beliefs and treating them fairly. It does not require a Muslim to regard all beliefs as religiously identical or equally correct.



2.1.2 Freedom of Religious Choice

One of the most frequently discussed Qur'ānic principles concerning religious difference is found in Qur'ān 2:256:

“There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.”

The verse establishes that religious commitment cannot be produced through coercion. The Qur'ān connects this principle with the distinction between right guidance and error.

This principle has important implications for plural social relations. A person's religious conviction involves belief and commitment, and coercion cannot produce genuine faith.

Consequently, Islamic engagement with people of other religions should not be reduced to forcing religious conformity.

The principle should, however, be understood carefully. **Freedom from religious compulsion does not mean that Islam regards all religious doctrines as equally valid.** Islam maintains its own theological claims while rejecting coercion as the means of producing religious commitment.

The distinction is important for understanding Islamic pluralism. Pluralism requires Muslims to live responsibly among people who may not share their beliefs. It does not require Muslims to surrender their own religious identity.

Fill in the Blank

Qur'ān 2:256 establishes the principle that there should be no _____ in religion.

Answer: compulsion.

2.1.3 Dialogue and Communication with Others

Peaceful coexistence requires communication. Differences become more difficult to manage when people refuse to listen to one another or treat disagreement as sufficient reason for hostility.

The Qur'ān instructs Muslims to invite others towards the way of their Lord with wisdom and good instruction and to engage in discussion in the best manner. This principle provides an ethical framework for religious communication. Dialogue should not become an excuse for abuse, humiliation or unnecessary provocation.

The Qur'ānic approach therefore combines conviction with appropriate conduct. A Muslim may explain Islamic beliefs, respond to disagreement and defend a position intellectually, while still observing standards of speech and behaviour.

This principle is especially relevant in educational institutions, workplaces and communities where Muslims interact with people of different beliefs. A constructive conversation begins with

listening, accurate representation of another person's position and avoidance of insulting language.

Pilot Question 2.1

1. Which Qur'ānic verse is commonly cited for the principle of no compulsion in religion?

- A. Qur'ān 2:256
- B. Qur'ān 1:1
- C. Qur'ān 112:1
- D. Qur'ān 114:1

Answer: A. Qur'ān 2:256. (SLO 2.1)

2. What does Qur'ān 49:13 teach about human diversity?

Answer: It presents human diversity into peoples and tribes as part of human existence and directs people to know one another. (SLO 2.1)

3. State one ethical requirement for religious dialogue derived from the Qur'ānic approach.

Answer: Dialogue should be conducted with wisdom, appropriate instruction and good manners. (SLO 2.1)

2.2 Justice, Kindness and Respect for Others

2.2.1 Justice as an Islamic Obligation

Justice is a central Qur'ānic principle. It is not restricted to situations in which Muslims agree with those being judged or treated. Qur'ān 5:8 warns believers not to allow hatred towards a people to lead them away from justice. The verse connects justice with righteousness and reminds Muslims that moral standards should remain consistent even where disagreement exists.

This principle is fundamental to peaceful coexistence because religious difference can sometimes produce suspicion or negative stereotyping. If such attitudes influence how people are treated, discrimination may result.

Islamic justice requires a Muslim to distinguish between disagreement with an idea and injustice towards a person. A person may hold a belief that Muslims consider incorrect, but this does not make it permissible to deny that person justice.

Justice therefore provides a moral safeguard against prejudice. It requires fairness in judgement, dealings, testimony and social relations.

Fill in the Blank

The Qur'ānic principle that requires believers to remain fair even when they dislike a people is the principle of _____.

Answer: justice.

2.2.2 Kindness towards Peaceful Non-Muslims

Qur'ān 60:8 provides an important basis for peaceful social relations. It states that Allah does not forbid Muslims from acting kindly and justly towards those who do not fight them because of religion and do not expel them from their homes. The verse concludes by affirming Allah's love for those who act justly.

The verse is significant because it distinguishes between religious difference and hostile action. Merely belonging to another religious community is not presented as sufficient reason for refusing ordinary kindness and justice.

Kindness may take different forms depending on the social context. It can include honesty in business, respect for neighbours, assistance in legitimate matters, visiting people when appropriate, offering condolences, maintaining good communication and cooperating in beneficial activities.

At the same time, kindness should not be confused with abandoning one's religious commitments. Islamic coexistence seeks to maintain both **religious identity** and **ethical social relations**.



Figure 2.2: Neighbourly Relations in a Plural Community

2.2.3 Prohibition of Religious Insult and Provocation

Peaceful coexistence can be damaged when religious differences are expressed through insults, mockery or deliberate provocation. The Qur'ān instructs Muslims not to insult those whom others invoke besides Allah, because doing so may lead them to respond by insulting Allah without knowledge.

This instruction demonstrates an important principle of responsible communication. Even when Muslims reject another religious belief, they are not authorised to turn disagreement into uncontrolled abuse.

The principle is especially relevant in plural societies and contemporary communication environments. Social media can rapidly amplify offensive statements, mockery and

inflammatory language. A responsible Muslim should therefore consider the likely consequences of words before speaking or publishing them.

Respectful conduct does not prevent intellectual disagreement. Rather, it establishes the ethical boundaries within which disagreement should occur.

Think About It

A Muslim student strongly disagrees with the religious belief of a classmate. What should guide the student's response?

Answer: The student should remain faithful to Islamic beliefs while discussing the disagreement respectfully, avoiding insults, injustice and deliberate provocation.

Pilot Question 2.2

1. According to Qur'ān 60:8, Muslims may act kindly and justly towards people who:

- A. Agree with every Islamic belief
- B. Do not fight Muslims because of religion or expel them from their homes
- C. Are Muslims only
- D. Have no religious beliefs

Answer: B. (SLO 2.2)

2. Why is justice important in managing religious differences?

Answer: Justice prevents disagreement from becoming an excuse for prejudice, discrimination or unfair treatment. (SLO 2.2)

3. Why should religious disagreement not be expressed through insults?

Answer: Insults can provoke hostility and undermine responsible communication and peaceful relations. (SLO 2.2)

2.3 Prophetic Teachings on Interreligious Relations

2.3.1 Respect for Neighbours and Guests

The Sunnah provides practical guidance for translating Islamic principles into everyday conduct. Among the most important areas is the treatment of neighbours.

The Prophet ﷺ repeatedly emphasised good treatment of neighbours. Sahih Muslim records the teaching that whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should treat the neighbour with kindness and honour the guest.

The significance of this teaching extends beyond abstract discussion of tolerance. Neighbours interact with one another regularly, often sharing physical spaces, roads, markets and community facilities. Good neighbourliness therefore becomes an important means of maintaining social peace.

A neighbour's religious identity does not remove the general obligation to avoid harming the neighbour and to maintain appropriate good relations.

2.3.2 Protection from Harm

Peaceful coexistence requires more than avoiding physical conflict. It also involves protecting others from unnecessary harm through words, actions and social behaviour.

Another narration in Sahih Muslim connects faith with refraining from harming one's neighbour. The teaching therefore places responsibility on the believer to consider how personal conduct affects people nearby.

In a religiously diverse environment, this principle has practical significance. Muslims may encounter neighbours, classmates, colleagues and business partners who hold different beliefs. A person's religious difference should not become an excuse for harassment, intimidation or deliberate inconvenience.

Avoiding harm also involves responsible speech. A Muslim should avoid spreading false accusations, insulting others or creating unnecessary hostility.

2.3.3 Good Conduct in Relations with Others

Islamic coexistence is not simply a political arrangement. It has a moral dimension. The believer is expected to demonstrate good character in social interaction.

The Prophetic teaching that a believer should speak good words or remain silent illustrates this connection between faith and responsible communication.

Good conduct may involve honesty, keeping promises, respecting legitimate rights, helping others in lawful matters and showing consideration for neighbours and guests.

These qualities are important because peaceful coexistence is sustained through repeated everyday interactions. A society does not become peaceful merely because its members avoid open conflict. Peace also requires trust, fairness, restraint and mutual consideration.

Fill in the Blank

According to a Prophetic teaching recorded in Sahih Muslim, a believer should either speak _____ or remain silent.

Answer: good.

Pilot Question 2.3

1. Which relationship is specifically emphasised in the Prophetic teaching discussed in this Part?
 - A. Relationship between rulers only
 - B. Relationship with neighbours
 - C. Relationship between soldiers only
 - D. Relationship between merchants only

Answer: B. Relationship with neighbours. (SLO 2.3)

2. Mention two behaviours encouraged by the Prophetic teachings discussed in this Part.

Answer: Kind treatment of neighbours and guests, avoidance of harm, and speaking good words.
(SLO 2.3)

3. How does good character contribute to peaceful coexistence?

Answer: It builds trust, reduces unnecessary conflict and enables people with different backgrounds to interact responsibly. (SLO 2.3)

2.4 Applying Qur'ānic and Ḥadīth Principles to Peaceful Coexistence

2.4.1 Managing Religious Differences

Religious differences are unavoidable in a plural society. The Islamic response is not to pretend that differences do not exist but to establish ethical methods for managing them.

First, a Muslim should understand the difference between **disagreement** and **hostility**.

Disagreement concerns differences in belief, interpretation or opinion. Hostility involves harmful behaviour towards another person or community.

A Muslim may disagree strongly with another religion while maintaining justice and good conduct towards its adherents. This distinction helps prevent theological disagreement from automatically becoming social conflict.

Second, disagreements should be handled through knowledge and responsible communication. Misrepresentation of another person's belief often produces unnecessary tension. A student who encounters a religious position he or she considers incorrect should seek accurate understanding before responding.

Third, Muslims should avoid allowing anger to control their conduct. Qur'ānic justice and Prophetic teachings on good speech provide standards that remain relevant even when disagreement becomes intense.

2.4.2 Cooperation in Matters of Common Good

People of different religions may share common concerns. They may work together to address poverty, protect the environment, support educational initiatives, assist victims of disasters or promote community welfare.

Cooperation in lawful and beneficial matters does not require participants to have identical religious beliefs. Instead, it allows people to contribute their different perspectives and abilities to a shared objective.

For example, Muslim and non-Muslim students may collaborate on a campaign to keep their educational environment clean. Their cooperation does not mean that they have adopted one another's religious beliefs. It demonstrates that social responsibility can create areas of common action despite theological differences.

The principle of cooperation should, however, remain within legitimate moral boundaries. Cooperation should not require participation in conduct that a Muslim considers religiously or ethically prohibited.

2.4.3 Balancing Religious Commitment and Social Harmony

Peaceful coexistence requires balance. A Muslim should neither abandon Islamic principles in the name of social harmony nor use religious commitment as an excuse for unjust treatment of others.

The balance can be understood through three principles:

1. **Maintain religious identity:** A Muslim remains committed to Islamic beliefs and practices.

2. **Maintain justice:** Religious difference does not justify unfairness or oppression.
3. **Maintain good social relations:** Muslims should interact responsibly and peacefully with others.

These principles make it possible to distinguish **religious pluralism** from religious indifference. Islamic peaceful coexistence does not require Muslims to consider every theological position correct. It requires Muslims to know how to live responsibly with people whose beliefs differ from theirs.

Application Activity

Imagine that you are a Muslim student working on a group assignment with students from two other religious backgrounds. One member makes a religious statement with which you strongly disagree.

Using the principles studied in this Series, identify three appropriate responses.

Suggested answer:

- Avoid insulting or ridiculing the person's belief.
- Explain your own position respectfully if discussion is appropriate.
- Continue cooperating on the legitimate academic task while maintaining your Islamic identity.

Pilot Question 2.4

1. What is the difference between religious disagreement and religious hostility?

Answer: Religious disagreement concerns differences in belief or interpretation, while hostility involves harmful or antagonistic conduct towards people because of those differences. **(SLO 2.4)**

2. Give one example of legitimate cooperation between Muslims and people of other religions.

Answer: They may cooperate in activities such as environmental protection, humanitarian assistance or community development. **(SLO 2.4)**

3. State the three principles that help a Muslim balance religious commitment with peaceful coexistence.

Answer: Maintaining religious identity, maintaining justice and maintaining good social relations. **(SLO 2.4)**

Series Summary

This Series examined the Qur’ānic and Prophetic foundations of peaceful coexistence. You first studied human diversity, freedom of religious choice and responsible communication. You then examined justice and kindness towards peaceful non-Muslims, including the Qur’ānic instruction to maintain fairness even when disagreement exists. The Series also considered Prophetic teachings concerning neighbours, guests, avoidance of harm and responsible speech. Finally, you applied these principles to religious disagreement, cooperation and social interaction.

By completing the Series, you should now be able to explain major Qur’ānic foundations for peaceful coexistence, analyse the place of justice and kindness in relations with others, examine relevant Prophetic teachings and apply these principles to practical situations involving religious difference. These competencies contribute directly to the wider course outcomes concerning inclusivity, peaceful relations, collaboration and the responsible expression of ideological differences.

Glossary of Terms

- **Coexistence:** The peaceful living or functioning of different people or communities within the same social environment.
- **Compulsion:** The use of force or coercion to make a person act or believe against their will.
- **Diversity:** The existence of differences among people, including differences in religion, culture, language and social background.
- **Interreligious:** Relating to interaction or relations between people belonging to different religions.
- **Justice:** Fair and morally appropriate treatment of people according to their rights and circumstances.
- **Pluralism:** The recognition and management of diversity within a society while allowing different communities to participate in social life.
- **Sunnah:** The teachings, practices, approvals and example of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ.

- **Tolerance:** The capacity to live with differences without resorting to unjust hostility or coercion.

Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. Which Qur'ānic verse establishes the principle that there is no compulsion in religion? **(SLO 2.1)**
2. What does Qur'ān 60:8 permit Muslims to show towards peaceful non-Muslims? **(SLO 2.2)**
3. Which relationship receives particular emphasis in the Prophetic teaching discussed in this Series? **(SLO 2.3)**
4. What is the difference between religious disagreement and hostility? **(SLO 2.4)**
5. Name one area in which Muslims and people of other religions may legitimately cooperate. **(SLO 2.4)**

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the significance of Qur'ān 2:256 for relations among people of different religious backgrounds. **(SLO 2.1)**
7. Explain how the Qur'ānic principle of justice can prevent religious disagreement from becoming social conflict. **(SLO 2.2)**
8. Discuss two Prophetic teachings that can contribute to peaceful relations in a religiously diverse community. **(SLO 2.3)**
9. Explain why peaceful coexistence does not require a Muslim to abandon Islamic religious identity. **(SLO 2.4)**

Long-Answer Questions

10. Analyse how the Qur'ānic principles of religious choice, justice, kindness and responsible communication can contribute to peaceful coexistence in a plural society. **(SLO 2.1, SLO 2.2 and SLO 2.4)**

11. Evaluate the relevance of Prophetic teachings on neighbours, avoidance of harm and good speech to contemporary relations between Muslims and people of other religions.
(SLO 2.3 and SLO 2.4)

Answers to Concept Check Questions 2

Objective Questions

1. ***Qur'ān 2:256.***
2. **Kindness and justice towards those who do not fight Muslims because of religion or expel them from their homes.**
3. **Relations with neighbours.**
4. **Religious disagreement concerns differences in belief or interpretation, while hostility involves harmful or antagonistic conduct towards people because of those differences.**
5. **Examples include humanitarian work, environmental protection, community development or educational activities.**

Short-Answer Questions

6. ***Qur'ān 2:256* establishes that there should be no compulsion in religion. It recognises that genuine religious commitment cannot properly be produced through coercion. The principle therefore provides an important basis for peaceful relations with people who hold different religious beliefs, while allowing Muslims to retain their own religious convictions.**
7. **Justice prevents religious disagreement from becoming an excuse for unfair treatment. *Qur'ānic* teaching requires Muslims to maintain fairness even where dislike or disagreement exists. This means that disagreement with another person's religion should not automatically result in discrimination, dishonesty or oppression.**

8. **Two examples are the Prophetic emphasis on treating neighbours well and the instruction to avoid harming one's neighbour. The Prophet ﷺ also taught believers to speak good words or remain silent. These teachings make peaceful coexistence part of everyday moral conduct rather than merely a theoretical principle.**
9. **Peaceful coexistence concerns social conduct, not the abandonment of religious conviction. A Muslim can remain committed to Islamic beliefs while treating people of other religions fairly, avoiding harm, communicating respectfully and cooperating with them in legitimate matters.**

Long-Answer Questions

10. **Basic Response:** The Qur'ān provides several principles that can support peaceful coexistence. Qur'ān 2:256 establishes that there should be no compulsion in religion, while Qur'ān 60:8 permits kindness and justice towards peaceful non-Muslims. Qur'ānic teaching also requires justice even where disagreement exists and promotes responsible communication.

Value-Added Response: These principles work together to establish an ethical framework for plural societies. Freedom from religious compulsion protects the integrity of religious choice. Justice prevents religious difference from becoming an excuse for discrimination. Kindness strengthens everyday social relations, while responsible communication reduces unnecessary provocation. Together, these principles allow Muslims to maintain their religious identity while participating constructively in a diverse society.

11. **Basic Response:** Prophetic teachings emphasise good treatment of neighbours, hospitality, avoidance of harm and responsible speech. These teachings are relevant wherever Muslims live alongside people of different religious backgrounds.

Value-Added Response: Contemporary plural societies depend heavily on everyday interaction. Neighbours, classmates, colleagues and community members constantly influence one another through speech and conduct. Prophetic teachings provide a moral framework for these interactions by requiring believers to avoid harm, treat neighbours well and speak responsibly.

Their relevance therefore extends beyond formal interreligious dialogue to ordinary social life, where trust and mutual respect are built through repeated conduct.

References and Attributions

1. **The Qur’ān**, especially 2:256, 5:8, 49:13, 60:8 and relevant passages concerning responsible dialogue and social conduct.
2. Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, Book of Faith, Ḥadīth 47a and related narrations concerning good treatment of neighbours, hospitality and speech.
3. Ibn Kathīr, Ismā‘īl ibn ‘Umar. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*, commentary on Qur’ān 2:256.
4. The Quranic Arabic Corpus, translations and linguistic resources for Qur’ān 2:256 and 60:8.

Illustrations

Figure 2.1: Qur’ānic Principles for Peaceful Coexistence

- **Short description:** An educational conceptual diagram showing four connected principles: religious choice, justice, kindness and responsible dialogue, with peaceful coexistence at the centre.
- **AI-generated illustration prompt:** “Create a clean university-level Islamic studies educational diagram showing peaceful coexistence at the centre, surrounded by four clearly labelled principles: freedom from religious compulsion, justice, kindness and responsible dialogue. Use subtle Islamic geometric design elements, no depiction of prophets or sacred personalities, clear academic typography, balanced composition, suitable for a Nigerian higher-education self-learning material.”
- **Suggested OER search string:** “Quran peaceful coexistence justice religious freedom Islamic studies educational diagram OER”

Figure 2.2: Neighbourly Relations in a Plural Community

- **Short description:** An educational illustration of Muslims and people from different religious backgrounds interacting respectfully in a shared community environment, with emphasis on neighbourliness, cooperation and peaceful communication.
- **AI-generated illustration prompt:** “Create a realistic but culturally neutral educational illustration of a diverse community in which Muslim and non-Muslim neighbours interact

respectfully in a shared public environment. Show ordinary neighbourly communication and cooperation, without depicting religious prophets or sacred figures. Include subtle visual cues of cultural and religious diversity while emphasising respect, kindness and peaceful coexistence. Suitable for a university Islamic studies self-learning material.”

- **Suggested OER search string:** “Muslim non-Muslim peaceful coexistence neighbours interfaith community OER”

Parts and Sub-Parts

3.1 Historical Context of the Madinan Charter

- **3.1.1** Yathrib before the Hijrah
- **3.1.2** The Hijrah and the Formation of a New Community
- **3.1.3** The Need for an Agreement in Madinah

3.2 Major Provisions of the Madinan Charter

- **3.2.1** Community, Political Order and Mutual Responsibility
- **3.2.2** Religious Communities and Freedom of Religious Practice
- **3.2.3** Security, Justice and the Settlement of Disputes

3.3 Islamic Values Underlying Peaceful Coexistence

- **3.3.1** Sanctity of Life and Human Dignity
- **3.3.2** Good Relations and Elimination of Injustice
- **3.3.3** Cooperation and Universal Human Brotherhood

3.4 Relevance of the Madinan Model to Plural Societies

- **3.4.1** Managing Religious and Social Diversity
- **3.4.2** Shared Responsibility and Civic Cooperation
- **3.4.3** Lessons for Contemporary Muslim Communities

Introduction

When different religious, tribal and cultural groups live within the same political community, peaceful coexistence requires more than goodwill. There must also be principles that regulate relationships, establish responsibilities and provide mechanisms for dealing with disagreement. The experience of Madinah after the Hijrah provides an important historical example for the study of these questions in Islam.

Before the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ migrated to Madinah, the city, then known as Yathrib, contained different groups with distinct tribal, religious and political interests. The Aws and Khazraj had experienced serious internal conflicts, while Jewish groups also lived in and around the settlement. The arrival of the Prophet ﷺ created the need for an arrangement capable of regulating relations within the emerging community.

The document commonly called the **Madinan Charter, Constitution of Madinah**, or **Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah** is associated with this historical setting. It is important to study it carefully rather than treating it as a simple modern constitution. The surviving text is transmitted primarily through early historical sources, particularly the version associated with Ibn Ishāq, and scholars have discussed questions concerning its compilation, transmission, dating and interpretation. Some scholars therefore prefer terms such as *Ṣaḥīfah*, *Kitāb*, agreement or pact rather than assuming that the modern constitutional category exactly describes the original document.

The significance of the Madinan Charter for this course lies in the way it addresses relations among groups with different identities. Its provisions deal with mutual obligations, security, dispute settlement, religious communities and collective responsibilities. One important clause concerning the Jews of Banū ‘Awf states that the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs, while other clauses establish reciprocal obligations and protection.

This Series therefore has four Parts. You will first examine the historical circumstances that produced the Madinan Charter. You will then study some of its major provisions concerning political order, religious communities, security and justice. In the third Part, you will examine Islamic values such as the sanctity of life, human dignity, good relations, elimination of injustice, cooperation and universal human brotherhood. Finally, you will consider the lessons that can be drawn from the Madinan experience for contemporary plural societies.

Series Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 3.1: Explain the historical circumstances that led to the formation of the Madinan Charter.

SLO 3.2: Analyse major provisions of the Madinan Charter concerning religious communities, security, justice and mutual responsibility.

SLO 3.3: Examine Islamic values that support peaceful coexistence, including human dignity, justice, cooperation and universal brotherhood.

SLO 3.4: Evaluate lessons from the Madinan experience for managing diversity and promoting peaceful coexistence in contemporary societies.

3.1 Historical Context of the Madinan Charter

3.1.1 Yathrib before the Hijrah

To appreciate the significance of the Madinan Charter, you need to understand the circumstances of Yathrib before the Prophet's migration. Yathrib was not a politically uniform community. Different tribes and religious groups lived there and maintained their own relationships, interests and alliances.

The Aws and Khazraj were two major Arab tribal groups in Yathrib. Their history included prolonged conflict, culminating in major confrontations such as the Battle of Bu'āth. The continuing instability created a need for an arrangement capable of establishing greater social and political order.

Jewish communities were also present in the region. Their relationships with the Arab tribes were complex and varied. Therefore, when the Prophet ﷺ arrived, he entered an environment in which questions of political authority, tribal loyalty, security and intergroup relations already existed.

The significance of this background is that the Madinan community did not begin as a society in which everyone already shared one religious or tribal identity. The challenge was how to organise a community containing different groups.

Think About It

Why would religious and tribal diversity make political organisation more difficult?

Answer: Different groups may have different loyalties, interests, customs and expectations.

Without agreed rules, disagreements over security, justice and responsibility can easily produce conflict.

3.1.2 The Hijrah and the Formation of a New Community

The Hijrah from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE marked a major turning point in Islamic history. The Muslims who migrated from Makkah, known as the Muhājirūn, joined Muslims in Madinah, particularly the Anṣār.

The new Muslim community nevertheless existed within a wider society containing people who did not share the Islamic faith. The Prophet ﷺ therefore faced a practical question: how could different communities live together under conditions of political uncertainty?

The answer was not simply to ignore existing social structures. Instead, agreements and relationships were established to regulate responsibilities and maintain security.

This approach demonstrates an important principle for understanding Islamic political and social thought: peaceful coexistence requires clear responsibilities. People need to know what rights they possess, what obligations they owe to others and how disputes will be handled.

Fill in the Blank

The migration of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his followers from Makkah to Madinah is known as the _____.

Answer: Hijrah.

3.1.3 The Need for an Agreement in Madinah

A plural society requires mechanisms for managing competing interests. In Madinah, the presence of Muslims, Jews and other groups meant that relations could not be based solely on a shared religious identity.

The Madinan Charter is traditionally understood as part of the Prophet's ﷺ effort to establish an ordered relationship among the communities of Madinah. It addressed questions of mutual obligations, security, responsibility and dispute settlement.

You should be careful, however, when describing the document. It is common to call it the “Constitution of Madinah”, but modern constitutional terminology can create misleading expectations. The surviving material is transmitted through historical sources and contains provisions that reflect the social and political circumstances of early seventh-century Arabia. Modern scholarship continues to discuss the nature and transmission of the document.

Its importance therefore does not depend on forcing it into a modern category. Rather, you should examine what its provisions actually attempted to accomplish.

Pilot Questions 3.1

1. What was the pre-Islamic name of Madinah?

- A. Makkah
- B. Yathrib
- C. Ṭā'if
- D. Khaybar

Answer: B. Yathrib. (SLO 3.1)

2. Mention the two major Arab tribal groups associated with Yathrib.

Answer: The Aws and the Khazraj. (SLO 3.1)

3. Why was an agreement useful in the Madinan context?

Answer: It helped regulate relations among different groups, establish responsibilities and provide mechanisms for security and dispute settlement. (SLO 3.1)

3.2 Major Provisions of the Madinan Charter

3.2.1 Community, Political Order and Mutual Responsibility

The Madinan Charter presents an attempt to establish an organised community in which different groups had defined responsibilities. The document contains provisions concerning the believers and later addresses Jewish groups associated with Madinah.

The concept of community in the document should therefore be examined carefully. The term *ummah* appears in the text, but its precise meaning and scope have been debated by scholars. In some provisions it clearly refers to the community of believers, while the document also establishes arrangements involving Jewish groups. This means that the political and religious dimensions of the agreement need to be distinguished rather than treated as identical.

One important feature is the movement from purely tribal arrangements towards wider forms of responsibility. Matters such as compensation, mutual assistance and security were given rules that extended beyond a single tribal relationship.

The document therefore contributed to the development of an organised social order in which obligations could be shared and regulated.

3.2.2 Religious Communities and Freedom of Religious Practice

One of the most significant provisions concerning religious diversity is the statement associated with the Jews of Banū 'Awf: the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs. Other Jewish groups are subsequently given corresponding terms in the transmitted text.

This provision is significant because it recognises the continued existence of distinct religious communities within the political arrangement. The agreement did not require Jewish groups to become Muslims before they could participate in the social order created by the pact.

You should distinguish this from the claim that the Charter established modern religious equality in every possible sense. The document arose within a seventh-century tribal and political context and contained differentiated obligations and identities. Its historical significance lies in the fact that it established regulated relations among communities with different religious identities.

The provision therefore illustrates how religious difference could be accommodated within a wider framework of social and political responsibility.

Fill in the Blank

According to the clause concerning the Jews of Banū ‘Awf, the Jews were allowed to maintain their _____ while the Muslims maintained theirs.

Answer: religion.

3.2.3 Security, Justice and the Settlement of Disputes

Security was an important concern in the Madinan agreement. The different groups were expected to fulfil responsibilities relating to the protection of the community and to avoid actions that could undermine the agreement.

The Charter also contains provisions concerning wrongdoing and dispute. Individuals and groups were expected to bear responsibility for their own conduct. This is important because peaceful coexistence cannot survive if agreements are treated as optional.

The document also assigns a role to the Prophet ﷺ in resolving disputes and maintaining the agreement. This demonstrates that coexistence requires not only rights but also institutions or recognised authorities capable of resolving disagreements.

A useful lesson here is that peace is not simply the absence of fighting. A peaceful political community needs agreed rules, procedures for resolving disputes and consequences for violating legitimate agreements.

Think About It

Suppose two groups in a community disagree over a shared resource. What lesson from the Madinan Charter is relevant?

Answer: They should rely on agreed rules and legitimate mechanisms for resolving the dispute rather than allowing disagreement to develop into hostility or violence.

Pilot Questions 3.2

1. What religious distinction is recognised in the Madinan Charter?

- A. Only one religion could exist
- B. Muslims and Jewish communities maintained distinct religions
- C. All religious identities were abolished
- D. Religion was prohibited

Answer: B. Muslims and Jewish communities maintained distinct religions. (SLO 3.2)

2. Why is mutual responsibility important in a plural society?

Answer: It establishes obligations among different groups and helps prevent one group from placing the entire burden of security and social order on others. (SLO 3.2)

3. Why is dispute settlement important to peaceful coexistence?

Answer: It provides a peaceful alternative to retaliation and violence when disagreements occur. (SLO 3.2)

3.3 Islamic Values Underlying Peaceful Coexistence

3.3.1 Sanctity of Life and Human Dignity

The protection of human life is a fundamental Islamic value. The Qur'ān presents the wrongful killing of a person as an extremely serious act and establishes strong moral condemnation of unjust violence.

The sanctity of life is important to pluralism because peaceful coexistence begins with recognition that human beings cannot be treated as disposable simply because they belong to another group.

Human dignity also requires that people are not humiliated, abused or denied basic moral consideration. A person's religion does not provide a justification for arbitrary violence or mistreatment.

When you apply this principle to a plural society, it means that Muslims should distinguish between religious disagreement and unjust aggression. Disagreement over belief may be profound, but it does not automatically permit harm against another person.

This principle also supports the importance of protecting vulnerable members of society and ensuring that disputes are managed through justice rather than revenge.

3.3.2 Good Relations and Elimination of Injustice

Islamic coexistence requires good relations with others. Good relations involve honesty, fairness, respect, keeping legitimate agreements and avoiding conduct that creates unnecessary hostility.

Justice is particularly important because peaceful relations cannot be sustained when one group believes that another group can be treated unfairly without consequence. The Qur'ānic instruction that hatred must not cause believers to depart from justice provides an important ethical standard.

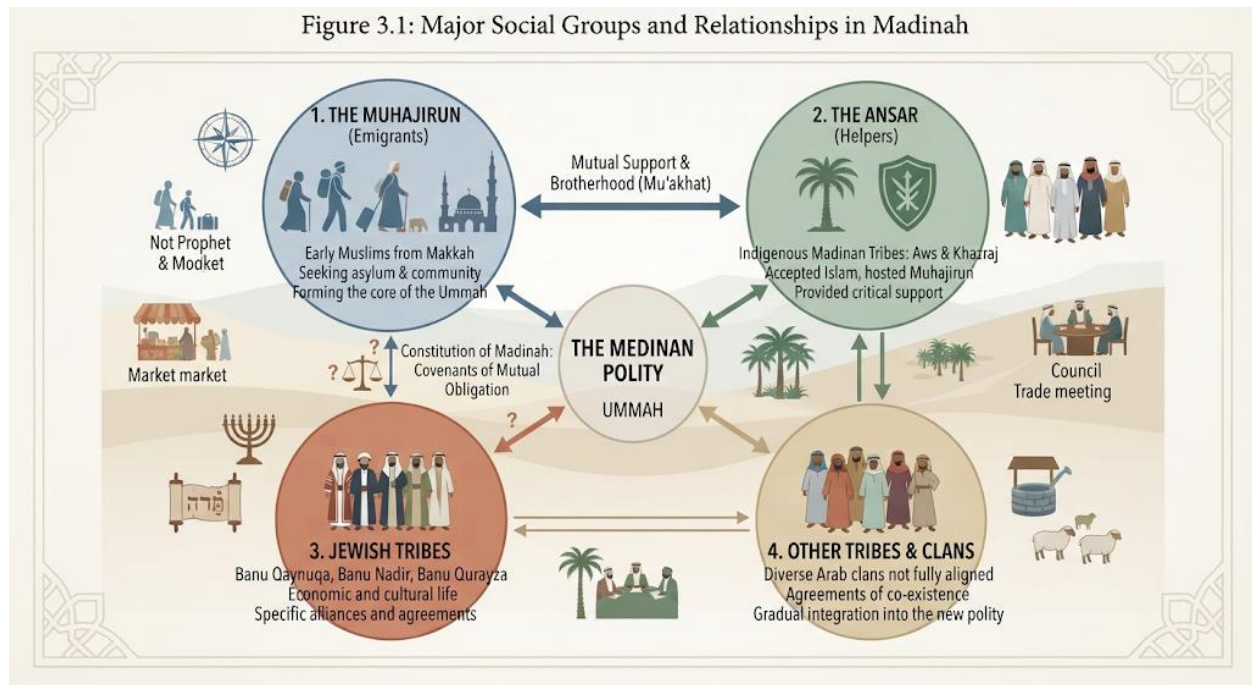
The elimination of injustice therefore operates at both individual and social levels. At the individual level, you are expected to avoid harming or cheating others. At the social level, institutions should protect people from oppression and arbitrary treatment.

A plural society needs this principle because religious difference can easily become a basis for stereotyping. Justice requires you to judge conduct according to evidence and moral standards rather than simply according to group identity.

Fill in the Blank

Islamic peaceful coexistence requires good relations with others and the elimination of _____.

Answer: injustice.



3.3.3 Cooperation and Universal Human Brotherhood

Human beings share a common origin. The Qur'ān describes humanity as originating from a male and a female and becoming peoples and tribes so that they may know one another. This provides a foundation for recognising a common human relationship despite differences of ethnicity, language and culture.

Islam also encourages cooperation in righteousness and beneficial activity. Cooperation does not mean that people must share every religious belief. Instead, people with different identities can work together where their objectives are lawful and beneficial.

Consider a Nigerian community facing flooding. Muslims, Christians and people of other backgrounds may cooperate to provide food, shelter and medical assistance. Their cooperation does not erase their religious differences. It demonstrates that common humanitarian responsibilities can provide an area of constructive interaction.

Universal human brotherhood therefore encourages Muslims to see human beings as members of a wider human family while maintaining the particular religious identity of Islam.

Pilot Questions 3.3

1. What does the principle of sanctity of life require?

- A. Protection only for Muslims
- B. Recognition that human life must not be unjustly violated
- C. Avoidance of all social interaction
- D. Rejection of justice

Answer: B. Recognition that human life must not be unjustly violated. (SLO 3.3)

2. How does justice contribute to peaceful coexistence?

Answer: Justice prevents religious or social differences from becoming excuses for oppression, discrimination or unfair treatment. (SLO 3.3)

3. Give one example of cooperation among people of different religions.

Answer: They may cooperate in humanitarian relief, environmental protection, community development or disaster response. (SLO 3.3)

3.4 Relevance of the Madinan Model to Plural Societies

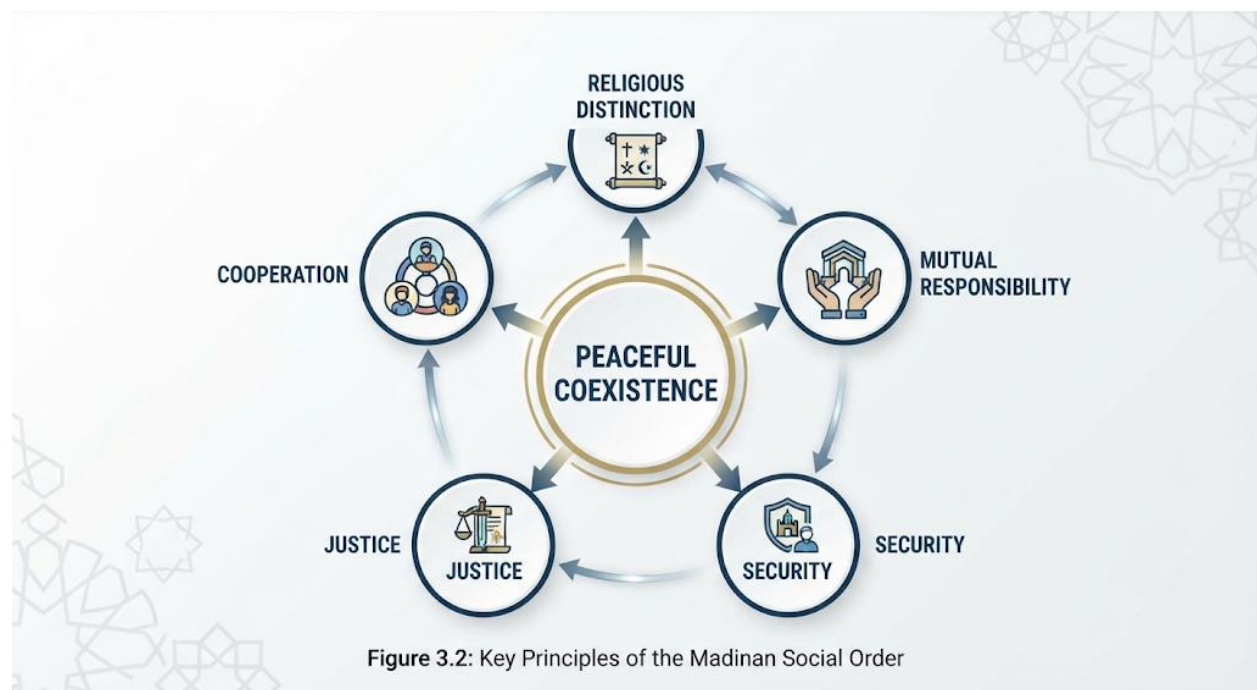
3.4.1 Managing Religious and Social Diversity

The Madinan experience demonstrates that diversity must be managed rather than ignored. The community contained people with different religious identities, tribal affiliations and interests.

The response involved establishing relationships and responsibilities capable of regulating interaction.

For contemporary Muslims, this provides an important lesson. Nigeria, for example, contains people from many religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Muslims therefore need practical principles for interacting with people who may not share their beliefs.

The Madinan model should not be copied mechanically into a modern state because the political, legal and social conditions are different. Instead, its underlying lessons can be studied: respect agreements, establish responsibilities, protect people from injustice, manage disagreements peacefully and recognise legitimate differences.



3.4.2 Shared Responsibility and Civic Cooperation

A diverse society functions better when members recognise responsibilities that extend beyond their immediate religious or ethnic group.

Shared responsibility can include protecting public property, supporting vulnerable people, respecting legitimate laws, maintaining peaceful neighbourhoods and assisting others during emergencies.

This principle is particularly relevant to contemporary Muslim participation in civic life. A Muslim living in a religiously diverse community can contribute to public welfare without abandoning Islamic beliefs.

For example, Muslim and Christian students may jointly organise a sanitation campaign on campus. Muslim and non-Muslim professionals may work together during a flood emergency. Neighbours from different religious backgrounds may cooperate to improve security in their area.

These examples show that pluralism is not merely about tolerating the existence of difference. It also involves responsible participation in shared social life.

3.4.3 Lessons for Contemporary Muslim Communities

The Madinan experience provides several lessons for contemporary Muslim communities.

First, **religious identity and peaceful coexistence can exist together**. Muslims do not need to abandon their beliefs in order to maintain good relations with others.

Second, **agreements create responsibility**. Whether an agreement concerns a neighbourhood, institution, organisation or state, legitimate commitments should be respected.

Third, **justice must operate across group boundaries**. A Muslim should not support injustice merely because the victim belongs to another religious or ethnic group.

Fourth, **cooperation can occur without theological uniformity**. Muslims and non-Muslims can work together on legitimate matters of common benefit.

Fifth, **peace requires responsible institutions and conduct**. Good intentions alone are insufficient where disputes, security concerns and competing interests exist.

The value of the Madinan model therefore lies not in presenting seventh-century Madinah as identical to a contemporary plural democracy. Its value lies in helping you identify principles for managing diversity, maintaining agreements, protecting people and pursuing common welfare.

Application Activity

Imagine that you are part of a university committee containing Muslims, Christians and members of other religious backgrounds. The committee is responsible for organising a community outreach programme.

Using the lessons of the Madinan experience, identify four principles that should guide the committee.

Suggested answer:

1. Each participant should be treated with fairness and dignity.
2. Legitimate religious differences should be respected.
3. Members should fulfil agreed responsibilities.
4. Members should cooperate in lawful activities that benefit the wider community.

Fill in the Blank

One major lesson of the Madinan experience is that peaceful coexistence requires both rights and _____.

Answer: responsibilities.

Pilot Questions 3.4

1. Should the Madinan political arrangement simply be copied into every modern society?
 - A. Yes, without modification
 - B. No, because historical and contemporary contexts differ
 - C. Yes, because all societies are identical
 - D. No, because peaceful coexistence is impossible

Answer: B. No, because historical and contemporary contexts differ. (SLO 3.4)

2. Mention two lessons contemporary Muslim communities can draw from the Madinan experience.

Answer: Respect for legitimate agreements, justice across group boundaries, peaceful management of differences, shared responsibility and cooperation for common good. **(SLO 3.4)**

3. Why can Muslims cooperate with people of other religions without abandoning their religious identity?

Answer: Cooperation in legitimate matters concerns shared social responsibilities and does not require agreement on every religious belief. **(SLO 3.4)**

Series Summary

In this Series, you examined the Madinan Charter and the Islamic values that support peaceful coexistence.

In **Part 3.1**, you studied the historical circumstances of Yathrib, the Hijrah and the need to establish an organised relationship among different communities. You learned that Madinah was a diverse society and that the Madinan agreement developed within a complex tribal and religious environment.

In **Part 3.2**, you examined major provisions of the Madinan Charter. You considered community organisation, mutual responsibility, religious communities, security, justice and dispute settlement. You also learned why the document should be studied in its historical context rather than automatically equated with a modern constitution.

In **Part 3.3**, you examined Islamic values relevant to coexistence, particularly the sanctity of life, human dignity, good relations, justice, elimination of injustice, cooperation and universal human brotherhood.

In **Part 3.4**, you applied these principles to contemporary plural societies. You learned that the Madinan experience offers principles rather than a mechanical political template. These principles include respect for agreements, justice across group boundaries, responsible citizenship, peaceful management of differences and cooperation for common good.

Glossary of Terms

Agreement: A mutually accepted arrangement establishing obligations or responsibilities between individuals or groups.

Anṣār: The Muslims of Madinah who supported and received the Prophet ﷺ and the Muhājirūn after the Hijrah.

Civic cooperation: Participation by members of a society in activities that promote shared social welfare.

Coexistence: The peaceful living of different individuals or communities within the same social environment.

Dignity: The inherent worth and moral value attributed to human beings.

Hijrah: The migration of the Prophet Muḥammad ﷺ and his followers from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE.

Justice: Fair and morally appropriate treatment of people according to legitimate rights and obligations.

Madinan Charter: The commonly used modern designation for the early agreement or collection of agreements associated with the Prophet's ﷺ organisation of relations among communities in Madinah.

Muhājirūn: The Muslims who migrated from Makkah to Madinah with the Prophet ﷺ or as part of the early Muslim migration.

Plural society: A society containing people or communities with different religious, cultural, ethnic or social identities.

Ṣaḥīfah: An Arabic term meaning a written document or sheet; it is one of the terms associated with the Madinan document.

Universal brotherhood: The principle that human beings share a common human origin and should be approached with recognition of their basic human relationship.

Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. What was Yathrib?
 - A. The pre-Islamic name associated with Madinah
 - B. The name of a Qur'ānic chapter
 - C. A city in Egypt
 - D. A tribe in Makkah

2. Which groups are prominently associated with the Arab population of Yathrib before the Hijrah?
 - A. Aws and Khazraj
 - B. Quraysh and Thamūd
 - C. Banū Hāshim and Banū Umayyah
 - D. Aws and Quraysh

3. What religious distinction is recognised in the Madinan Charter?
 - A. Muslims and Jews had distinct religions
 - B. All religions were abolished
 - C. Only Judaism was recognised
 - D. Religious identity was prohibited

4. Which of the following is an Islamic value relevant to peaceful coexistence?
 - A. Injustice
 - B. Human dignity
 - C. Religious provocation
 - D. Collective retaliation

5. Why should the Madinan model not be copied mechanically into contemporary societies?
 - A. Because Islam rejects coexistence
 - B. Because historical and contemporary political contexts differ

- C. Because the Charter had no social provisions
- D. Because religious diversity did not exist in Madinah

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain why the historical circumstances of Yathrib are important for understanding the Madinan Charter. **(SLO 3.1)**
7. Explain the significance of recognising distinct religious communities in the Madinan Charter. **(SLO 3.2)**
8. How does the sanctity of life contribute to peaceful coexistence? **(SLO 3.3)**
9. Explain why cooperation among people of different religions does not necessarily require theological agreement. **(SLO 3.3)**
10. Identify three lessons that contemporary Muslim communities can draw from the Madinan experience. **(SLO 3.4)**

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the major features of the Madinan Charter that contributed to the regulation of relations among different communities. **(SLO 3.2)**
12. Evaluate the relevance of the Madinan experience to peaceful coexistence in a contemporary plural society such as Nigeria. **(SLO 3.4)**

Answers to Concept Check Questions 3

Objective Questions

1. **A. The pre-Islamic name associated with Madinah.**
2. **A. Aws and Khazraj.**
3. **A. Muslims and Jews had distinct religions.**

4. **B. Human dignity.**
5. **B. Because historical and contemporary political contexts differ.**

Short-Answer Questions

6. **Yathrib was a socially and politically diverse settlement containing different tribal and religious groups. The Aws and Khazraj had experienced serious conflict, while Jewish communities also lived in the area. Understanding this background helps explain why the emerging Madinan community required arrangements for security, responsibility and dispute settlement. (SLO 3.1)**
7. **The recognition of distinct religious communities demonstrates that the Madinan arrangement did not require every group to possess the same religious identity. The provision concerning the Jews of Banū ‘Awf states that the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs. This provided a basis for regulated relations while preserving religious distinction. (SLO 3.2)**
8. **The sanctity of life contributes to peaceful coexistence by establishing a strong moral barrier against unjust violence. When human life is treated as valuable, religious or social difference cannot automatically become a justification for killing, abuse or retaliation. (SLO 3.3)**
9. **People can share legitimate social objectives without sharing identical theological beliefs. Muslims and non-Muslims can cooperate in areas such as humanitarian relief, education, environmental protection and community development while maintaining their respective religious identities. (SLO 3.3)**
10. **Three lessons include respecting legitimate agreements, maintaining justice across group boundaries and cooperating with others for common welfare. Other acceptable answers include peaceful dispute management, protection of human dignity and shared civic responsibility. (SLO 3.4)**

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the major features of the Madinan Charter that contributed to the regulation of relations among different communities.

Basic Response:

The Madinan Charter emerged within a diverse society containing Muslims, Jewish communities and different tribal groups. Its provisions addressed relationships among these communities and established responsibilities relating to security, mutual assistance and dispute settlement.

One important feature was the recognition of religious distinction. The clause concerning the Jews of Banū 'Awf states that the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs. This shows that religious difference could exist within the wider political arrangement.

The document also addressed mutual obligations. Different groups were expected to contribute to security and to respect the terms of the agreement. Provisions concerning wrongdoing and disputes reinforced the importance of responsible conduct.

Value-Added Response:

The importance of these provisions becomes clearer when the historical context is considered. Madinah was not a homogeneous community, so peaceful order required more than shared beliefs. The Charter attempted to transform relationships among groups by establishing agreed responsibilities and mechanisms for dealing with conflict.

Its significance should nevertheless be interpreted historically. The surviving document comes through early sources, and scholars debate its precise composition and transmission. It is therefore more academically responsible to examine its actual provisions and historical context than to make unqualified claims about it as an exact equivalent of a modern constitution.

12. Evaluate the relevance of the Madinan experience to peaceful coexistence in a contemporary plural society such as Nigeria.

Basic Response:

The Madinan experience remains relevant because contemporary societies also contain people with different religious, cultural and social identities. Its lessons include respecting agreements, protecting people from injustice, managing disputes peacefully and accepting legitimate differences.

In Nigeria, Muslims and Christians live together in many communities and institutions. They may share schools, workplaces, markets, neighbourhoods and civic institutions. The principles of justice and responsible cooperation can therefore help people manage differences without turning them into hostility.

Value-Added Response:

The Madinan experience should not, however, be copied as though seventh-century Arabia and contemporary Nigeria were politically identical. Modern Nigeria operates under a constitutional and legal framework different from that of early Madinah. The appropriate lesson is therefore methodological and ethical rather than mechanical.

The experience demonstrates that plural societies need agreed responsibilities, legitimate mechanisms for dispute settlement, respect for religious identity and cooperation in matters of common welfare. When these principles are combined with contemporary constitutional institutions and the rule of law, they can contribute to peaceful relations among diverse communities.

Answers to Pilot Questions

Pilot Questions 3.1

1. **B. Yathrib.**
2. **The Aws and Khazraj.**
3. **The agreement helped regulate relations among different groups, establish responsibilities and provide mechanisms for security and dispute settlement.**

Pilot Questions 3.2

1. **B. Muslims and Jewish communities maintained distinct religions.**
2. **Mutual responsibility establishes obligations among groups and supports social order.**
3. **Dispute settlement provides a peaceful alternative to retaliation and violence.**

Pilot Questions 3.3

1. **B. Recognition that human life must not be unjustly violated.**
2. **Justice prevents religious or social differences from becoming excuses for oppression or unfair treatment.**
3. **Examples include humanitarian relief, environmental protection, community development and disaster response.**

Pilot Questions 3.4

1. **B. No, because historical and contemporary contexts differ.**
2. **Possible answers include respect for agreements, justice across group boundaries, peaceful management of differences, shared responsibility and cooperation for common welfare.**
3. **Cooperation in legitimate matters does not require people to abandon their respective religious identities.**

References and Attributions

References

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The Qur’ān, particularly 4:29, 5:8, 49:13 and 60:8.

Online Scholarly Resource

The Yaqeen Institute study of the Ṣaḥīfah provides a detailed translation and commentary on the Madinan document and discusses questions surrounding its versions, transmission, interpretation and historical context.

Illustrations and Attributions

Figure 3.1: The Social Composition of Madinah

Short Description:

A historical educational diagram showing the major social groups associated with Madinah around the time of the Hijrah, including the Muslim community, the Aws and Khazraj, and Jewish communities, with arrows showing their interaction within the emerging Madinan social order.

Caption:

Figure 3.1: Major Social Groups and Relationships in Madinah

AI Prompt:

“Create a historically informed university-level educational illustration showing the diverse social composition of seventh-century Madinah around the time of the Hijrah. Represent the Muslim community, the Aws and Khazraj tribal groups, and Jewish communities as distinct but interacting social groups. Use a clean historical infographic style, neutral academic presentation, subtle Arabian architectural elements, clear labels, no depiction of Prophet Muhammad or any other sacred personality, and no invented portraits.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Madinah Yathrib social groups Aws Khazraj Jewish communities Hijrah historical map OER”

Figure 3.2: Principles of the Madinan Social Order

Short Description:

A conceptual diagram showing how religious distinction, mutual responsibility, security, justice and cooperation contributed to an organised plural social order in Madinah.

Caption:

Figure 3.2: Key Principles of the Madinan Social Order

AI Prompt:

“Create a clean university-level conceptual diagram titled ‘Key Principles of the Madinan Social Order’. Place peaceful coexistence at the centre and connect it to five clearly labelled principles: religious distinction, mutual responsibility, security, justice and cooperation. Use restrained Islamic geometric motifs, academic infographic design, clear typography, balanced spacing, and no depiction of prophets or sacred personalities.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Madinan Charter peaceful coexistence justice cooperation religious communities infographic OER”

Series 4: Contemporary Challenges Between Islam and the West

Parts and Sub-Parts

4.1 Understanding Islam and the West

- 4.1.1 The Meaning of “Islam” and “the West” in Contemporary Discourse
- 4.1.2 Historical Encounters and Changing Relationships
- 4.1.3 Why Generalisations Create Misunderstanding

4.2 Major Contemporary Sources of Tension

- 4.2.1 Islamophobia and Negative Stereotyping
- 4.2.2 Terrorism, Security and the Representation of Islam
- 4.2.3 Migration, Integration and Religious Identity

4.3 Muslims in the Western World

- 4.3.1 Muslim Minority Experiences
- 4.3.2 Religious Identity and Integration
- 4.3.3 Discrimination, Citizenship and Participation

4.4 Towards Constructive Muslim-Western Relations

- 4.4.1 Correcting Misconceptions and Westophobia
- 4.4.2 Dialogue and Mutual Understanding
- 4.4.3 Shared Interests and Peaceful Engagement

Introduction

The relationship between the Muslim world and Western societies is one of the most important issues in contemporary discussions of Islam and pluralism. The relationship cannot be reduced to either friendship or conflict. It has involved periods of warfare and political competition, but also extensive intellectual, scientific, economic and cultural exchange. In the contemporary period, migration, international politics, security concerns, religious identity and media representations have brought Muslims and Western societies into increasingly close contact.

A major challenge in studying this relationship is the tendency to treat both “Islam” and “the West” as if each represents a single, internally uniform community. Islam includes people from many countries, cultures, legal traditions and political positions. The West likewise contains different states, religious communities, political ideologies and social experiences. A serious academic study must therefore avoid reducing complex societies to stereotypes.

The contemporary presence of Muslims in Western societies illustrates this complexity. Muslims have lived in Western Europe in significant numbers since migration increased from Muslim-majority regions during the twentieth century. Today, Muslim communities participate in education, business, politics, professional life and civil society. At the same time, research has documented continuing challenges involving discrimination, integration and public perceptions of Islam. Pew Research Center surveys have found differences across European societies in attitudes towards Muslims, while the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights reported in 2024 that many Muslims surveyed in EU countries had experienced racial discrimination and harassment.

Security concerns have also influenced perceptions of Islam. Terrorist attacks carried out by groups claiming Islamic justification have contributed to suspicion towards Muslims, even though Muslim populations are internally diverse and cannot be equated with extremist organisations. Research on Muslim communities in Western Europe has similarly shown considerable variation among Muslim organisations, ranging from groups focused on religious practice and community services to groups with political or ideological objectives.

Another challenge concerns integration. Questions arise about how Muslims can preserve their religious identity while participating fully in societies with different cultural and political traditions. Muslim communities themselves are not uniform in how they approach these questions. Some emphasise integration and civic participation, while others place greater emphasis on maintaining distinctive communal practices.

This Series therefore examines contemporary challenges without presenting Muslims or Western societies as monolithic groups. Part 4.1 introduces the relationship and the danger of generalisation. Part 4.2 examines major sources of contemporary tension, including Islamophobia, terrorism, security concerns, migration and integration. Part 4.3 focuses on Muslims living in Western societies and the challenges surrounding identity, discrimination and participation. Finally, Part 4.4 considers ways of correcting misconceptions, rejecting both Islamophobia and Westophobia, encouraging dialogue and identifying areas of shared interest.

Series Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 4.1: Explain the complexity of contemporary relations between Muslim societies and Western societies.

SLO 4.2: Analyse major social and political challenges affecting Muslim-Western relations.

SLO 4.3: Examine the experiences of Muslims living as minorities in Western societies.

SLO 4.4: Evaluate approaches for reducing misconceptions and promoting constructive relations between Muslims and Western societies.

4.1 Understanding Islam and the West

4.1.1 The Meaning of “Islam” and “the West” in Contemporary Discourse

The terms “Islam” and “the West” are frequently used in political speeches, news reports and public discussions. However, using them carelessly can produce serious misunderstanding.

Islam refers to a global religious tradition whose adherents live across different regions and cultures. Muslims may differ in language, ethnicity, political views, legal interpretation and cultural practices while sharing commitment to Islam.

The West is equally difficult to define as a single entity. It commonly refers to a group of societies associated historically with Western Europe and, in some contexts, North America, Australia and related political and cultural institutions. Even within these societies, however, there are significant differences concerning religion, politics, immigration, national identity and social values.

You should therefore avoid statements such as “Islam thinks...” or “the West believes...” unless you have clearly identified which Muslims, Western societies or institutions you are discussing.

For example, Western European governments have adopted different approaches towards Muslim communities. Public attitudes also vary considerably between countries. Pew Research Center found substantial differences among European countries in attitudes towards accepting Muslims as neighbours or family members.

This diversity matters because generalisation can transform a specific disagreement into an imagined conflict between entire civilisations.

Think About It

If a particular European government introduces a policy that affects Muslims, is it accurate to say “the West has rejected Islam”?

Answer: No. A policy adopted by one government should not automatically be attributed to every Western society or to Western people generally.

4.1.2 Historical Encounters and Changing Relationships

Relations between Muslim societies and European societies have a long history. They have included military conflict, political rivalry, trade, migration and intellectual exchange.

The historical relationship is therefore not adequately described as permanent conflict. Muslim civilisation contributed to intellectual developments in areas such as medicine, mathematics, philosophy and astronomy, while Muslim societies also interacted extensively with European societies through trade, translation and political contact.

In the modern period, European colonial expansion changed the relationship considerably. Several Muslim-majority territories came under European colonial rule. The political consequences of colonialism continued to influence relationships after independence.

Contemporary relations are also shaped by globalisation. Muslims live in Western societies, while Western institutions operate extensively in Muslim-majority countries. Education, commerce, technology, migration and international organisations create connections that make complete separation impossible.

The modern relationship should therefore be understood as historically changing rather than fixed.

4.1.3 Why Generalisations Create Misunderstanding

Generalisation becomes especially dangerous when individual actions are attributed to entire populations.

For example, the violent actions of a terrorist organisation may be described as evidence that all Muslims support violence. This is an example of collective attribution. It ignores the diversity of Muslim beliefs and the large number of Muslims who reject terrorism.

The reverse error is also possible. A discriminatory statement made by one Western politician or individual may be used to conclude that all Western people hate Islam.

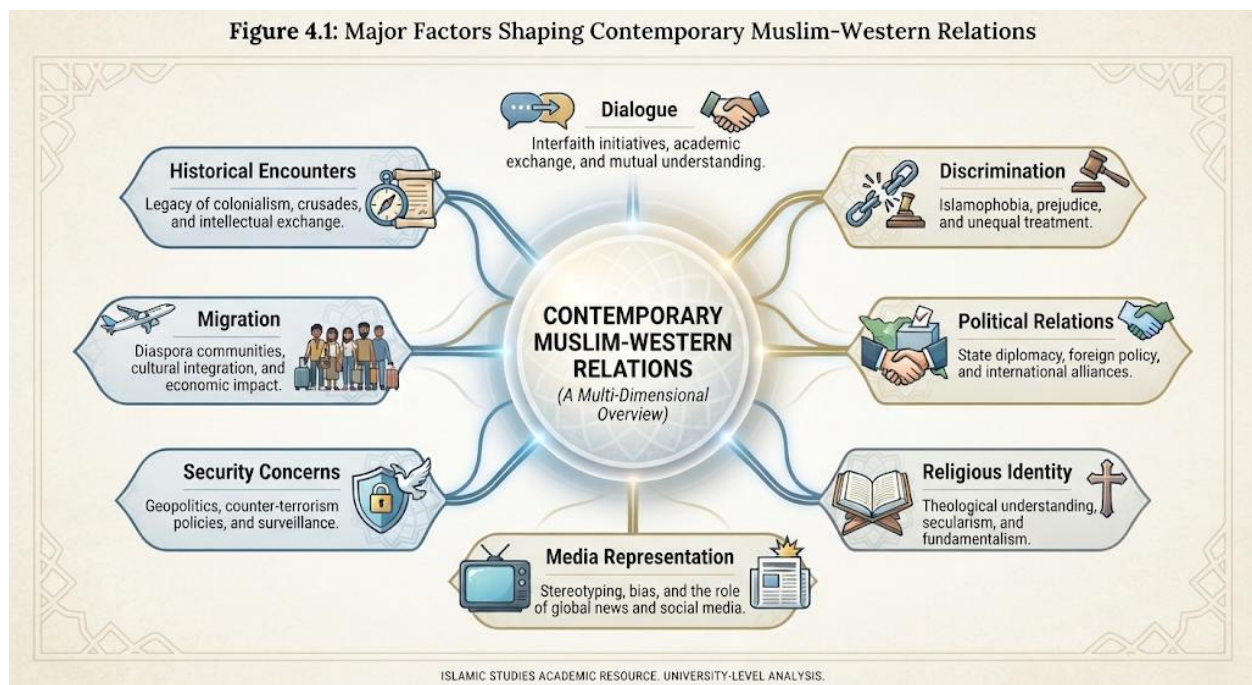
Both approaches are intellectually weak because they replace evidence with stereotypes.

A better approach is to identify the specific actor, institution, policy or social group involved and then evaluate the evidence.

Fill in the Blank

Attributing the actions or beliefs of a small group to an entire population is an example of harmful _____.

Answer: generalisation.



Pilot Questions 4.1

1. Why is it problematic to treat Islam as a single cultural or political bloc?

Answer: Muslims differ in nationality, culture, political views, legal interpretations and social experiences. (SLO 4.1)

2. Give one reason why “the West” cannot always be treated as a single viewpoint.

Answer: Western societies differ in their political systems, public attitudes, policies and approaches to religion and Muslims. (SLO 4.1)

3. Mention two forms of interaction that have characterised Muslim-Western relations historically.

Answer: Examples include conflict, trade, intellectual exchange, migration and political contact. (SLO 4.1)

4.2 Major Contemporary Sources of Tension

4.2.1 Islamophobia and Negative Stereotyping

Islamophobia may be broadly described as fear, hostility, prejudice or negative stereotyping directed towards Muslims or Islam. It can appear in individual behaviour, public discourse, media representation, political rhetoric or discriminatory practices.

Not every criticism of Islam is Islamophobic. Academic and public discussion may legitimately examine Islamic beliefs, interpretations, institutions or historical events. The distinction lies partly in whether criticism engages ideas and evidence or instead treats Muslims as inherently inferior, dangerous or undeserving of equal treatment.

Negative stereotyping can affect everyday life. It may influence employment, housing, education, political participation and interpersonal relations.

Recent evidence from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights indicates that racism and discrimination remain significant issues for Muslims in EU countries. Its 2024 report was based on responses from almost 10,000 Muslims in 13 EU countries and reported increased experiences of discrimination compared with its earlier survey.

This does not mean that every Western society or individual is Islamophobic. It demonstrates instead that anti-Muslim prejudice is one of the issues that must be taken seriously when examining contemporary Muslim-Western relations.

4.2.2 Terrorism, Security and the Representation of Islam

Terrorism presents a serious challenge to international security. Some terrorist organisations have claimed Islamic justification for their actions, creating a difficult environment for Muslim communities and for discussions about Islam.

It is important to distinguish **Islam as a religion**, **Muslims as a diverse population**, and **violent extremist organisations**. Treating these categories as identical produces inaccurate conclusions.

Security concerns can nevertheless have consequences for Muslim populations. Measures introduced to combat terrorism may generate debates about surveillance, discrimination, civil liberties and religious freedom.

Media representation can also influence public perceptions. When violent acts committed by Muslims are presented primarily through religious identity, audiences may incorrectly assume that violence is representative of Muslims generally.

At the same time, Muslims should not dismiss legitimate security concerns simply because they fear stereotyping. Responsible engagement requires acknowledging genuine security threats while resisting collective blame.

Think About It

Why is it inaccurate to equate terrorism committed by an organisation claiming Islamic justification with Islam as a whole?

Answer: Because a violent organisation represents a specific ideological and organisational position, while Muslims constitute a diverse global population with different beliefs and practices.



Figure 4.2: Muslim Religious Identity and Civic Participation

4.2.3 Migration, Integration and Religious Identity

Migration has increased interaction between Muslims and Western societies. Muslim migration to Western Europe expanded significantly during the twentieth century, and later migration included refugees and other migrants from Muslim-majority regions. Pew Research Center notes that migration has been an important factor in the growth of Muslim populations in Europe.

Migration can create opportunities and challenges. Muslim migrants may contribute to economic activity, education, professional life and cultural diversity. At the same time, questions can arise concerning language, employment, housing, citizenship, religious practice and social integration.

Integration does not necessarily mean the complete abandonment of religious identity. A Muslim may participate fully in the civic life of a Western society while continuing to pray, fast, observe dietary requirements or maintain other religious practices within the limits of the law.

The challenge is to distinguish between legitimate civic integration and demands that require people to erase their religious identity.

Fill in the Blank

Successful integration does not necessarily require Muslims to abandon their _____ identity.

Answer: religious.

Pilot Questions 4.2

1. What is Islamophobia?

Answer: It refers broadly to fear, hostility, prejudice or negative stereotyping directed towards Muslims or Islam. (SLO 4.2)

2. Why should terrorism and Islam not automatically be treated as synonymous?

Answer: Terrorist organisations are specific actors with particular ideologies and methods, while Muslims form a diverse global religious community. (SLO 4.2)

3. Mention two challenges that migration may create for Muslim communities in Western societies.

Answer: Possible answers include employment, housing, language, integration, religious practice, citizenship and identity. (SLO 4.2)

4.3 Muslims in the Western World

4.3.1 Muslim Minority Experiences

Muslims living in Western societies are not a single social group. Their experiences vary according to country, generation, ethnicity, socioeconomic position, education and degree of religious observance.

Some Muslims were born in Western countries and regard the country as their primary home. Others migrated as adults or arrived as refugees. Some maintain strong cultural connections with countries of family origin, while others have developed primarily local identities.

This diversity challenges the assumption that Muslims living in the West are simply temporary outsiders. Many are citizens who participate in local institutions and contribute to the societies in which they live.

At the same time, minority status can create challenges. Muslims may encounter misunderstandings about Islamic practices, negative stereotypes or discrimination. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has documented experiences of discrimination affecting areas including employment and housing.

These experiences should be studied without assuming that every Muslim in the West has the same experience.

4.3.2 Religious Identity and Integration

Religious identity can remain important to Muslims living in Western societies. For some, Islamic identity provides moral guidance, family identity and community belonging. For others, religious identity may be expressed more privately.

Integration therefore needs careful definition. It can involve learning the dominant language, participating in education and employment, respecting laws and contributing to civic life. None of these necessarily requires abandoning Islam.

Evidence from European Muslim communities also demonstrates considerable variation in attitudes towards integration. Earlier Pew research found differences among Muslim communities in countries such as Britain, France, Germany and Spain concerning identity, integration and relationships with wider society.

The appropriate question is therefore not simply whether Muslims should “become Western”. Rather, it is how Muslim citizens and residents can participate fully in society while maintaining legitimate aspects of their religious identity.

4.3.3 Discrimination, Citizenship and Participation

Citizenship involves rights as well as responsibilities. Muslims who are citizens of Western states have the responsibility to obey legitimate laws and contribute to society, while governments have responsibilities to protect citizens against discrimination and uphold applicable rights.

Participation can occur through education, employment, professional associations, political institutions, voluntary organisations, community development and interfaith initiatives.

Participation is particularly important because social isolation can reinforce misunderstanding. Regular interaction enables people to encounter one another as individuals rather than through stereotypes.

However, participation should not be understood as one-sided assimilation. A healthy plural society permits different communities to retain legitimate cultural and religious practices while participating in shared civic institutions.

Fill in the Blank

Muslim participation in Western societies may occur through education, employment, politics, professional life and _____ activities.

Answer: community.

Pilot Questions 4.3

1. Why is it inaccurate to describe Muslims living in Western countries as a completely uniform community?

Answer: Their experiences differ according to nationality, generation, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, religious practice and country of residence. **(SLO 4.3)**

2. Mention two forms of civic participation available to Muslims in Western societies.

Answer: Examples include education, employment, political participation, professional associations, volunteering and community development. **(SLO 4.3)**

3. How can regular interaction reduce stereotypes?

Answer: It allows people to encounter one another directly and understand individuals beyond assumptions about their religious or cultural group. (SLO 4.3)

4.4 Towards Constructive Muslim-Western Relations

4.4.1 Correcting Misconceptions and Westophobia

The course outcome requires students to negate the assumption that Islam is inherently anti-West. Achieving this requires rejecting both simplistic anti-Muslim assumptions and simplistic anti-Western assumptions.

Westophobia, in this context, refers to an indiscriminate fear, hostility or negative stereotyping of Western people or societies. Just as Islamophobia unfairly attributes negative characteristics to Muslims, Westophobia can treat Western societies as inherently immoral, hostile or opposed to Islam.

A critical Muslim perspective should distinguish between Western people, Western governments, Western political policies and Western intellectual traditions. A Muslim may criticise a particular foreign policy without concluding that every Western person is an enemy of Islam.

Similarly, Western individuals may disagree with particular Islamic doctrines or political movements without hostility towards Muslims as people.

This distinction creates room for principled criticism without collective hatred.

4.4.2 Dialogue and Mutual Understanding

Dialogue is an important method of addressing misunderstanding. Effective dialogue requires more than simply speaking. It requires listening, asking questions, identifying genuine areas of disagreement and avoiding deliberate misrepresentation.

Muslim-Western dialogue can take place at different levels. Religious scholars may engage in theological discussions. Universities may organise academic exchanges. Civil society organisations may cooperate on social issues. Individuals may develop understanding through ordinary relationships.

Dialogue does not require agreement on every issue. Its purpose may be to understand why disagreement exists and to identify ways of managing it peacefully.

For dialogue to be meaningful, participants should also recognise internal diversity. Muslims should not be expected to speak for every Muslim, and Western participants should not be assumed to speak for every Western society.

4.4.3 Shared Interests and Peaceful Engagement

Despite differences in religion and worldview, Muslims and Western societies share many practical concerns. These may include education, scientific research, healthcare, environmental protection, economic development, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding.

Shared interests create opportunities for cooperation without requiring theological uniformity.

For example, Muslim and non-Muslim organisations may cooperate in disaster relief. Muslim professionals and Western institutions may collaborate in scientific research. Students from different backgrounds may work together on environmental projects.

Research also indicates that the relationship between Muslims and Western societies cannot be reduced to conflict. Pew Research Center has documented significant levels of willingness among many Western Europeans to accept Muslims as neighbours and family members, even while opinions about Islam and its compatibility with national cultures remain divided.

This illustrates an important distinction: people may disagree about ideas while still being capable of living and working together peacefully.

Application Activity

You are a Muslim student in a Western university. During a class discussion, another student says:

“Islam and the West can never live together because they have completely different values.”

Using the principles studied in this Series, formulate a response.

Suggested answer:

The statement is too general because neither Islam nor the West is internally uniform. Muslims and Western societies contain different perspectives and experiences. Religious or political differences can exist without making peaceful coexistence impossible. Muslims can maintain Islamic beliefs while participating responsibly in Western societies, and people of different backgrounds can cooperate in areas of common interest.

Fill in the Blank

Constructive Muslim-Western relations require dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation in areas of _____ interest.

Answer: common.

Pilot Questions 4.4

1. What is meant by Westophobia in the context of this Series?

Answer: It refers to indiscriminate fear, hostility or negative stereotyping directed towards Western people or societies. (SLO 4.4)

2. Does dialogue require complete agreement between Muslims and Western participants?

Answer: No. Dialogue can allow participants to understand differences and manage disagreement peacefully without requiring complete agreement. (SLO 4.4)

3. Mention two areas in which Muslims and Western societies can cooperate.

Answer: Examples include education, scientific research, healthcare, environmental protection, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding. (SLO 4.4)

Series Summary

This Series examined contemporary challenges between Islam and the West from a pluralist perspective.

In **Part 4.1**, you examined the meanings of “Islam” and “the West” and learned why neither should automatically be treated as a single homogeneous entity. You also examined historical encounters and the dangers of generalisation.

In **Part 4.2**, you analysed major sources of contemporary tension, including Islamophobia, terrorism, security concerns, migration, integration and religious identity.

In **Part 4.3**, you examined Muslims living in Western societies. You considered differences in minority experiences, religious identity, integration, discrimination, citizenship and civic participation.

In **Part 4.4**, you evaluated approaches to constructive relations. You learned that rejecting Islamophobia should be accompanied by rejection of indiscriminate Westophobia. You also examined dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation in areas of common interest.

The Series therefore contributes particularly to the course outcomes concerning peaceful relations with people of other backgrounds, collaboration, expression of ideological differences, rejection of the assumption that Islam is anti-West and promotion of inclusivity.

Glossary of Terms

Civic participation: Involvement in the social, political and community activities of a society.

Discrimination: Unfair treatment of a person or group based on characteristics such as religion, ethnicity or nationality.

Integration: The process through which individuals or communities participate in the wider social, economic and civic life of a society.

Islamophobia: Fear, hostility, prejudice or negative stereotyping directed towards Muslims or Islam.

Migration: Movement of people from one place or country to another, either temporarily or permanently.

Minority: A population group that is numerically smaller than another group within a particular society.

Pluralism: The recognition and management of diversity within society.

Stereotype: A simplified and often inaccurate assumption about a particular group of people.

Terrorism: The use or threat of violence intended to create fear and pursue political, ideological or other objectives.

Westophobia: Indiscriminate fear, hostility or negative stereotyping directed towards Western people or societies.

Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. Why is it problematic to treat “Islam” as a single political bloc?
 - A. Muslims live only in one country
 - B. Muslims differ in culture, nationality and political perspectives
 - C. Muslims have no shared beliefs
 - D. Islam has no global presence
2. Which of the following is an example of harmful generalisation?
 - A. Examining the policy of a particular government
 - B. Studying differences among Muslim communities
 - C. Attributing the actions of a terrorist group to all Muslims
 - D. Comparing two political policies
3. Which organisation reported recent evidence concerning discrimination experienced by Muslims in EU countries?
 - A. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
 - B. World Trade Organisation
 - C. International Olympic Committee
 - D. African Union
4. Which of the following does not necessarily contradict Muslim religious identity?
 - A. Civic participation
 - B. Learning a language
 - C. Employment
 - D. All of the above
5. What does constructive dialogue require?
 - A. Complete agreement
 - B. Refusal to listen

- C. Listening and responsible engagement
- D. Collective blame

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain why the terms “Islam” and “the West” should be used carefully in academic discussion. **(SLO 4.1)**
7. Analyse two ways in which Islamophobia can affect Muslim communities. **(SLO 4.2)**
8. Explain why terrorism should not be equated with Islam as a religion. **(SLO 4.2)**
9. Discuss the relationship between religious identity and integration among Muslims living in Western societies. **(SLO 4.3)**
10. Explain how rejecting Westophobia can contribute to healthier Muslim-Western relations. **(SLO 4.4)**

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the major contemporary challenges affecting relations between Muslim societies and Western societies. **(SLO 4.2)**
12. Evaluate how Muslims can maintain religious identity while participating constructively in Western societies. **(SLO 4.3 and SLO 4.4)**
13. “Muslim-Western relations should be understood through dialogue rather than collective assumptions.” Discuss. **(SLO 4.1 and SLO 4.4)**

Answers to Concept Check Questions 4

Objective Questions

1. **B. Muslims differ in culture, nationality and political perspectives.**
2. **C. Attributing the actions of a terrorist group to all Muslims.**
3. **A. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.**

4. **D. All of the above.**
5. **C. Listening and responsible engagement.**

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain why the terms “Islam” and “the West” should be used carefully in academic discussion.

Answer: Neither Islam nor the West represents a completely uniform community. Muslims differ according to nationality, culture, political position and interpretation, while Western societies differ in their governments, populations, religious traditions and social values. Careful use of the terms therefore prevents inaccurate generalisations. **(SLO 4.1)**

7. Analyse two ways in which Islamophobia can affect Muslim communities.

Answer: Islamophobia can contribute to discrimination in areas such as employment and housing. It can also produce social exclusion, negative stereotyping and suspicion towards Muslims. The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights has documented significant experiences of discrimination and racist harassment among Muslims surveyed in EU countries. **(SLO 4.2)**

8. Explain why terrorism should not be equated with Islam as a religion.

Answer: Terrorism is carried out by specific individuals or organisations pursuing particular ideological and political objectives. Muslims constitute a highly diverse global population and cannot accurately be represented by the actions of a violent organisation. Equating the two therefore produces collective blame and inaccurate understanding. **(SLO 4.2)**

9. Discuss the relationship between religious identity and integration among Muslims living in Western societies.

Answer: Religious identity and integration do not necessarily contradict each other. Muslims can maintain Islamic beliefs and practices while participating in education, employment, civic

institutions and community life. Integration should therefore be understood as meaningful participation in society rather than automatic abandonment of religious identity. (SLO 4.3)

10. Explain how rejecting Westophobia can contribute to healthier Muslim-Western relations.

Answer: Rejecting Westophobia prevents Muslims from treating all Western people or societies as inherently hostile to Islam. It allows criticism to focus on specific policies, institutions or ideas rather than entire populations. This creates greater room for dialogue, cooperation and mutual understanding. (SLO 4.4)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Analyse the major contemporary challenges affecting relations between Muslim societies and Western societies.

Basic Response:

Several factors contribute to contemporary tensions between Muslim and Western societies. These include Islamophobia, terrorism and security concerns, migration, integration, religious identity and political disagreements.

Islamophobia can create negative stereotypes and discrimination against Muslims. At the same time, terrorist organisations claiming Islamic justification have contributed to security concerns and have sometimes caused Islam to be associated unfairly with violence.

Migration has also increased contact between Muslims and Western societies. Although migration can produce cultural and economic benefits, it may generate debates concerning integration, citizenship, religious identity and national culture. Research has shown that European societies differ considerably in their attitudes towards Muslims and other minorities.

Value-Added Response:

These challenges should not be interpreted as evidence of an inevitable conflict between Islam and the West. They arise from a combination of historical experiences, political decisions, migration patterns, security concerns, social attitudes and competing interpretations of identity.

A balanced analysis must therefore avoid collective blame. Muslims should be able to criticise policies or practices they consider unjust without treating Western populations as a single enemy. Western societies should likewise be able to address security and integration concerns without treating Muslims collectively as threats.

Constructive relations require accurate knowledge, fair treatment, responsible political discourse, dialogue and opportunities for meaningful social participation.

12. Evaluate how Muslims can maintain religious identity while participating constructively in Western societies.

Basic Response:

Muslims can maintain religious identity through legitimate Islamic practices while participating in education, employment, civic life and community activities. Religious commitment does not automatically prevent social participation.

For example, a Muslim student may observe Islamic prayer and fasting while attending a Western university. A Muslim professional may observe religious practices while working with people from different backgrounds.

Value-Added Response:

Constructive participation requires Muslims to understand the society in which they live, obey legitimate laws, contribute positively to public life and communicate their beliefs responsibly. At the same time, integration should not automatically be interpreted as the complete removal of religious identity.

The experiences of Muslim communities in Europe demonstrate that identity and integration can take different forms. Research has found variation among Muslim communities in how they relate religious identity to wider European society.

The appropriate model is therefore neither total isolation nor complete cultural erasure. It is responsible participation that allows Muslims to maintain legitimate religious commitments while contributing to the common good.

13. “Muslim-Western relations should be understood through dialogue rather than collective assumptions.” Discuss.

Basic Response:

Dialogue allows Muslims and Western participants to discuss their beliefs, experiences and disagreements directly. It can reduce misunderstanding by replacing assumptions with information and personal interaction.

Collective assumptions are dangerous because they treat diverse populations as though they all think alike. Not all Muslims hold the same political or theological views, and Western societies also contain competing perspectives.

Value-Added Response:

Dialogue does not mean that all disagreements must disappear. Rather, it provides a framework through which disagreements can be expressed without hostility. Participants can maintain strong convictions while listening to opposing positions.

Constructive dialogue should therefore involve accurate representation, active listening, evidence-based discussion and respect for human dignity. It can also identify areas of common interest such as education, healthcare, scientific research, humanitarian relief and environmental protection.

The goal is not to eliminate difference but to prevent difference from becoming an automatic source of hostility.

References and Attributions

References

Esposito, John L. *Islam and the West: A Conversation*. Oxford University Press.

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Pew Research Center. *Islam and the West: Searching for Common Ground*. Pew Research Center.

Pew Research Center. *Being Muslim in the EU and Europe: Attitudes, Integration and Religious Identity*. Relevant survey materials.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. *Being Muslim in the EU: Experiences of Muslims*. 2024.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books.

Contemporary Evidence

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights' 2024 report draws on a survey of almost 10,000 Muslims living in 13 EU countries and examines discrimination, racist harassment, police encounters, employment, housing and other dimensions of Muslim experience.

Pew Research Center's studies of Muslims and Western Europe provide comparative evidence concerning Muslim identity, integration, attitudes towards Islam and acceptance of Muslims in European societies.

Illustrations and Attributions

Figure 4.1: Factors Shaping Contemporary Muslim-Western Relations

Short Description:

A conceptual academic diagram showing the major factors that shape contemporary relations between Muslim societies and Western societies, including history, migration, security, media representation, religious identity, politics, discrimination and dialogue.

Caption:

Figure 4.1: Major Factors Shaping Contemporary Muslim-Western Relations

AI Prompt:

“Create a clean university-level Islamic Studies conceptual infographic showing ‘Contemporary Muslim-Western Relations’ at the centre, connected to eight clearly labelled factors: historical encounters, migration, security concerns, media representation, religious identity, political

relations, discrimination, and dialogue. Use a balanced academic layout, subtle geometric Islamic design elements, neutral professional appearance, clear typography, and no depiction of prophets, sacred personalities or political leaders.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Islam West relations migration Islamophobia dialogue Muslim minorities educational infographic OER”

Figure 4.2: Muslim Participation in a Plural Western Society

Short Description:

An educational illustration showing Muslims participating in different areas of Western civic life, including education, employment, community activities, dialogue and public service, while maintaining religious identity.

Caption:

Figure 4.2: Muslim Religious Identity and Civic Participation

AI Prompt:

“Create a realistic university-level educational illustration showing a diverse Western urban community in which Muslims participate positively in education, professional work, community service and interfaith dialogue while maintaining visible but respectful expressions of Islamic identity. Include people of different cultural backgrounds working together in a university and community setting. Avoid stereotypes, political symbols, sacred personalities and exaggerated religious imagery. Professional academic composition suitable for an Islamic Studies self-learning material.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Muslim civic participation Western society integration religious identity interfaith OER”

Parts and Sub-Parts

5.1 Muslim Intellectual Responses to Civilizational Encounter

- 5.1.1 Meaning of Civilizational Dialogue
- 5.1.2 Muslim Intellectual Responses to Western Influence
- 5.1.3 Scholarship, Reform and Engagement with the Other

5.2 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh

- 5.2.1 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī: Life and Intellectual Orientation
- 5.2.2 Afghānī on Muslim Renewal and Western Power
- 5.2.3 Muḥammad ‘Abduh: Reform, Education and Modern Civilization

5.3 Sayyid Quṭb and the Question of Western Civilization

- 5.3.1 Life and Intellectual Background of Sayyid Quṭb
- 5.3.2 Quṭb’s Critique of Modern Western Civilization
- 5.3.3 Assessing Quṭb’s Contribution and Its Limits for Dialogue

5.4 Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī and Lessons for Civilizational Engagement

- 5.4.1 Life, Education and Scholarly Activities
- 5.4.2 Islamic Education, Culture and Social Reform
- 5.4.3 Comparative Lessons for Contemporary Civilizational Dialogue

Introduction

Throughout this course, you have examined Islam and pluralism from several perspectives. You began with the concept of society and social justice, proceeded to Qur'ānic and Prophetic guidance on peaceful coexistence, examined the Madinan experience, and then considered contemporary challenges between Islam and the West.

This final Series introduces another important dimension: the contribution of Muslim scholars to intellectual engagement with other civilizations.

Civilizational dialogue refers to sustained intellectual, cultural and social engagement between different civilizations or communities. It does not mean that participants must abandon their convictions or pretend that differences do not exist. Rather, meaningful dialogue allows people to examine differences, identify areas of agreement and disagreement, exchange knowledge and seek peaceful ways of living together.

The relationship between Muslim societies and Western societies has generated extensive intellectual reflection. Muslim scholars have asked questions about political power, education, science, cultural identity, reform, colonialism, modernity and the place of Islam in a changing world. Their responses have not been identical. Some emphasised renewal and engagement with useful aspects of modern knowledge. Others were more critical of Western political and cultural influence.

This diversity is important for understanding Muslim intellectual history. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad 'Abduh, for example, became important figures in nineteenth-century Islamic reform thought. Their intellectual work addressed the relationship between Islam, modern civilisation and the political challenges confronting Muslim societies. Albert Hourani's study of Arabic thought places Afghānī and 'Abduh within a wider intellectual movement concerned with the encounter between Islamic societies and the changing modern world.

Sayyid Quṭb represents a substantially different intellectual response. His writings developed a strong critique of aspects of modern Western civilisation and secular social organisation. His thought therefore provides an important case for examining the boundaries between intellectual

criticism and civilizational dialogue. Studying him requires both an accurate account of his ideas and a critical assessment of how those ideas may be interpreted.

The Series also gives attention to Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī, whose contribution is especially relevant to the Nigerian and West African context. Studies of al-Ilūrī identify his work in Arabic and Islamic education, teaching, preaching, writing and Muslim reform in Yorubaland. His Markaz became an important centre for Islamic and Arabic education in southwestern Nigeria.

The importance of studying these scholars is not simply to memorise their biographies. You are expected to identify their major intellectual concerns, compare their approaches and evaluate what their experiences teach contemporary Muslims about engaging other civilizations without losing intellectual confidence or religious identity.

Part 5.1 introduces civilizational dialogue and the Muslim intellectual response to encounters with other civilizations. Part 5.2 examines Afghānī and ‘Abduh as major reformist thinkers. Part 5.3 examines Sayyid Quṭb’s critique of Western civilisation and critically considers its implications for dialogue. Part 5.4 examines Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī and draws comparative lessons for contemporary engagement.

Series Learning Outcomes

At the end of this Series, you should be able to:

SLO 5.1: Explain the meaning and significance of civilizational dialogue in Islamic intellectual thought.

SLO 5.2: Analyse the contributions of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh to Muslim intellectual responses to modern civilisation.

SLO 5.3: Evaluate Sayyid Quṭb’s critique of Western civilisation and its implications for Muslim engagement with the West.

SLO 5.4: Assess the contribution of Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī to Islamic education, cultural engagement and social reform in West Africa.

SLO 5.5: Compare the approaches of selected Muslim scholars and formulate lessons for constructive contemporary civilizational dialogue.

5.1 Muslim Intellectual Responses to Civilizational Encounter

5.1.1 Meaning of Civilizational Dialogue

Civilization refers broadly to the developed social, intellectual, political, cultural and institutional life of a people or society. Civilizations contain systems of knowledge, values, institutions, artistic expressions, technologies and patterns of social organisation.

Civilizational dialogue therefore involves interaction between different civilizations through intellectual exchange, cultural contact, education, diplomacy, scholarship and other peaceful forms of engagement.

Dialogue should not be confused with agreement.

Imagine two scholars discussing religion and modernity. One scholar may believe that revelation provides the ultimate source of moral guidance, while the other may approach morality from a secular philosophical perspective. They may disagree fundamentally, yet they can still engage in serious discussion.

This distinction is important in Islamic Studies. Islam does not require Muslims to accept every idea encountered in another civilization. At the same time, intellectual confidence does not require Muslims to reject everything associated with another civilization.

The Cambridge study *Islam and the West: A Civilized Dialogue* describes Muslim-Western interaction as involving both conflict and extensive exchanges of knowledge and culture. It also identifies dialogue and peaceful coexistence as important areas of contemporary reflection.

Think About It

Does civilizational dialogue mean that Muslims must accept Western ideas without criticism?

Answer: No. Dialogue involves engagement and understanding. It does not require unconditional acceptance.

5.1.2 Muslim Intellectual Responses to Western Influence

The expansion of European political and economic power during the modern period created new challenges for Muslim societies. Military weakness, colonial domination, technological differences and political fragmentation encouraged Muslim thinkers to reconsider the condition of their societies.

Their responses varied.

Some scholars emphasised educational reform and the acquisition of useful knowledge. Others concentrated on political unity and resistance to foreign domination. Some sought ways to reconcile Islamic principles with selected aspects of modern institutions. Others were more critical of Western cultural influence.

It is therefore misleading to describe Muslim intellectual responses as either complete acceptance or complete rejection of the West.

The reformist thought associated with Afghānī and ‘Abduh illustrates an attempt to address the challenges of modern civilisation through Islamic intellectual renewal. Hourani’s account places their ideas within a broader nineteenth-century intellectual encounter involving Europe, the Ottoman world and Muslim reform movements.

5.1.3 Scholarship, Reform and Engagement with the Other

Muslim scholarship has historically involved engagement with different cultures and intellectual traditions. Such engagement may involve learning, comparison, criticism, adaptation or rejection.

A useful principle is to distinguish **critical engagement** from **uncritical imitation**.

Critical engagement asks:

- What does the other society believe?
- Why does it hold those beliefs?

- What historical circumstances produced them?
- Which aspects can be beneficial?
- Which aspects conflict with Islamic principles?
- How can differences be discussed peacefully?

Uncritical imitation, by contrast, accepts ideas simply because they originate from a powerful or prestigious society.

Uncritical rejection makes the opposite error. It assumes that everything associated with another civilization is harmful without investigating it.

Civilizational dialogue is strongest when participants possess sufficient knowledge of their own traditions and are also willing to study others accurately.

Fill in the Blank

Civilizational dialogue requires engagement with another civilization without requiring unconditional _____ of its ideas.

Answer: acceptance.

Pilot Questions 5.1

1. Define civilizational dialogue. **(SLO 5.1)**

Answer: Civilizational dialogue is sustained intellectual, cultural and social engagement between different civilizations or communities.

2. Why is it inaccurate to describe Muslim responses to Western influence as either complete acceptance or complete rejection? **(SLO 5.1)**

Answer: Muslim scholars adopted different approaches, ranging from reform and selective engagement to strong criticism of Western political and cultural influence.

3. Distinguish critical engagement from uncritical imitation. **(SLO 5.1)**

Answer: Critical engagement evaluates another civilization's ideas carefully, while uncritical imitation accepts those ideas without sufficient examination.

5.2 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh

5.2.1 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī: Life and Intellectual Orientation

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī was one of the influential Muslim intellectual figures of the nineteenth century. His activities connected several parts of the Muslim world, and his thought developed in an environment marked by European imperial expansion and political weakness in many Muslim societies.

His intellectual concerns included Muslim unity, political renewal, resistance to foreign domination and the strengthening of Muslim intellectual life.

Afghānī’s engagement with modern civilisation should therefore be understood within the political circumstances of his time. His concern was not simply whether Muslims should imitate Europe. He was interested in how Muslim societies could overcome weakness and respond intellectually and politically to changing global conditions.

His intellectual influence extended beyond his own writings through his students and associates. Muḥammad ‘Abduh, who became one of his important collaborators, developed several reformist concerns in a different intellectual direction.

5.2.2 Afghānī on Muslim Renewal and Western Power

Afghānī viewed Muslim weakness as a major problem requiring intellectual and political renewal. European power represented a challenge because it demonstrated the consequences of technological, political and institutional strength in the modern period.

His response included emphasis on Muslim unity and resistance to domination.

This does not mean that his approach can simply be described as hatred of Western civilisation. His intellectual environment required engagement with the political and scientific realities of

Europe. The important issue was how Muslims could respond to Western power without surrendering their religious and intellectual identity.

Afghānī therefore represents an important model of **critical engagement**. He recognised the strength of European civilisation while remaining deeply concerned about political domination and the condition of Muslim societies.

The wider intellectual history of the period shows that Muslim thinkers were examining European ideas, institutions and scientific developments while also confronting the political realities of European expansion.

Think About It

If a Muslim scholar recognises the strengths of another civilisation but criticises its political domination, is that necessarily hostility towards that civilisation?

Answer: No. Recognition of strengths and criticism of political actions can coexist.

5.2.3 Muḥammad ‘Abduh: Reform, Education and Modern Civilization

Muḥammad ‘Abduh was an Egyptian scholar and reformer whose thought became influential in discussions about Islam and modern civilisation.

One important feature of ‘Abduh’s thought was his attempt to address the apparent tension between Islam and modern civilisation. Albert Hourani describes ‘Abduh’s project as an effort to demonstrate that authentic Islamic principles and aspects of modern civilisation were not necessarily incompatible, while maintaining that Islamic moral and doctrinal principles could not simply be subordinated to whatever modern society approved.

Education was central to this reformist outlook. Reform required intellectual development rather than mere imitation.

This approach provides an important lesson for civilizational dialogue. A community can engage another civilization intellectually while retaining criteria for evaluating what it encounters.

For ‘Abduh, therefore, the relationship between Islam and modernity involved both openness and boundaries. Muslims could benefit from knowledge and institutional developments while maintaining Islamic principles.

Fill in the Blank

Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s reformist thought sought to examine the relationship between Islam and modern _____.

Answer: civilisation.

Pilot Questions 5.2

1. Identify two major concerns associated with Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. (SLO 5.2)

Answer: Muslim unity, political renewal, resistance to foreign domination and strengthening Muslim intellectual life.

2. How did Afghānī approach Western power? (SLO 5.2)

Answer: He recognised the strength of European civilisation while strongly opposing foreign domination and calling for Muslim renewal.

3. What was significant about Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s approach to modern civilisation? (SLO 5.2)

Answer: He sought to demonstrate that Islam and aspects of modern civilisation were not necessarily incompatible while maintaining that Islamic principles remained authoritative.

5.3 Sayyid Quṭb and the Question of Western Civilization

5.3.1 Life and Intellectual Background of Sayyid Quṭb

Sayyid Quṭb was an Egyptian writer and thinker whose intellectual development occurred in the context of major political and social changes in twentieth-century Egypt.

His writings addressed questions of Islam, society, morality, political authority and modernity. His thought became influential in later Islamic movements, although interpretations of his ideas differ significantly.

Quṭb's work must be situated within its historical context. The political struggles of twentieth-century Egypt, colonial legacies and encounters with Western cultural influence formed part of the environment in which his ideas developed.

For this reason, studying Quṭb requires more than extracting individual statements from his writings. His arguments should be examined in relation to his broader intellectual framework.

5.3.2 Quṭb's Critique of Modern Western Civilization

Quṭb developed a strong critique of aspects of modern Western society. His concern centred on what he regarded as the separation of human life from divine guidance and the resulting moral and social consequences.

He used the concept of **Jāhiliyyah** in a distinctive modern intellectual sense to criticise societies that, in his view, did not organise human life according to divine guidance.

His criticism therefore extended beyond specific Western governments or policies. It involved a wider evaluation of modern social and moral systems.

This position is important for understanding why Quṭb cannot simply be placed in the same category as 'Abduh. Whereas 'Abduh explored ways in which Islam and aspects of modern civilisation could be reconciled, Quṭb developed a much sharper critique of modern Western civilisation.

At the same time, it is important not to reduce Quṭb's entire intellectual legacy to a single political interpretation. His writings contain broader discussions of Qur'ānic concepts, morality, society and human life.

5.3.3 Assessing Quṭb's Contribution and Its Limits for Dialogue

Quṭb's writings provide an important case study in the limits of civilizational dialogue.

His criticism reminds Muslims that engagement with another civilization does not require surrendering fundamental beliefs. A community may critically examine dominant political and cultural systems.

However, a dialogue-oriented approach also requires careful distinction between criticism of ideas and collective judgement of people.

If a critique of a particular philosophy becomes a blanket rejection of all people associated with a civilization, dialogue becomes more difficult.

This distinction is especially important when studying Islam and the West. The objective is not to suppress criticism. Rather, criticism should remain intellectually precise.

Quṭb's thought can therefore be studied as an example of a strong critique of modernity and Western civilisation, while students should also assess the implications of such a critique for coexistence and dialogue.

Application Activity

Suppose a student says:

“Because Sayyid Quṭb criticised Western civilisation, his ideas prove that Islam rejects every form of engagement with the West.”

How would you respond?

Suggested answer:

The conclusion is too broad. Quṭb developed a strong critique of aspects of modern Western civilisation, but criticism of particular ideas or social systems should not automatically be transformed into a claim that Islam requires hostility towards every Western person or society. His thought should be examined historically and critically, particularly in relation to its implications for dialogue and coexistence.

Fill in the Blank

A major feature of Sayyid Quṭb's thought was his strong critique of aspects of modern _____ civilisation.

Answer: Western.

Selected Muslim Scholars and Their Intellectual Contributions

 Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897)	 Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849–1905)	 Sayyid Quṭb (1906–1966)	 Shaykh Ādam 'Abdullāh al-Ilūrī (1917–1992)
• Muslim Renewal (Ihyā'): Advocated for the revival of Islamic intellectual tradition and socio-political activism. • Pan-Islamic Unity (Al-Waḥdah al-Islāmiyyah): Called for the solidarity of Muslims worldwide against colonialism. • Anti-Colonial Resistance (Muqāwah): Resisted foreign domination and promoted political reform.	• Modernist Reform (Iṣlāḥ): Interpreted Islam in line with modern rationality and science. • Educational Development (Al-Ta'līm): Reforming Al-Azhar curriculum and emphasizing broader education. • Civilizational Engagement (Al-Madaniyyah): Fostering a synthesis of Islamic values and positive aspects of modern civilization.	• Critique of Modernity (Naqd al-Ḥadāthah): Offered a sharp critique of materialism and secularism in the West. • Societal Re-ordering (Al-Mujtama'): Proposed an Islamic alternative to Western-influenced socio-political systems. • Intellectual Vanguard (Al-Ṭalī'ah): Developed concepts of Islamic revival through a dedicated group.	• Islamic Education (Al-Ta'līm al-Islāmī): Pioneer of modern Islamic institutions (Markaz) in Yorubaland. • West African Scholarship (Al-Turāth al-Ifriqī): Documented and preserved Islamic knowledge in West Africa. • Cultural Reform (Al-Iṣlāḥ al-Thaqāfī): Integrated Islamic learning with local culture and intellectual heritage.

Educational resource for Islamic Studies. Interpretations reflect scholarly consensus.

Pilot Questions 5.3

1. What was one major concern in Sayyid Quṭb's critique of modern society? **(SLO 5.3)**

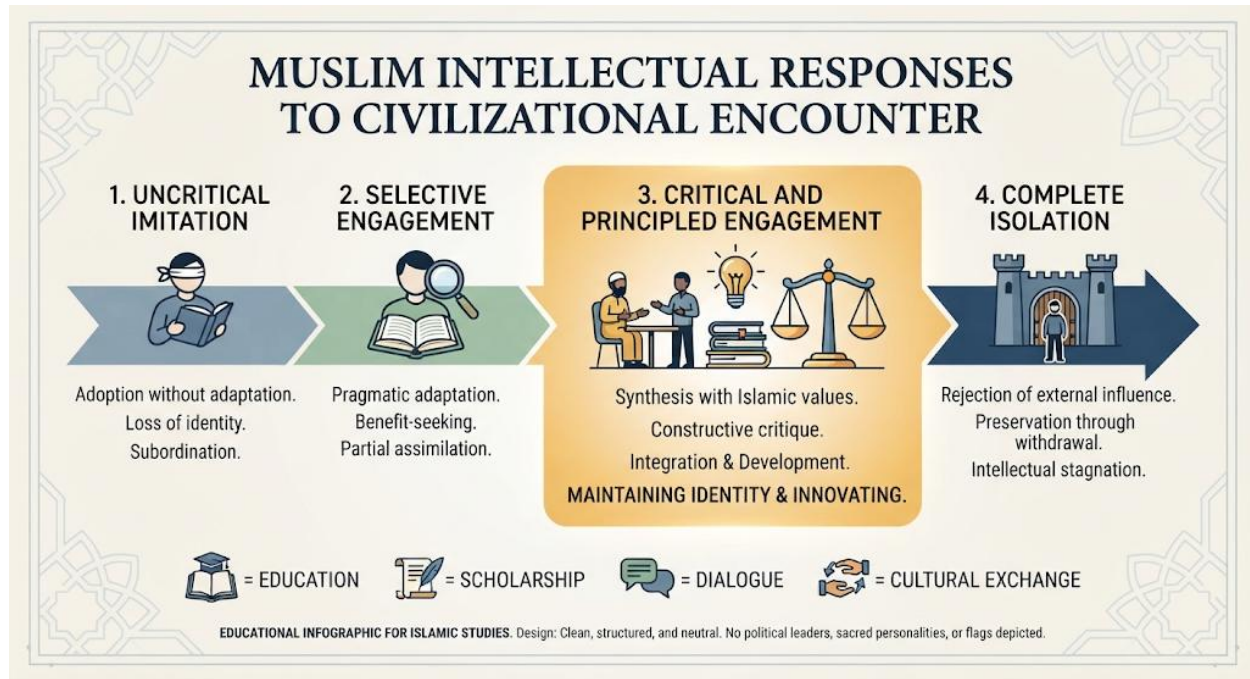
Answer: He was concerned about the separation of human life from divine guidance and its perceived moral and social consequences.

2. Why should Quṭb's thought be studied within its historical context? **(SLO 5.3)**

Answer: His ideas developed during significant political and social changes in twentieth-century Egypt and were influenced by the circumstances of that period.

3. What is one limitation that should be considered when applying a strong civilizational critique to dialogue? **(SLO 5.3)**

Answer: A critique may become counterproductive if criticism of ideas is transformed into collective hostility towards entire populations.



5.4 Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī and Lessons for Civilizational Engagement

5.4.1 Life, Education and Scholarly Activities

Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī was a prominent twentieth-century Muslim scholar associated particularly with Islamic scholarship and education in Yorubaland and Nigeria.

Available studies identify him as a reformer, teacher, preacher, author and organiser whose activities had considerable influence on Islamic education in southwestern Nigeria. Research on his work identifies the Markaz as an important centre through which he promoted Arabic and Islamic learning and trained generations of students.

The National Open University of Nigeria's course material on al-Ilūrī presents him as a significant contributor to Arabic and Islamic thought in West Africa and identifies a substantial body of Arabic writings associated with him.

His significance for this Series lies partly in the way his scholarship responded to the realities of a changing Nigerian society.

5.4.2 Islamic Education, Culture and Social Reform

Al-Ilūrī's work demonstrates that civilizational engagement does not occur only between famous political leaders or European and Middle Eastern intellectuals. It also occurs at community level through education, scholarship, language and cultural reform.

His educational work placed strong emphasis on Arabic and Islamic learning. The Markaz model contributed to the organisation and expansion of Islamic education in Yorubaland. Studies also associate his work with efforts to address the relationship between Islamic teachings and Yoruba cultural practices.

His approach therefore provides a West African example of how Islamic scholarship can respond to social realities.

One study of his educational philosophy notes that his reformist work developed partly in response to concerns about the effects of colonial and Western educational systems on Muslim identity in Nigeria.

This does not mean that al-Ilūrī's work should be reduced to opposition to Western education. His educational activities themselves demonstrate an engagement with changing educational realities. The important lesson is that Muslims can respond to external intellectual and cultural pressures by strengthening knowledge, institutions and educational capacity.

5.4.3 Comparative Lessons for Contemporary Civilizational Dialogue

The scholars examined in this Series did not provide identical answers to the challenges of modernity and civilizational encounter.

Afghānī emphasised Muslim renewal, unity and resistance to foreign domination.

‘Abduh placed considerable emphasis on reform, education and demonstrating the compatibility of Islam with selected aspects of modern civilisation while maintaining Islamic principles.

Quṭb developed a stronger critique of modern Western civilisation and questioned social systems that he regarded as disconnected from divine guidance.

Al-Ilūrī focused strongly on Islamic scholarship, education, cultural reform and the strengthening of Muslim intellectual life in West Africa.

These differences are valuable because they demonstrate that Muslim intellectual responses have never been completely uniform.

Comparative Table

Scholar	Major Concern	General Approach	Lesson for Dialogue
Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī	Muslim weakness and foreign domination	Renewal, unity and resistance	Engagement requires intellectual confidence and political awareness
Muḥammad ‘Abduh	Reform and modern civilisation	Education, reform and selective engagement	Useful knowledge can be engaged without abandoning Islamic principles
Sayyid Quṭb	Modernity and Western civilisation	Strong critique of secular modernity	Criticism should remain intellectually precise and should

Scholar	Major Concern	General Approach	Lesson for Dialogue
			not become collective hostility
Ādam al-Ilūrī	Islamic education and cultural reform	Scholarship, education and community development	Strong institutions and education strengthen constructive engagement

The comparative lesson is that civilizational dialogue requires both **identity and openness**.

Without identity, engagement may become uncritical imitation.

Without openness, engagement may become isolation.

A balanced approach allows Muslims to preserve their religious principles, learn from others, challenge injustice and cooperate where interests overlap.

This is particularly relevant to contemporary Muslim communities. Civilizational dialogue should not be understood as a project for scholars alone. Students, teachers, professionals, religious leaders, civil society organisations and ordinary citizens can all participate.

Think About It

Which of the four scholars provides the most useful model for contemporary civilizational dialogue?

There is no single compulsory answer. A strong response should identify a scholar's contribution, explain its relevance and acknowledge its limitations.

Fill in the Blank

The comparative study of Muslim scholars shows that civilizational engagement requires both religious identity and intellectual _____.

Answer: openness.

Pilot Questions 5.4

1. Identify two areas in which Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī made important contributions. **(SLO 5.4)**

Answer: Islamic education, Arabic education, scholarship, preaching, writing and community reform.

2. Why is al-Ilūrī particularly relevant to the Nigerian study of Islam and civilizational engagement? **(SLO 5.4)**

Answer: His scholarship and educational activities addressed the realities of Muslims in Yorubaland and contributed significantly to Arabic and Islamic education in southwestern Nigeria.

3. State one major difference between ‘Abduh and Quṭb. **(SLO 5.5)**

Answer: ‘Abduh explored ways of reconciling Islam with selected aspects of modern civilisation, while Quṭb developed a much stronger critique of modern Western civilisation.

Series Summary

This Series examined the contributions of selected Muslim scholars to the intellectual encounter between Islam and other civilizations.

In **Part 5.1**, you examined the meaning of civilizational dialogue and distinguished critical engagement from both uncritical imitation and uncritical rejection.

In **Part 5.2**, you studied Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh. Afghānī’s thought emphasised Muslim renewal, unity and resistance to foreign domination, while ‘Abduh’s reformist project examined the relationship between Islamic principles, education and modern civilisation.

In **Part 5.3**, you examined Sayyid Quṭb’s critique of modern Western civilisation. You also learned to distinguish criticism of ideas and systems from collective hostility towards people.

In **Part 5.4**, you examined Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī’s contribution to Islamic education, scholarship and cultural reform in West Africa. His work demonstrates that civilizational engagement also takes place through education and community institutions.

The overall lesson is that constructive civilizational dialogue requires knowledge, confidence in one’s identity, willingness to listen, intellectual honesty and the ability to distinguish legitimate disagreement from hostility.

Glossary of Terms

Civilisation: The organised intellectual, cultural, social, political and institutional development of a society.

Civilizational dialogue: Sustained intellectual, cultural and social engagement between different civilizations or communities.

Critical engagement: Careful examination of another person’s or society’s ideas without automatically accepting or rejecting them.

Jāhiliyyah: A Qur'ānic term associated with the condition of ignorance, used by Sayyid Quṭb in a broader modern critique of societies that he regarded as detached from divine guidance.

Modernity: The social, intellectual, political and technological conditions associated with the modern period.

Muslim reform: Efforts to address perceived weaknesses or challenges within Muslim societies through intellectual, educational, religious or social renewal.

Pluralism: The recognition and management of diversity within society.

Reform: A deliberate effort to improve institutions, practices or ideas.

Western civilisation: A broad term referring to historical and contemporary cultural, intellectual, political and institutional traditions associated with Western societies.

Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. Which statement best describes civilizational dialogue?
 - A. Complete acceptance of another civilization
 - B. Complete rejection of another civilization
 - C. Peaceful intellectual and cultural engagement between civilizations
 - D. Political domination of one civilization by another

2. Which scholar is particularly associated with nineteenth-century Muslim reform thought?
 - A. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī
 - B. Sayyid Quṭb only
 - C. Ādam al-Ilūrī only
 - D. None of the above

3. Muḥammad ‘Abduh placed significant emphasis on:
 - A. The rejection of all modern knowledge
 - B. Reform and education
 - C. Military expansion
 - D. Cultural isolation

4. Sayyid Quṭb is particularly known for his:
 - A. Strong critique of aspects of modern Western civilisation
 - B. Complete rejection of Islamic scholarship
 - C. Study of West African Arabic education
 - D. Founding of Markaz

5. Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī made significant contributions to:
 - A. Arabic and Islamic education in West Africa
 - B. European colonial administration

- C. Western political philosophy
- D. Medieval European Christianity

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the difference between civilizational dialogue and uncritical imitation. **(SLO 5.1)**
7. Analyse two major concerns in the thought of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī. **(SLO 5.2)**
8. Explain Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s approach to Islam and modern civilisation. **(SLO 5.2)**
9. Evaluate one strength and one limitation of Sayyid Quṭb’s critique of Western civilisation. **(SLO 5.3)**
10. Examine the contribution of Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī to Islamic education in West Africa. **(SLO 5.4)**

Long-Answer Questions

11. Compare the approaches of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh to Muslim engagement with modern civilisation. **(SLO 5.2 and SLO 5.5)**
12. Evaluate Sayyid Quṭb’s critique of Western civilisation in relation to the requirements of contemporary civilizational dialogue. **(SLO 5.3 and SLO 5.5)**
13. Compare the contributions of Afghānī, ‘Abduh, Quṭb and Ādam al-Ilūrī and discuss the lessons their thought offers for contemporary Muslim engagement with other civilizations. **(SLO 5.5)**

Answers to Concept Check Questions 5

Objective Questions

1. **C. Peaceful intellectual and cultural engagement between civilizations.**
2. **A. Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.**
3. **B. Reform and education.**

4. **A. Strong critique of aspects of modern Western civilisation.**
5. **A. Arabic and Islamic education in West Africa.**

Short-Answer Questions

6. Explain the difference between civilizational dialogue and uncritical imitation.

Answer: Civilizational dialogue involves studying, discussing and evaluating another civilization while maintaining one's own intellectual and religious principles. Uncritical imitation occurs when ideas are accepted simply because they originate from another society without adequate evaluation. (SLO 5.1)

7. Analyse two major concerns in the thought of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī.

Answer: Two major concerns were Muslim weakness and foreign domination. Afghānī emphasised renewal and Muslim unity as responses to the political and intellectual challenges facing Muslim societies. His engagement with European power was therefore both critical and reform-oriented. (SLO 5.2)

8. Explain Muḥammad 'Abduh's approach to Islam and modern civilisation.

Answer: 'Abduh sought to demonstrate that Islam and selected aspects of modern civilisation were not necessarily incompatible. He emphasised reform and education while maintaining that Islamic moral and doctrinal principles could not simply be abandoned in order to follow modern trends. (SLO 5.2)

9. Evaluate one strength and one limitation of Sayyid Quṭb's critique of Western civilisation.

Answer: One strength is that his critique encourages Muslims to examine the moral assumptions underlying modern social systems rather than accepting them automatically. A limitation is that an excessively broad civilizational critique can make constructive dialogue more difficult if distinctions between ideas, institutions and entire populations are lost. (SLO 5.3)

10. Examine the contribution of Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī to Islamic education in West Africa.

Answer: Al-Ilūrī contributed significantly to Arabic and Islamic education through teaching, writing, preaching and the development of the Markaz educational institution. His work helped strengthen organised Islamic learning in Yorubaland and produced students who continued Islamic scholarship in Nigeria and beyond. (SLO 5.4)

Long-Answer Questions

11. Compare the approaches of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh to Muslim engagement with modern civilisation.

Basic Response:

Afghānī and ‘Abduh were both concerned about the condition of Muslim societies during a period of increasing European political and intellectual influence. Afghānī placed strong emphasis on Muslim unity, political renewal and resistance to foreign domination.

‘Abduh also sought Muslim reform but gave considerable attention to education and the relationship between Islam and modern civilisation. He argued that Islam and aspects of modern civilisation were not necessarily incompatible, provided Islamic principles remained authoritative.

Value-Added Response:

The two thinkers therefore shared a concern for Muslim renewal but differed in emphasis. Afghānī’s thought was strongly shaped by political weakness and foreign domination, whereas ‘Abduh developed a more sustained intellectual and educational programme for reconciling Islamic principles with selected features of modern civilisation.

Their approaches demonstrate that Muslim engagement with the West does not have to take a single form. It may include political resistance, educational reform, intellectual exchange and selective adoption of useful knowledge.

For contemporary civilizational dialogue, the important lesson is that engagement should be informed rather than imitative. Muslims can learn from other societies while retaining criteria rooted in their own intellectual and religious tradition.

12. Evaluate Sayyid Quṭb's critique of Western civilisation in relation to the requirements of contemporary civilizational dialogue.

Basic Response:

Quṭb developed a strong critique of modern Western civilisation, particularly aspects of modern social organisation that he regarded as detached from divine guidance. His work therefore represents an important Muslim critique of modernity.

His thought demonstrates that dialogue does not require Muslims to accept every aspect of another civilisation.

Value-Added Response:

However, contemporary civilizational dialogue requires careful distinctions. Criticism of secularism, consumerism, political systems or particular Western philosophies can be intellectually legitimate. Problems arise when criticism becomes a general judgement against all Western people or societies.

Quṭb's thought is therefore valuable for examining the importance of maintaining Islamic intellectual independence, but it also provides an opportunity to consider the limits of broad civilizational categorisation.

A constructive contemporary approach should preserve the right to disagree while maintaining respect for persons, encouraging accurate understanding and identifying opportunities for peaceful cooperation.

13. Compare the contributions of Afghānī, 'Abduh, Quṭb and Ādam al-Ilūrī and discuss the lessons their thought offers for contemporary Muslim engagement with other civilizations.

Basic Response:

Afghānī emphasised Muslim renewal, unity and resistance to foreign domination. ‘Abduh focused strongly on reform, education and the relationship between Islam and modern civilisation. Quṭb developed a strong critique of Western modernity. Al-Ilūrī concentrated particularly on Islamic education, scholarship and cultural reform in West Africa.

These scholars therefore responded differently to the challenges created by encounters between Muslim societies and other civilizations.

Value-Added Response:

Their differences provide an important lesson. There is no single Muslim intellectual response to civilizational encounter. Muslims may resist political domination, reform educational institutions, critically evaluate modern ideas or strengthen religious scholarship and community institutions.

Afghānī teaches the importance of intellectual and political renewal. ‘Abduh demonstrates the importance of education and critical engagement with modern civilisation. Quṭb demonstrates the importance of maintaining moral and religious critique, while also providing a case through which the risks of broad civilizational generalisation can be examined. Al-Ilūrī demonstrates how scholarship and education can strengthen Muslim communities at the local and regional level.

For contemporary Muslims, the most constructive lesson is to combine strong religious identity with intellectual openness. Engagement with other civilizations should involve learning without blind imitation, criticism without collective hostility, and cooperation without surrendering fundamental principles.

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Olanrewaju, Yusuf Badmas, and Yusuph Dauda Gambari. “The Thoughts of Shaykh Adam Abdullahi Al-Ilorī (1917-1992) on Islam and Cultural Practices among Yoruba Muslims in Nigeria.” *IIUM Journal of Human Sciences*, 2023.

National Open University of Nigeria. *Islamic Studies in West Africa*, Unit on Shaykh Adam Abdullah Al-Iluri.

Further Reading

Cambridge University Press. *Islam and the West: A Civilized Dialogue*. The volume examines historical interaction, media perceptions, Muslim minorities, coexistence and prospects for dialogue.

Hourani’s treatment of Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Muḥammad ‘Abduh provides a useful framework for understanding nineteenth-century Muslim intellectual engagement with modern civilisation.

Research on Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī provides a West African perspective on Islamic education, reform and the relationship between Islamic teachings and Yoruba cultural practices.

Illustrations and Attributions

Figure 5.1: Spectrum of Muslim Intellectual Responses to Civilizational Encounter

Short Description:

A conceptual academic illustration showing different forms of Muslim intellectual engagement with other civilizations, ranging from uncritical imitation through critical engagement to complete isolation, with critical and principled engagement identified as the balanced approach.

Caption:

Figure 5.1: Approaches to Civilizational Engagement

AI Prompt:

“Create a clean university-level educational infographic showing a horizontal spectrum titled ‘Muslim Intellectual Responses to Civilizational Encounter’. Show four stages: uncritical imitation, selective engagement, critical and principled engagement, and complete isolation. Highlight the conceptual middle position of critical and principled engagement through balanced visual emphasis. Include small academic symbols representing education, scholarship, dialogue and cultural exchange. Use professional Islamic Studies textbook design, subtle geometric Islamic patterns, neutral academic appearance, clear typography, no political leaders, no sacred personalities, no flags.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Islam Muslim intellectual response Western civilisation dialogue reform modernity educational infographic OER”

Figure 5.2: Comparative Contributions of Selected Muslim Scholars

Short Description:

A comparative educational diagram connecting Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī, Muḥammad ‘Abduh, Sayyid Quṭb and Shaykh Ādam al-Ilūrī to their principal intellectual concerns: renewal and unity, reform and education, critique of modernity, and Islamic education and cultural reform.

Caption:

Figure 5.2: Selected Muslim Scholars and Their Intellectual Contributions

AI Prompt:

“Create a professional university-level comparative educational infographic titled ‘Selected Muslim Scholars and Their Intellectual Contributions’. Present four clearly separated scholarly profiles: Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī connected to Muslim renewal, unity and resistance to foreign domination; Muḥammad ‘Abduh connected to reform, education and modern civilisation; Sayyid Quṭb connected to critique of modernity and Western civilisation; Shaykh Ādam ‘Abdullāh al-Ilūrī connected to Islamic education, scholarship and cultural reform in West Africa. Use abstract academic symbols instead of portraits. Use subtle Islamic geometric design, balanced layout, clear readable labels, professional Islamic Studies textbook style, no political propaganda and no sacred imagery.”

Suggested OER Search String:

“Afghani Abduh Qutb Adam al Ilori Muslim scholars Islamic reform education OER”