International Journal of Engineering & Technology, 8 (1.9) (2019) 540-542

International Journal of Engineering & Technology

Website: www.sciencepubco.com/index.php/IJET

Research paper

Pluralistic Islamic Cities & the Significance of Marrakesh Declaration

Mya Su San[1]*, Nor Atiah Ismail [2*]

[1]University Putra Malaysia
[2]School of Mechanical Engineering, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 14300 Nibong Tebal, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
**Corresponding author E-mail: myasusan@gmail.com*

Abstract

If Quran offers the timeless guidance and Sunnah (the way of Prophet Muhammad) is the truthful way, the study on how to improve the planning methods according to Islamic Principles would be of immense help to a nation. Without a doubt Exemplary Islamic City is the goal we are aiming for. But how are we going to deal with pluralism in our planning methods while balancing between modern and Islamic notions? Traditionally in Islam, Muslims are obliged to respect and protect the people regardless of their faith and background. For the very reason that it promotes peace and tolerance, many other groups joined for Islamic path even in the hardest of times according to the history. A peaceful nation state is where everyone can be included in managing the affairs of their own society, in accordance with their rights and duties, to be outlined by a reasonable constitution that seeks harmonious living, the rule of law. Does Islam recognized those values? Yes it does, and even more so, the very first functioning constitution was developed in early days of Islam which later known as The Medina Charter (Shahifat al-Medina). The Medina Charter, prepared as the basis of the Medina city-state established by Prophet Muhammad, was the first written constitution in Islam and arguably the first instance of constitutional law in society. It was an agreement that was reached without war, fighting, violence, or compulsion; it was an agreement that all of its parties arrived at voluntarily due to their commitment to the shared principles contained therein, within the sphere of positive cooperation, the context of their conditions, and the various elements of the Medinan society. It was a step towards the realization of social peace based upon their mutual recognition of rights and responsibilities and of accepting the demands of their diversity, their various religious affiliations, benefits, and lifestyles. Medina was a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society that was not founded as the result of a conquest. There, the Prophet composed a document governing the relations between the Muslims and other religious communities that would come to be known as "the Constitution of Medina." This document was, for all intents and purposes, a just constitution that established a type of contractual citizenship. It affirmed that those who were under its authority were one, cohesive, unified polity with all of its citizens enjoying equal rights and having the same duties. This document affirmed the unity of the society in terms of religious pluralism and freedom of religion, but, despite its obvious importance, it has not garnered much study. Revival of Medina Charter and to make thorough study to be applicable to our constitution is rather very important factor nowadays. That is why a major conference was hosted in Marrakesh in the Kingdom of Morocco early this year of 2016. A large number of personals from more than 100 predominantly Muslim countries participated in this conference. It called upon other scholars of the world to initiate more on this concern. The Objective of this study is to revive Medina Charter for the modern day Islamic City planning which would enable the states to develop better and more appropriate planning methods for pluralistic Islamic societies and highlight the importance of Marrakesh Declaration. A qualitative method will be implemented in this study with content analysis method.

Keywords: *Medina Charter, Marrakesh Declaration, Islam and Pluralism, Islamic City*

1. Introduction & literature review

According to Pew Research Centre, there are around 50 Muslim majority countries in the world. Most of these countries being politically unstable and couldn't provide safety to citizens, more and more families are migrating to the West despite the bitterness towards the Muslims on those foreign lands. The resentments, Islamophobia and the bad perceptions of the people around the Western world generally targeting Islam is now spreading to a global level. America, the most celebrated Democratic Nation, just elected a white supremacist Donald Trump who threatened the safety of minorities, immigrants and the Muslims.

The Slate Magazine and several others testified that within one week of election, more than 300 incidents of harassment or intimidation have been reported in the aftermath of Trump's election, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center and most of them targeting to minorities and Muslims. The Huffington Post reported that Steve Bannon, the man President-elect Donald Trump has chosen to be his chief strategist, expressed dismay at the number of tech execs who are immigrants from Asia. From the far West to the East, more and more discriminations occurred against Muslim communities and at the same time, the extremist groups like ISIS is causing more flames to the situation. Several reporters documented the situations in different part of the world and I we would acknowledge their comment on 'Being a Muslim in many parts of the world currently is like being a Jew in 1933 Germany'.

Copyright © 2019 Authors. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

The purpose of this research is to develop the pluralistic aspect of city planning for a more successful Islamic Society just as the first Islamic city of history by Prophet Muhammad through revival 'Medina Constitution'. This study encourages to focusing in reviving the true essence of value-centered Islamic City Planning to the modern Islamic society more than physical form approaches which will results in having better relationships among different groups within the society and create the peaceful equilibrium.

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

Moroccan King Muhammad VI, held a prime conference in Marrakesh City in the Kingdom of Morocco, in order to study more deeply on the rights of religious minorities in Muslim countries, both in theory and practice. According to the report by (Muslim Peace Forum, 2016), the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies, based in the U.A.E. jointly organized the conference from 25th – 27th January. A great number of personals from political and religious background participated in discussions including Ministers, Muftis, Religious Scholars of different school of thought and Academics of different background and field. Concerned representatives of several religious background and various international organizations attended. The conference was entitled as 'Religious Minorities in Muslim Lands: It's Legal Framework and a Call to Action.' This Marrakesh Declaration was a remarkable incident for the contemporary Muslim societies and it urges the participants and scholars across the world to revive the Medina Constitution. However, many individuals worry that it would be ignored after an initial outburst of praise. Scholars should put more effort in reviving the Medina Constitution and politicians and planners ought to put more effort in application of it to modern day Islamic society.

2. Methodology

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

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

3. Discussion & conclusion

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

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

The religious sanctity was attached to the Migration to Medina and it gave an importance as it has been referred in the Qur'an as a deed performed in the path of God. Furthermore, this event marks out the great qualities of Prophet's character and some of the most splendid aspects of his personality as the leader of one of the greatest historic revolution. Subsequently, He developed the first written Constitution of Medina (also known as the Medina Charter). It focused to address the disputes and issues among the people of Medina. It covered the issues of not only Muslim immigrant and local Muslims but also Jews, other non-Muslims and their non- Muslim allied tribes. The philosophy and the values of medina charter is not specifically for Islam or Muslims but rather, it refers to universal doctrine of peacemaking regardless of religion, race and ethnicity (Rahman et al., 2016). It can be act as a harbinger to address the present day questions, offering approaches to solve diverse issues between the pluralistic societies. It is not only important as a first constitution, but still timeless and applicable to contemporary issues and conflicts occurring in the pluralistic society. The key focus of the charter was relationship

rather than group dynamics. As Prof. (Hamidullah, 1975) rightly indicated, "…this new constitution…brought with it very important, and…to Arabia at least...very revolutionary change and improvement, by providing the people with a central public institution for seeking justice, in place of everyone seeking it with the power of his own hand or, at best that of his family. This epoch-making innovation…brought an end for all times to the chaos of tribalism and which laid the basis for a wider institution, viz a State." The Medina Charter is a prominent example that is greatly needed and should be emphasized to be discussed and referred to in current global conflicts. Overall, the Medina charter can represent the best model of conducts to develop and maintain a successful pluralistic society and establish better political and social relations among diverse groups (Rahman et al., 2016).

(Bayyah, 2016) claimed in Marrakesh Declaration that the accusation of Islam oppresses minorities has no basis in sacred law or in history. History itself testifies that there was no religion except that minorities experienced calamities living amongst them at some point in history and in some place on the earth. That lesson necessitates that all of us work together and that we should all be members of the "majority," for if justice reigns, equality is guaranteed, and mercy spreads; then the concept of "majority or minority" will no longer have any significance. Hundreds of academics and scholars of various faiths pledge to collaborate and work on in reviving the historical Medina Charter that may serve as a basis for contemporary conceptualizations of citizenship in Marrakesh Declaration. The dream of having a just Islamic constitution and developing a constitutional citizenship, which has no concept of majority or minority that would lead to infringing upon of the rights of others. That citizenship would be committed to a mutuality that ensures freedom and guarantees societal peace. Such is a sound foundation, accepted by both religion and the pursuit of the commonweal. To quote the famous theologian Hans Küng, 'There can be no peace in this world without peace among the religions'. I would like to urge the scholars in Islamic City Planning to give more thoughts on reviving Medina Charter according to the Marrakesh Declaration. (Bayyah, 2016) and hundreds of scholars called for peoples of all faiths to establish an alliance for peace—spiritual and psychological peace, the kind that inspires us to do good in the world. John Lenon would say 'A dream you dream alone is only a dream. A dream you dream together is reality.'

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

I strongly believe reviving the Medina Charter will lead us to the path of rationality, nobility, wisdom, virtue, and benefit. May we live all in peace, God's mercy and blessings shall always be upon us.

4. Research output & benefits

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

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my thesis advisor Dr. Nor Atiah Ismail for her constant assistance, support and care. And I am always particularly grateful for valuable guidance and support of WARIS research group members of UPM, Malaysia. My special thanks are extended for all members of ICSEBS.

References

[1] Bayyah, S. A. Bin. (2016). The Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities : Legal Framework and a Call to Action. Marrakesh, Morocco.
[2] Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research Design (Fourth Edi). London, UK: SAGE Publications, Inc.
[3] Hamidullah, M. (1975). The First Written Constitution in the World: An Important Document of the Time of the Holy Prophet. Lahore, Pakistan: Ashraf Printing Press.
[4] Muslim Peace Forum. (2016). Executive Summary of the Marrakesh Declaration on the Rights of Religious Minorities in Predominantly Muslim Majority Communities, (January).
[5] Pattison, M. (2016, May 11). Cardinal: Don't let Marrakesh Declaration "die a death of silence." National Catholic Reporter. Washington. Retrieved from https://www.ncronline.org/news/peace-justice/cardinal-dont-let-marrakesh-declaration-die-death-silence
[6] Rahman, F. N., Sami, K., & Memon, F. (2016). Medina Charter and Just Peacemaking Theory, (June).
[7] The Forum for Peace. (2016). Marrakesh Declaration. Retrieved from http://www.marrakeshdeclaration.org/
[8] Yin, R. K. (2009). Case Study h Researc Design and Methods Fourth Edition. Applied Social Research Methods Seiries (Vol. 5). Retrieved from http://cemusstudent.se/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/YIN_K_ROBERT-1.pdf%5CnISBN 978-1-412296099-1
[9] Yusuf, H. (2016). Speech at Marrakesh Declaration Forum 2016. Marrakesh, Morocco.