


THE LEGACY OF INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION: APPROACHES TO RESOLVING CONTEMPORARY CIVILIZATIONAL CONFLICTS

*¹ Dr. Ahlem Ben Brahim

¹. Beijing International Studies University

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history:</p> <p>Received: 1 Oct 2025 Revised: 20 Oct 2025 Accepted: 29 Oct 2025 Published: 1 Nov 2025</p> <p>Keywords:</p> <p><i>Islamic heritage, interfaith dialogue, coexistence, digital initiatives, global ethics</i></p> <p></p>	<p>This study examines the legacy of interfaith dialogue in Islamic civilization, highlighting its potential to address contemporary civilizational conflicts and promote cultural and religious coexistence. The research begins with the concept of religious dialogue as an ethical imperative, grounded in the Qur'anic texts and the Prophetic model, and explores the philosophical and theological traditions of dialogue through the works of <i>al-Ghazali</i>, <i>Ibn Rushd</i>, and Maimonides, as well as the ethical role of classical Islamic literature on dialogue.</p> <p>The study also reviews historical models of coexistence, such as Andalusia, the Abbasid House of Wisdom, the <i>dhimma</i> system, and Islamic-Buddhist interactions from Central Asia to the global context. It analyzes the decline of the Islamic dialogical heritage and proposes contemporary approaches for its revival through <i>maqasid al-sharia</i>, pluralistic <i>ijtihad</i>, institutional initiatives, and the development of traditional and digital dialogical platforms.</p> <p>The study concludes that interfaith dialogue constitutes a renewed civilizational necessity, requiring the mobilization of Islamic historical heritage in ways compatible with modern challenges, to foster justice, mutual respect, and sustainable peaceful harmonious relations</p>

Corresponding Author:

* Dr. Ahlem Ben Brahim,
Beijing International Studies University
Email: 13671317309@qq.com



Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International

DOI 10.5281/zenodo.17481278

INTRODUCTION

Interreligious dialogue has been one of the fundamental pillars of Islamic civilization. It was not merely a means of communication between followers of different religions, but an intellectual and ethical approach that contributed to shaping human relationships and creating spaces for harmonious engagement and creativity. This dialogue fostered an atmosphere of openness and cultural and intellectual exchange, contributed to the flourishing of sciences and arts, while left a deep imprint on patterns of thought and collective life across the ages.

In the modern context, the term civilizational conflict refers to the tensions and confrontations that emerge when cultural, religious, and moral systems perceive one another as incompatible or competing sources of legitimacy and identity. As theorized by Samuel Huntington, such conflicts often stem from differing worldviews and value systems that challenge global intercommunal understanding (Huntington, 1996, p. 2). Yet, within the framework of global ethics and interreligious dialogue, these tensions can also be reinterpreted as opportunities for renewed understanding and moral cooperation rather than inevitable clashes.

Amid increasing contemporary civilizational tensions and the decline of dialogical values in many contexts, there is an urgent need to revive this heritage and reinterpret it considering present-day challenges. This raises the following research question:

"To what extent can the dialogical legacy of Islamic civilization provide effective ethical and intellectual frameworks for promoting mutual engagement among religions and cultures in the face of contemporary civilizational challenges?"

This study argues that dialogue in Islamic civilization was not a secondary option but an integral part of its intellectual and practical structure. Reviving and activating this approach today is essential for building bridges of understanding and fostering a culture of peace and reciprocal respect.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical methodology designed to investigate the historical, philosophical, and ethical dimensions of interreligious dialogue within Islamic civilization and to assess their applicability to contemporary civilizational challenges. Rather than relying on fieldwork or quantitative data, the research employs textual analysis, comparative hermeneutics, and historical contextualization to uncover the epistemic and moral foundations of Islamic dialogical thought. Together, these approaches enable a critical synthesis of classical, historical, and contemporary insights, facilitating the reconstruction of an Islamic dialogical paradigm that is ethically grounded and relevant to modern civilizational challenges.

1. Analytical and Textual Method

The first methodological axis is the critical analysis of primary Islamic sources, including the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the writings of classical scholars such as *al-Ghazālī*, *Ibn Rushd*, and Maimonides. These sources are examined through close reading to identify the epistemological and ethical principles that govern interreligious dialogue. Qur'anic verses emphasizing *ḥikmah* (wisdom), *maw'izah ḥasanah* (gentle exhortation), and *mujādalah bi-allatī hiya aḥsan* (respectful debate) are interpreted within their historical and linguistic contexts to establish Islam's foundational dialogical ethics. Prophetic practices, including the Constitution of Medina and the dialogue with the Christians of *Najrān*, are analyzed as practical models of religious pluralism and pluralistic governance.

2. Comparative Hermeneutic Approach

The study applies a comparative hermeneutic framework to evaluate the dialogical thought of major Islamic and non-Islamic philosophers. The works of *al-Ghazālī*, *Ibn Rushd*, and Maimonides are compared to reveal overlapping concepts of reason, revelation, and human dignity that fostered mutual intellectual respect across religious boundaries. This hermeneutic comparison also extends to Islamic–Buddhist exchanges in Central and East Asia, using the writings of *al-Bīrūnī* and Chinese Muslim thinkers such as Liu Zhi to highlight Islam's capacity for intercultural synthesis. The comparative dimension situates Islamic dialogue within a global philosophical context, emphasizing its universal relevance to pluralism, ethical reasoning, and intercultural engagement.

3. Historical Contextualization

Historical analysis constitutes the third methodological axis. The study examines institutional and social manifestations of dialogue in various civilizational settings—such as al-Andalus, the Abbasid *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, the *dhimma* system, and Mughal India—to assess how theoretical ideals of pluralism were translated into

governance, cultural exchange, and social practice. This contextual approach avoids idealization by recognizing both achievements and tensions within these models, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of Islamic pluralism as a dynamic and evolving historical process.

4. Contemporary Analytical Framework

To connect classical insights with current realities, the study incorporates ethical and civilizational analysis grounded in the objectives of Islamic law (*maqāṣid al-sharī'a*) and the principles of *ijtihād*. This framework guides the reinterpretation of traditional concepts to address modern challenges such as religious nationalism, digital transformation, and global ethical crises. Institutional initiatives like the Marrakesh Declaration (2016), the Document on Human Fraternity (2019), and the Makkah Document (2019) are examined as case studies demonstrating the contemporary revival of Islamic dialogical ethics within international, legal, and digital contexts.

5. Scope and Limitations

The study's scope is theoretical and interpretive, focusing on intellectual and ethical analysis rather than empirical data collection. Its temporal scope spans from the classical Islamic period to the present, and its geographical focus includes the Middle East, al-Andalus, Central Asia, China, and selected contemporary Muslim-majority countries. While this breadth allows for a comprehensive civilizational analysis, it also limits the depth of case-specific sociological exploration. Future research could complement this study through empirical evaluation of interfaith educational programs or digital dialogue initiatives.

6. Synthesis and Theoretical Integration

Finally, the methodology integrates findings from textual, philosophical, historical, and contemporary analyses into a unified ethical-theoretical synthesis. This critical synthesis reconstructs an "Islamic dialogical paradigm" that combines moral, intellectual, and practical considerations. By employing multidisciplinary tools from theology, philosophy, history, and ethics, the study contributes to a renewed understanding of Islamic dialogue as a living civilizational process and a viable framework for addressing contemporary conflicts, fostering intercultural understanding, and promoting ethical pluralism.

Building on this methodological foundation, the following section presents a critical synthesis of the findings. It connects classical insights, historical models, and contemporary initiatives to demonstrate patterns, continuities, and challenges in Islamic dialogical practices, highlighting their ongoing relevance and applicability in modern contexts.

Critical Synthesis of Findings

Drawing on the qualitative and analytical methodology outlined above—textual analysis, comparative hermeneutics, and historical contextualization—this study reveals that Islamic dialogue is neither monolithic nor static, but a dynamic, context-sensitive, and ethically grounded framework. Across different periods and regions, dialogical engagement was shaped by theological principles, social structures, and political realities, demonstrating both opportunities for pluralism and inherent tensions in managing difference.

Comparative hermeneutics highlights recurring patterns of reasoned ethical engagement, epistemic humility, and respect for diversity, while historical contextualization illustrates the contingent and negotiated nature of coexistence in practice. Classical paradigms, such as *convivencia* in Al-Andalus, Mughal policies under Akbar, and Islamic–Buddhist engagement in China, show negotiated pluralism, protection of minorities, and intellectual exchange. Contemporary case studies—including institutional declarations (Marrakesh Declaration, Document on Human Fraternity, Makkah Document), digital interfaith platforms, and grassroots initiatives—demonstrate the adaptability and ongoing relevance of these traditions to modern civilizational challenges.

By synthesizing these dimensions, the study reconstructs an Islamic dialogical paradigm that integrates moral, intellectual, and practical considerations. This paradigm provides a critical, normative, and actionable framework for addressing contemporary interfaith and intercultural conflicts, fostering ethical pluralism, and sustaining constructive dialogue. The methodological integration ensures that the findings are analytically rigorous, historically grounded, and directly connected to the classical and contemporary evidence examined throughout the study.

THE CONCEPT OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Dialogue, in terminology, is a general term that encompasses various forms such as debate and argumentation. It refers to the exchange of words and conversation between two parties without necessarily implying hostility.

When the term dialogue is associated with religions, it takes on the meaning of discussions, conversations, debates, and exchanges between followers of different faiths. This indicates that its meaning is broad, diverse in forms and types, depending on the nature of the discourse and discussion.

In any case, it becomes clear that dialogue is an equitable communicative process between two or more parties, aiming to reach the truth while remaining free from hostility and fanaticism. This principle resonates with the intellectual heritage of Islamic philosophy, which historically functioned as a rational and dialogical discipline. Early Muslim schoolers not only defended the core of Islamic doctrine but also engaged with philosophy, science, and even other religious traditions. For instance, in Abbasid Baghdad, Muslim *mutakallimūn* held public debates with Christian theologians on the nature of God and prophecy, while in al-Andalus, dialogue with Jewish and philosophical thinkers enriched intellectual life. Through such encounters, Islamic philosophy embodied the spirit of constructive dialogue—seeking truth, clarifying concepts, and negotiating diversity within and beyond the Islamic tradition. Thus, the Islamic philosophy legacy demonstrates that dialogue is deeply rooted in Islamic intellectual practice, bridging theological defense with the pursuit of mutual understanding.

QUR'ANIC AND PROPHETIC FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

The Islamic tradition of religious dialogue is not a marginal or incidental feature but a foundational element deeply embedded in the primary sources of Islam: the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. Dialogue in this tradition emerges as both a spiritual obligation and a civilizational necessity, aimed at fostering mutual understanding, social cohesion, and ethical engagement across religious boundaries.

The Qur'an: A Text of Dialogue and Ethical Engagement

The Qur'an explicitly frames engagement with others as a process governed by wisdom (*hikmah*), gentle exhortation (*maw'izah ḥasanah*), and respectful debate (*mujādalah bi-allatī hiya aḥsan*). This triad forms the ethical and methodological foundation for interreligious communication in Islam. The imperative in *Surah An-Nahl* (16:125),

“Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and beautiful exhortation, and argue with them in the best manner,” does not simply instruct Muslims to preach but emphasizes the manner of engagement—rooted in intellectual rigor, empathy, and decorum. The Qur'anic approach insists that dialogue is not a polemical contest or a tool for coercion, but a sincere effort to reach hearts and minds through respectful and dignified exchange.

Furthermore, the Qur'an openly acknowledges religious diversity as an intentional aspect of the divine order: “To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one community, but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you.” (*Qur'an, Surah Al-Ma'idah*, 5:48)

This verse articulates a theological vision that sees plurality not as a problem to be erased but as part of God's plan, an arena for ethical and spiritual testing. The emphasis on *sharī'ah* (law) and *minhāj* (method) indicates that diversity entails distinct yet valid paths towards the Divine, inviting mutual recognition and coexistence without enforced homogenization (*Al-Qurṭubī*, 2006).

Moreover, the Qur'an addresses the People of the Book (*Ahl al-Kitāb*) with particular attention, acknowledging shared scriptural roots and ethical values while upholding differences. The respect extended toward them in the text is unprecedented in the religious literature of the time and sets a normative standard for pluralistic engagement.

The Prophetic Model: Dialogue in Action

The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) concretizes Qur'anic ideals into practical models of interreligious engagement. One of the most significant examples is the Constitution of Medina, a pioneering political charter which established a pluralistic polity including Muslims, Jews, and pagan tribes, guaranteeing religious autonomy, mutual defense, and social cooperation under shared ethical principles.

Moreover, the Prophet's encounter with the Christian delegation from Najran exemplifies his respect for religious difference and freedom. He invited them to pray in the mosque of Medina according to their own rites, allowing for public religious expression without coercion or assimilation. This event symbolically and practically underscored the ethical commitment to harmonious engagement and religious liberty.

Furthermore, throughout his prophethood, Muhammad engaged in numerous dialogues with rabbis, monks, and tribal leaders that were characterized by patience, mutual respect, and an openness to intellectual exchange. These interactions were not aimed at domination but at inviting shared reflection on universal moral and spiritual values.

Dialogue as Ethical Obligation

In Islamic thought, dialogue transcends the pragmatic realm of persuasion or debate; it is a profound ethical commitment grounded in the principle of *karāmah*—the inherent dignity bestowed upon every human being. This principle elevates the interlocutor from being merely an object of conversion to a moral equal whose beliefs and values command respect.

The Qur'an explicitly states:

“O humanity! We created you from a single pair... and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.” (Qur'an 49:13)

This verse provides a theological grounding for pluralism, framing human diversity as divinely ordained and purposeful. The mandate “so that you may know one another” (*li-ta 'ārafū*) implies an active, dialogical process of mutual recognition and learning rather than mere tolerance or passive coexistence.

Thus, dialogue within Islam is a manifestation of recognizing the other's moral and spiritual legitimacy. It affirms a shared humanity rooted in divine will and serves as a critical mechanism for resolving conflicts and nurturing peaceful pluralism.

PHILOSOPHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL TRADITIONS OF DIALOGUE

The philosophical and theological traditions within Islamic civilization reveal a sophisticated and multifaceted discourse on religious dialogue that transcends mere theological disputation. These traditions reflect an enduring commitment to intellectual openness, ethical rigor, and a nuanced understanding of pluralism that incorporates both metaphysical and practical dimensions of interreligious engagement. The works of Al-Ghazali (d. 504 AH / 1111 CE), Ibn Rushd (Averroes, 1126–1198 CE), and *Ibn Maimon* (Maimonides, 1138–1204 CE) illustrate how Islamic thinkers have historically engaged with religious “others” through reasoned critique, respectful engagement, and shared ethical concerns, thereby laying a foundation for a dialogical ethos rooted in mutual recognition and coexistence.

Al-Ghazali's Openness Toward Christian Theology in al-Radd al-Jamīl

Al-Ghazālī, renowned for his defense of Islamic creed, displays in *Al-Radd al-Jamīl* (The Beautiful Response on the Divinity of Jesus in the Explicit Gospel) a remarkable openness toward Christian theological perspectives. Rather than being a purely polemical work confined to rebuttals, this treatise embodies a dialogical stance that seeks to understand the Christian doctrinal framework on its own terms. This approach is significant because it acknowledges the intellectual coherence and spiritual sincerity of the Christian faith, while also highlighting common concerns such as divine justice, the nature of God, and moral conduct.

Such intellectual generosity creates a framework in which theological differences are regarded as opportunities for mutual enrichment rather than as sources of hostility. By carefully identifying points of convergence and divergence, *Al-Ghazālī* calls for a constructive dialogue that respects the dignity of the other faith community while reaffirming Islamic positions. His method thus reflects a balanced epistemology that values rational critique without denying the legitimacy of alternative theological visions.

This openness is evident in the way he engages with Christian texts: he does not simply reject or denounce them, but rather quotes passages from the Gospels—such as references to Christ's hunger, his ignorance of the hour, or terms like “Father” and “Son”—and then interprets them in accordance with his rational and theological framework, as noted in the first chapter of *Al-Radd al-Jamīl*. This indicates that he regarded the texts of his opponents as worthy of explanation and discussion, not merely as material for refutation. Accordingly, he employed rational and allegorical interpretation; for instance, he explained the phrase “Word of God” from within the Islamic perspective as referring to the divine will manifested in the command “Be!”, as elaborated in the second chapter of *Al-Radd al-Jamīl* in his discussion of “Word” and “union.” In doing so, he was not merely negating but reconstructing the Christian meaning within a Qur'anic conceptual framework.

Furthermore, *Al-Ghazālī* did not treat Christian philosophical and theological propositions as mere sophistry or empty speculation; rather, he studied them in depth and refuted them using the tools of logic and rational analysis. An example of this is his critique of the relation between soul and body and his discussion of the Christian interpretation of “union,” which he analyzed extensively in the third section of *Al-Radd al-Jamīl*, where he presented the views of philosophers and then responded with rational arguments. This reflects an implicit recognition of the intellectual depth of Christian thought and its connection with philosophy, prompting him to confront it on a shared rational ground.

Despite his clear defensive aim of safeguarding Islamic doctrine, *Al-Ghazālī*’s tone in this work was neither aggressive nor populist. Instead, it resembled a refined theological disputation that balanced rational critique with acknowledgment of the opponent as a legitimate theological interlocutor with his own arguments. At times, *Al-Ghazālī* even hints at the presence of authentic spiritual and ethical dimensions within Christianity, suggesting that the problem does not lie in the religion itself but in the philosophical and traditional interpretations that obscured the true meaning of the texts.

Accordingly, *Al-Radd al-Jamīl* represents an early model of what may be termed “critical openness.” It combines seriousness in engaging with Christian texts, a commitment to rational critique, and an effort at reinterpretation rather than outright rejection. This renders the work, as attested by its various chapters, a key reference in the study of Islamic–Christian dialogue in the fifth/eleventh century, and a model of disputational dialogue that both defends Islamic doctrine and acknowledges the other as a legitimate theological partner.

The Rational Defense of Pluralism by Ibn Rushd in *Fasl al-Maqāl*

Ibn Rushd (d. 593 AH/1198 CE) was a prominent figure who advocated the harmony of reason with faith, offering a coherent philosophical vision of religious pluralism. In his seminal work *Fasl al-Maqāl fī mā bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī‘ah* (The Decisive Treatise on the Connection Between Philosophy and *Sharia*), he presents a rigorous philosophical argument in favor of religious pluralism, grounded in epistemic humility and sociological realism. *Ibn Rushd* maintains that human intellectual capacities vary and that societies require diverse legal and doctrinal systems suited to their specific circumstances. Accordingly, religious pluralism is a deliberate design that accommodates human diversity rather than a failure of divine guidance.

In explaining epistemic discourse, *Ibn Rushd* distinguishes between hierarchical levels of discourse. The first level, the instructional or sermonic discourse, is intended for the general public and focuses on interpreting the apparent meanings of texts, including traditional Islamic sciences such as jurisprudence, exegesis, and *hadith*, to preserve the outward form of religion and maintain social stability. Although adherents of this discourse may consider philosophers heretical, *Ibn Rushd* views it as necessary for sustaining social hierarchy and communicating with the public.

The second level, dialectical discourse, targets specialists who reason through argumentation and includes Islamic theological schools such as the *Mu‘tazila* and the *Ash‘arites*. It is epistemically superior to the instructional level but lacks comprehensive interpretive depth and, if applied without proper safeguards, may lead to confusion or conflict among people.

The third level, demonstrative interpretive discourse, is reserved for the epistemically advanced, those capable of deep philosophical interpretation and integrating reason with revelation. This discourse should not be shared with the general public or dialecticians to prevent misunderstanding or heresy, situating *Ibn Rushd*’s philosophy within a rigorous, elite epistemic framework while remaining grounded in intellectual precision.

Ibn Rushd emphasizes the interpretive nature of the *Sharia* and the necessity of *ijtihād* to keep pace with changing circumstances. He argues that studying the works of earlier thinkers, regardless of their religious affiliation, is a religious duty if their intent aligns with the goals encouraged by *Sharia*. Prohibiting such study closes the door to attaining true knowledge of God. He highlights the role of the *mujtahid* and the interpreter in accessing truth more accurately than mere followers, thus acknowledging different levels of intellectual capacity.

Through this framework, *Ibn Rushd* provides a rational basis for peaceful coexistence and intellectual and religious pluralism, respecting multiple paths to the divine. He stresses that engagement with philosophical interpretation must be gradual and proportionate to the level of understanding and knowledge. He also notes the limitations of the elite demonstrative discourse, where accumulated intellectual knowledge does not automatically translate into direct social change, raising challenges for connecting philosophy to practical societal applications.

Maimonides (*Mūsā ibn Maimūn*) and His Dialogical Engagement with Muslim Philosophers

Moses Maimonides represents a prominent example of Jewish philosophers' engagement in philosophical dialogue with Islamic thought during the Middle Ages. He demonstrated a profound immersion in Islamic philosophical discourse, particularly in the works of al-Farabi, *al-Ghazali*, and *Ibn Rushd*, while maintaining strict adherence to Jewish traditions and law. This dual commitment highlights his dialogical openness and his ability to transcend sectarian boundaries.

Maimonides sought to reconcile reason and revelation, asserting that both pursue truth, and that any apparent conflict between them arises from misunderstanding or a superficial conception of reason, rather than an inherent clash between religion and philosophy.

His philosophical engagement is evident in his adoption of a shared philosophical language capable of building intellectual bridges between communities and fostering understanding and scholarly cooperation, reflecting his awareness of the importance of dialogue across religious and cultural boundaries.

As noted in *Abdelkader Malouk's Falsafat Mūsā ibn Maymūn wa Athar al-Fikr al-Islami fihā: Bahth fī al-Akhlāq wa al-Ta'wīl* (2024), Maimonides' ethical and hermeneutical philosophy is characterized by both flexibility and depth. He views reason as a divine gift enabling humans to critically understand religious texts, while revelation constitutes the divine source of truth.

Accordingly, he resorted to allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*) as a method that unites scientific knowledge with ethical practice, achieving a balance between philosophy and religion, and affirming that wisdom is realized when reason harmonizes with religious teachings without excess or deficiency.

Maimonides was convinced of the permissibility of learning from other cultures; he traveled extensively in pursuit of knowledge and openly praised al-Farabi, adhering to the principle that intellectual exchange across religions and cultures enriches understanding rather than posing a religious threat.

At the same time, he followed a careful strategy in presenting his philosophical ideas, employing a method of interpretive exposition designed to be accessible to the insightful, while shielding the general public or those unable to grasp its depth, recognizing the delicate relationship between the philosopher and the public and the necessity of caution to avoid misunderstandings or doubts.

Furthermore, Maimonides' ethical philosophy extends beyond the individual to address major human concerns such as freedom, evil, and happiness, linking them to human cognition and divine providence.

Malouk's study highlights the interplay between Maimonides' thought and Islamic philosophy, revealing the influence of Islamic philosophical reflection in shaping his ethical and hermeneutical vision, while preserving his Jewish identity and adherence to law.

In this way, Maimonides exemplifies a philosopher capable of integrating multiple traditions, establishing an interpretive methodology that harmonizes reason and religion, and serving as a bridge between cultures and between religious and philosophical thought in the medieval period.

The Ethical Role of Manners of Dialogue in Classical Islamic Thought

Classical Islamic tradition situates dialogue literature within a robust ethical framework that governs not only the content of discourse but also the manner in which it is expressed. Rooted in Qur'anic principles and prophetic conduct, this literary and rhetorical practice emphasizes virtues such as patience, humility, empathy, and sincerity as essential foundations for productive dialogue.

It explicitly proscribes hostility, mockery, or coercion, affirming the dignity and freedom of conscience of interlocutors as inalienable rights. By fostering an atmosphere of consideration and intellectual generosity, dialogue literature functions as a safeguard against conflict escalation and as a cornerstone for enduring cultural and religious engagement.

The ethical dimension of dialogue in Islam finds direct support in Qur'anic injunctions that encourage polite and constructive speech, respect for others, and avoidance of offensive language. Verses such as "And say to My servants that which is best..." (*al-Isra'* 17:53, *Qur'an*) highlight the significance of measured and considerate expression as a means of facilitating understanding and harmony.

Similarly, prophetic teachings exemplify moderation, gentleness, and respect in interpersonal communication, serving as practical models for implementing ethical dialogue in daily life (Ibn Kathir, 2000).

Scholarly analysis indicates that these principles are not merely theoretical but actively shape methods of communication. They underpin approaches that aim to engage individuals and communities constructively, bridging differences without confrontation. Literature underscores the importance of balancing assertiveness with politeness, argumentation with tact, and persuasion with ethical responsibility.

As a result, Islamic dialogue literature functions not only as a vehicle for transmitting knowledge or debating ideas but also as a mechanism for cultivating moral excellence, fostering trust, and strengthening cooperative relationships.

Furthermore, ethical dialogue in Islam extends to addressing complex human and social issues. Concepts such as freedom, fairness, and the management of conflict are integrated with moral norms to ensure that discourse contributes to the common good. By prioritizing respect, fairness, and empathy, dialogue becomes a tool for conflict prevention, social cohesion, and the promotion of collective welfare.

This ethical orientation reflects the holistic view of communication in Islam, in which the act of speaking and listening is inseparable from moral responsibility and spiritual integrity.

Overall, dialogue literature in classical Islam exemplifies a synthesis of ethical reflection, rhetorical skill, and spiritual mindfulness. By embedding virtue within the process of communication, it establishes a moral infrastructure that supports constructive engagement across cultural and religious boundaries.

This framework not only ensures that discourse remains respectful and effective but also cultivates an enduring ethos of cooperation, understanding, and mutual recognition among interlocutors.

HISTORICAL MODELS OF COEXISTENCE

The history of Islamic civilization offers profound examples of living together among diverse religious communities, providing both inspiration and critical lessons for contemporary intercultural dialogue. These historical models demonstrate a dynamic interplay between tolerance, negotiation, power structures, and intellectual exchange. However, their complexity cautions against simplistic idealization; rather, they invite a nuanced understanding of mutual accommodation as a contingent and evolving process shaped by theological principles, socio-political exigencies, and cultural creativity.

Al-Andalus as a Paradigm of Convivencia

The phenomenon of convivencia in Al-Andalus is often celebrated as a rare historical instance where Muslims, Christians, and Jews not only coexisted but engaged in profound cultural and intellectual symbiosis. This interaction facilitated the translation and transmission of classical knowledge, the flowering of philosophy, poetry, and sciences, and the emergence of hybrid cultural forms. The convivencia model embodies the possibility of shared civic identity without erasing religious distinctiveness.

Yet, convivencia was not a static ideal but fluctuated according to political circumstances, economic pressures, and social tensions. Episodes of repression and forced conversions punctuated this communal harmony, especially toward the late Reconquista period. The model's strength lies in demonstrating that coexistence requires ongoing negotiation and is vulnerable to external disruptions.

Philosophically, Al-Andalus challenges exclusivist narratives by showing that religious identities can be plural, overlapping, and dialogically productive. It provides a historically grounded example for modern pluralistic societies grappling with multiculturalism and interfaith relations.

The Abbasid House of Wisdom (*Bayt al-Hikma*): A Multicultural Hub

The *Bayt al-Hikma* exemplifies the Abbasid era's cosmopolitan embrace of knowledge as a shared human enterprise. Beyond its role as a translation center, it functioned as a vibrant intellectual nexus where scholars from diverse religious backgrounds actively participated in creating a syncretic culture of inquiry. This environment fostered critical engagement with classical Greek philosophy, Indian mathematics, Persian wisdom, and indigenous Islamic thought.

The institution's pluralism was undergirded by an ethos that regarded knowledge as a unifying force transcending doctrinal boundaries. Importantly, this intellectual cooperation was not without tension; debates over the role of philosophy in religion or the limits of rational inquiry illustrate ongoing negotiation within pluralism.

As a historical model, the *Bayt al-Hikma* invites contemporary scholars to reimagine knowledge production as an intercultural dialogue rooted in respect and curiosity, highlighting the potential of pluralistic intellectual communities.

The Dhimma System: Protection or Marginalization? Revaluation in Context

The *dhimma* system—defining the legal status of non-Muslim minorities under Islamic rule—occupies a contested place in discussions of interreligious engagement. While providing *ahl al-kitab* with protection, religious autonomy, and exemption from military service, the system also imposed legal and social restrictions, including the *jizya* tax (Q. 9:29) and limitations on public religious expression.

Modern historiography urges a contextualized understanding: in many periods and places, *dhimma* afforded a pragmatic framework for relative security and communal self-governance amid otherwise volatile religious landscapes. It enabled minorities to maintain religious practices and participate economically and socially.

However, the institutionalization of hierarchical difference embedded power asymmetries that limited equality and could legitimize discrimination. The *dhimma* thus embodies a coexistence marked simultaneously by protection and subordination, highlighting tensions inherent in managing religious diversity within a dominant confessional framework.

A striking parallel can be drawn with Mughal India under Emperor *Jalal al-Din Akbar* (r. 1542–1605), considered one of the greatest emperor, who abolished the *jizya* tax and sought to integrate Hindu elites—particularly the Rajputs—into the imperial structure. In his “House of Worship” (Ibadat Khana) at Fatehpur Sikri, Akbar welcomed dialogue among Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Jains, advancing what he termed *sulh-i kull* (“peace with all”). Although controversial among contemporary jurists—some accusing him of diluting Islam by favoring Hindus and experimenting with the syncretic “Divine Faith” (*din-i ilahi*)—Akbar’s policies illustrate an early attempt to move beyond the protection–subordination binary of the *dhimma*. His reforms reflected a model where pluralistic integration was not merely about tolerating minorities but about incorporating them into the civic and political fabric of empire.

This comparison highlights the broader historical question: how far can systems of “protected” difference evolve toward genuine pluralism? Reevaluating the *dhimma* system today, in light of such precedents, invites reflection on the ethical and legal frameworks necessary for authentic inclusion, equity, and mutual dignity.

Islamic–Buddhist Dialogue: From Central Asia to the Chinese and Global Contexts

Islamic history shows that interfaith dialogue was not limited to the Abrahamic religions, but also extended to Buddhism, which emerged as a major spiritual and philosophical force in Asia. In Central Asia, where Islam spread from the eighth century CE, Muslims encountered the Buddhist heritage in *Balkh*, *Samarkand*, and *Kashgar*. Scholars such as *Abu Rayhan al-Biruni* (973–1048 CE) played a prominent role in conveying precise knowledge about Buddhist and Indian doctrines in his work *Al-Tahqiq ma lil-Hind* (Verifying All That Pertains to India, Whether Rationally Acceptable or Rejected), reflecting a comparative and dialogical approach that went beyond preconceived judgments. The Mughal period in India also provided a space for interreligious dialogue, bringing Muslims together with Buddhists, Hindus, and Christians within the framework of Emperor Akbar’s religious project (*Din-i Ilahi*).

In China, the Islamic–Buddhist dialogue took on greater depth and continuity. From the arrival of Muslims via the maritime and overland Silk Roads, they engaged with a Chinese society in which Buddhism was one of the three major religious traditions alongside Confucianism and Taoism. This engagement was generally non-confrontational, characterized by coexistence and intellectual exchange. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, Chinese Muslim scholars such as Liu Zhi (ca. 1660–ca. 1730) endeavored to develop an Islamic discourse that accommodated both Buddhism and Confucianism within a reconciliatory framework, recognizing shared values such as compassion, asceticism, and the purification of the essence of the heart (mind). This intellectual interweaving helped establish Islam in China as a religion capable of integrating and living alongside with local intellectual and religious traditions.

In the contemporary context, Islamic–Buddhist dialogue represents a vital avenue for addressing global peace, cultural plurality, and environmental ethics. Islam and Buddhism converge on principles such as compassion, nonviolence, and the protection of living beings—principles that can facilitate the creation of joint platforms for Muslims and Buddhists in China and globally to confront current civilizational challenges. Over the past

two decades, China has hosted several conferences and meetings between Islamic and Buddhist leaders, including the Buddha–Islam Forum for Civilizational Dialogue in Beijing (2006) and the International Symposium on Religion and Peace in Hong Kong (2014).

In these gatherings, participants affirmed shared values such as social equity, compassion, and environmental stewardship. These initiatives reflect a living legacy of Islamic–Buddhist engagement and demonstrate the potential to revive this dimension in building civilizational bridges that transcend insularity and confrontational identities.

Taken together, these historical examples illustrate that interreligious engagement is a multidimensional and evolving process, mediated by theological principles, intellectual engagement, and socio-political realities. Studying them provides important insights for addressing contemporary civilizational conflicts through a balance of respect for difference, commitment to ethical integrity, dialogue, and shared human values.

From a philosophical perspective, Muslim engagement with Buddhism was not limited to social or ethical considerations but also addressed metaphysical and philosophical concepts. For example, when *al-Biruni* described Buddhist teachings on karma and the cycle of birth and death, he treated them as a rational system explaining cosmic rightness and compared them with the Islamic notion of the afterlife, where justice is ultimately realized. Similarly, the Buddhist concept of nirvana, understood as liberation from attachment and desire, resonated with certain Muslim scholars who saw parallels with Islamic asceticism and the purification of the essence of the heart (mind) from worldly passions to achieve closeness to God.

This convergence did not erase deep doctrinal differences but demonstrated the Islamic intellectual tradition's capacity to engage in open, reasoned, and ethical comparisons, creating a shared language with the other, making the Islamic–Buddhist dialogue far richer than mere social interaction.

Scholars have noted that these philosophical approaches between Islam and Buddhism highlight the ability of Islamic thought to open up and employ reasoned ethical comparisons to find common ground, thereby deepening and enriching interfaith dialogue.

These historical paradigms collectively underscore that coexistence is a multifaceted and contingent process, mediated by theological ideals, intellectual engagement, and socio-political realities. Their study provides valuable insights for addressing modern civilization conflicts by balancing respect for difference with commitments to fairness, dialogue, and shared human values.

THE DECLINE AND FRAGMENTATION OF THE ISLAMIC DIALOGICAL HERITAGE

The rich traditions of interfaith dialogue that once flourished within Islamic civilization have undergone significant erosion over the past centuries, particularly with the onset of the modern era. This decline cannot be attributed to a single factor; rather, it reflects a complex interplay between external pressures and internal dynamics that have gradually weakened the social and intellectual foundations supporting dialogue. A deep understanding of these challenges is essential for comprehending the marginalization of the classical Islamic ethos of coexistence and for exploring avenues to revive it.

Historical research highlights that colonial encounters profoundly reshaped the political, cultural, and intellectual landscapes of Muslim societies. European colonial powers introduced new administrative and ideological frameworks that disrupted traditional social orders and, at times, exacerbated divisions along religious and ethnic lines. Colonial narratives often portrayed Islamic civilization and its pluralistic heritage as stagnant or backward compared to the West, creating identity dilemmas for Muslim intellectuals and reformers who struggled to reconcile the preservation of tradition with the pressures of modernization.

In response, some thinkers adopted exclusive and essentialist narratives in an attempt to reclaim a unified Islamic identity as a form of resistance, frequently rejecting pluralism and interfaith engagement, while emphasizing theological and political boundaries. This defensive posture, at times marked by aggression, replaced the classical spirit of openness and engagement, narrowing the conceptual space for dialogue.

The emergence of modern nation-states during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries further transformed frameworks of identity and governance, often privileging ethnic nationalism or sectarian exclusivity. Religion was instrumentalized as a tool for social cohesion and political mobilization, favoring dominant groups while marginalizing minorities. Consequently, religious identity became rigidly defined by criteria of inclusion or exclusion, rendering the inclusive and dialogical models inherited from classical Islam increasingly untenable within contexts where political legitimacy depended on exclusivist definitions of nationhood or faith.

The integration of religious institutions with nationalist ideologies undermined the independence of religious scholarship and discourse, facilitating the rise of rigid orthodoxy that curtailed theological pluralism and critical engagement with alternative traditions.

Internal fragmentation within Muslim societies has posed a profound challenge to the moral and intellectual underpinnings of Islamic dialogical traditions. Sectarian divisions, particularly between *Sunnis* and *Shi'is*, were intensified by political rivalries, foreign interventions, and socio-economic inequalities.

The emergence of takfiri movements—declaring fellow Muslims as apostates—represents an extremist departure from classical Islamic principles rooted in mercy, tolerance, and communal solidarity. These movements often reject intra-Islamic pluralism and employ violence against those deemed deviant, thereby amplifying sectarian tensions and weakening prospects for dialogue among Muslims, while undermining the ethical and social foundations necessary for interfaith engagement.

The decline of the Islamic dialogical heritage is not merely a narrative of inevitable loss, but a multifaceted historical process shaped by external domination, political transformations, and internal conflicts. Recognizing these challenges provides a critical foundation for contemporary efforts to revive interfaith dialogue, drawing on Islam's rich intellectual and ethical traditions. It calls for renewed scholarly and practical engagement to confront exclusivism, politicization, and social fragmentation, aiming to restore dialogue as a vital instrument for fostering peace, mutual understanding, and coexistence in a fractured world.

RECLAIMING THE DIALOGICAL TRADITION IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

In an era marked by epistemic fragmentation, rising populism, and a global retreat from liberal universalism, the Islamic tradition's dialogical resources offer not only historical precedents but a living ethical grammar for interreligious engagement. The intellectual legacy of Islam—grounded in a civilizational openness to the Other—has the potential to contribute significantly to a renewed vision of coexistence that transcends mere tolerance toward principled pluralism.

The Islamic paradigm of dialogue does not advocate relativism nor theological dilution. Rather, it insists on ethical encounter rooted in divine equity and prophetic compassion. Far from being a defensive accommodation to modernity, reclaiming the dialogical tradition represents a reassertion of Islam's foundational commitment to justice (*'adl*), mercy (*rahma*), and humility (*tawāḍu'*)—values that animated the Prophet's interactions with Jews, Christians, and pagans alike.

Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a (the higher objectives of Islamic law) and the Foundations of Global Ethics

The *maqāṣid* framework is not merely a legal theory but an ethical architecture that provides Islam with a universalizing moral lens. Originally articulated by scholars such as *al-Juwaynī*, *al-Ghazālī*, and *al-Shāṭibī*, the *maqāṣid* tradition aimed to preserve the essential goods of human life: faith, life, intellect, lineage, and property. Later thinkers expanded this to include dignity (*karāma*), freedom (*ḥurriyya*), and social equity (*'adāla ijtīmā'iyya*)—a clear evolution toward moral inclusivity.

When applied to interfaith engagement, the *maqāṣid* provide an Islamic basis for solidarity across religious lines. For instance, the principle of preserving life necessitates proactive peacebuilding. The preservation of intellect validates the dignity of rational discourse. And the protection of dignity and freedom entails respecting the religious other not merely as a tolerated subject, but as a co-equal participant in the moral fabric of society. This approach challenges rigid exclusivism and allows Islamic ethics to converge with global discourses on human rights, climate ethics, and conflict resolution—while remaining rooted in divine command and Qur'anic cosmology.

Reviving *Ijtihād* (independent reasoning in Islamic law) for Pluralistic Jurisprudence

The eclipse of *ijtihād* in favor of *taqlīd* (imitation) led to the ossification of Islamic legal thought, particularly in its approach to religious diversity. The revival of *ijtihād* is not simply a call for juridical reform but a restoration of epistemic vitality. It enables scholars to reinterpret classical rulings in light of new social realities, demographic transformations, and ethical priorities.

Modern scholars such as *Abdullahi An-Na'im* and *Tariq Ramadan* argue for a contextualized *ijtihād*—one that aligns with the *maqāṣid* and recognizes religious pluralism as part of the divine will:

“Had Allah willed, He would have made you one community” (Qur’an 5:48).

Through this lens, pluralism is not a threat but a theological invitation to mutual recognition and cooperation. A dynamic jurisprudence informed by *ijtihad* can offer robust frameworks for minority rights, interfaith marriage, joint social initiatives, and shared public spaces—without abandoning core Islamic tenets. Such a jurisprudence can resist both sectarian rigidity and liberal dilution, charting a path toward an inclusive yet principled Islamic legal modernity.

Contemporary Declarations and Institutional Efforts

In recent decades, major initiatives by Islamic leaders and institutions have sought to uphold Islam’s dialogical values and adapt them to modern ideals of harmony and tolerance. These efforts have manifested in various institutional and constitutional initiatives that focus on protecting the rights of religious minorities and promoting tolerance and mutual dialogue.

Marrakesh Declaration (2016)

In January 2016, the Marrakesh Declaration was issued by Muslim scholars, thinkers, and political leaders in response to the challenges faced by religious minorities in Muslim-majority societies. The declaration drew inspiration from the Charter of Medina, a historical document affirming the rights of religious minorities within the Islamic community. The Marrakesh Declaration emphasized:

- Guaranteeing the civil rights of religious minorities.
- Rejecting violence and extremism in the name of religion.
- Promoting a culture of interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding.

According to a report by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP, 2016), the declaration represents a significant step toward enhancing the rights of religious minorities in Muslim-majority societies.

Document on Human Fraternity (Abu Dhabi, 2019)

In February 2019, Grand Imam Ahmed al-Tayeb and Pope Francis signed the Document on Human Fraternity in Abu Dhabi, a clear and influential call for mutual respect, dialogue, and cooperation for global peace and human dignity. The document highlighted:

- Rejection of violence and extremism in the name of religion.
- Promotion of peaceful interreligious engagement among religions.
- Respect for human rights and dignity.

A report from Georgetown University (2019) recognized the document as a major step in enhancing interfaith dialogue and promoting global peace.

Tunisia: National Efforts to Promote Religious Coexistence

These international initiatives complement national efforts, as in Tunisia, which has recognized freedom of belief and conscience as a fundamental right for all individuals since the 2014 Constitution. Article 6 states:

"The State is the guardian of religion, ensuring freedom of belief and conscience, and the practice of religious rites, guaranteeing the neutrality of mosques and places of worship from partisan employment."

The 2022 Constitution reaffirmed this commitment in Article 27:

"The State guarantees freedom of belief and freedom of conscience."

These constitutional provisions demonstrate Tunisia’s commitment to safeguarding freedom of belief, worship, and the rights of religious minorities.

In a practical step to reinforce these values, the *Talaqi* Organization for Freedom and Equality (NGO) oversaw the signing of a National Charter for Interfaith Coexistence on January 26, 2022, with representatives from various religious communities. This initiative reflects the ethical commitment of both civil society and the state to promote unity, celebrate diversity, and sustain ongoing interfaith dialogue. (Anadolu Agency, 2022).

Saudi Arabia: Interfaith Dialogue as a Strong Signal of Openness and Tolerance

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has witnessed a clear openness to interfaith dialogue, reflecting the seriousness of the social and religious reforms led by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. One of the most prominent indicators of this openness is:

- Makkah Document (2019):

On May 30, 2019, on the sidelines of the International Conference on Moderation and Balance organized by the Muslim World League in Saudi Arabia, the Makkah Document was launched. It represented a historic charter aimed at achieving peace and upholding the values of moderation and balance in Islamic countries. The document included:

- Combating terrorism, injustice, and oppression.
- Rejecting violations of human rights and dignity.
- Promoting values of religious pluralism among different religions, cultures, races, and Islamic sects worldwide.

It was signed by 1,200 Islamic figures from 139 countries, representing various sects and Islamic schools of thought, reflecting international recognition and the pluralism embraced by the initiative (Arab News, 2019).

- Forum on Shared Values Among Followers of Religions (2022):

Another key indicator of Saudi openness is the “Forum on Shared Values Among Followers of Religions,” hosted in Riyadh in May 2022. The forum brought together Islamic, Christian, Jewish, and Hindu religious leaders, demonstrating that the Kingdom is moving beyond the traditional dominance of hardliners over its official institutions (Al Arabiya, 2022).

The forum focused on several key themes, including:

- Human dignity and equality among all people, with an emphasis on understanding religious and cultural specificities.
- Bridging humanity and promoting cooperation among nations and peoples by dismantling the notion of an inevitable civilizational clash.
- Moderation and understanding others, as fundamental values of humanity and essential for shaping a balanced character and appreciation of diversity.

The closing statement emphasized that the forum aimed to reach a global consensus within a shared civilizational vision, strengthen cooperation and trust among spiritual leaders, leverage commonalities to promote tolerance and peace, and establish intellectual frameworks to counter extremist thought and behavior.

United Arab Emirates: Interfaith and Religious Coexistence

The UAE has positioned itself as a regional model of religious pluralism and harmony. Its policies combine historical openness with modern institutional support:

- **Religious Infrastructure:**
 - The **Dubai Hindu Temple (2022)** and the **Abu Dhabi Hindu Temple (2024)**—the first stone-built Hindu temple in the Middle East—stand as visible symbols of interfaith understanding.
 - The **Mahamevnawa Buddhist Monastery (2009)** in Dubai serves the growing Buddhist community, with plans to accommodate up to 10,000 worshippers.
 - Numerous mosques, churches, and temples operate across the country, supported by **Federal Law (2023)** and a **Personal Status Decree** ensuring religious rights.
- **Historical Leadership:**
 - Since the 1950s, UAE leaders have promoted interfaith respect, beginning with Sheikh Zayed’s visits to European religious centers (1951) and land donations for Abu Dhabi’s first church (1965).
- **International Initiatives:**
 - Hosting the **Global Conference on Human Fraternity (2019)**.
 - Rebuilding Christian churches in Iraq.
 - Establishing the **Abrahamic Family House** in Abu Dhabi, a complex uniting a mosque, a church, and a synagogue in one space.

Together, these initiatives highlight the UAE's sustained commitment to interfaith dialogue, multicultural inclusion, and peaceful cohabitation.

Building Traditional Ethical Platforms for Dialogue

The future of Islamic dialogue depends on establishing sustainable platforms that are ethically grounded and socially connected. Genuine dialogue is not merely a diplomatic performance, but a transformative process rooted in shared moral concerns such as justice, compassion, and humility. On this foundation, practical initiatives can be developed. Examples of such traditional platforms include:

- Community-based initiatives in schools, mosques, and neighborhoods that foster religious empathy and social harmony.
- Intellectual and cultural exchanges between Islamic seminaries and non-Islamic institutions to promote rational and ethical dialogue.
- Joint humanitarian projects that embody moral values—such as collaborative volunteer work in serving society—rather than remaining at the level of theoretical agreements.

This vision of Islamic dialogue is not confined to reactive responses to crises; it constitutes a proactive approach to reviving Islam's role as a civilizational partner in the global conversation on meaning, righteousness, and peace.

Islamic Dialogue in the Digital Space and the Future of Interfaith Coexistence

Amid contemporary technological and social transformations, the historical legacy of Islamic dialogue is no longer only a source of knowledge; it can be harnessed to develop practical tools that foster interreligious and intercultural coexistence. The digital sphere offers new horizons for discussion, where the ethical principles of classical dialogue—such as justice, compassion, and humility—can be translated into modern educational and interactive experiences aimed particularly at youth and younger generations. Examples of such digital initiatives include:

- **Multifaith Digital Learning Platforms:**

Designing online educational programs that allow users from diverse religious backgrounds to simulate ethical discussions across civilizations, drawing on the historical experiences of Islamic dialogue with other faiths. These platforms cultivate critical thinking, attentive listening, and collaborative skills, while also demonstrating the real-world outcomes of ethical choices in virtual scenarios.

- **Interactive Applications Rooted in Ethical Values:**

Developing smartphone and web applications that place users in real or simulated contexts of religious and cultural difference, where participants learn to resolve conflicts or build mutual understanding based on shared moral principles inspired by the Islamic tradition of dialogue.

- **Cooperative Educational Games (Gamification):**

Employing game-based learning to reenact historical challenges of dialogue between Muslims and followers of other religions. Players engage in joint tasks designed to strengthen empathy, openness to others, and appreciation of cultural and religious diversity in an engaging and practical way. Such games allow participants to directly experience the consequences of dialogical decisions while promoting experiential learning.

Despite the vast opportunities that digital space provides for enhancing interfaith engagement, these initiatives face practical challenges that call for clear solutions and oversight mechanisms to ensure their effectiveness and positive impact. Examples of these challenges and proposed responses include:

- **Risk of distortion or conflict:** Divergent religious and cultural backgrounds may lead to heated debates or misrepresentation of ethical principles.
- **Need for careful supervision:** Expert religious and cultural moderators are required to review content and intervene when hostile or discriminatory behavior arises.

- **Clear behavioral guidelines:** Establishing interaction rules with well-defined consequences for violations to guarantee a safe and inclusive dialogical environment.
- **Design that incentivizes collaboration:** Interfaces and tools should encourage constructive discussion and reward positive contributions, rather than emphasizing conflict or division.

Inclusive content: Ensuring diversity of sources and perspectives to avoid cultural or religious bias, supported by academically reviewed and documented educational materials

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study highlights the rich Islamic tradition of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, rooted in the Qur'an, the Prophet's practices, classical scholarship, and historical models of coexistence. Far from being merely historical, this legacy offers a normative framework for addressing contemporary political, moral, and religious challenges. Classical Islamic dialogue reflects "principled pluralism," emphasizing justice, compassion, wisdom, dignity, and humility, rather than mere tolerance.

Reviving this heritage requires concrete action at multiple levels—scholarly, institutional, and grassroots—while acknowledging the realities and limitations of contemporary Muslim societies. Efforts to strengthen dialogue should balance the ambition to engage others with the need to address internal divisions, sectarian conflicts, and societal challenges that affect the effectiveness of these engagements. Accordingly, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Strengthening Internal Dialogue First**
 - Encourage open dialogue between different Islamic sects to reduce divisions and sectarian conflicts that weaken social cohesion.
 - Support independent and moderate religious institutions that promote values of fairness and mercy, distancing discourse from extremism and *takfir* (excommunication).
 - Develop educational and awareness programs that foster a culture of tolerance and acceptance within Muslim society, creating an environment suitable for external dialogue.
2. **Adopting a Gradual and Realistic Approach**
 - Recognize that not every individual or institution has the capacity for tolerant and open-minded dialogue, necessitating capacity-building through training and workshops.
 - Implement supervisory and monitoring mechanisms, especially on digital platforms, to ensure a safe environment free from fanaticism or escalation.
 - Establish clear behavioral codes for dialogue, clarifying consequences for violations, thereby embedding a culture of responsibility and mutual respect.
3. **Developing Institutional and Popular Dialogue Platforms**
 - Create official platforms that bring together representatives of various sects and religious groups to exchange views and build shared understandings.
 - Support community initiatives in schools, mosques, and neighborhoods to instill values of empathy and respect through cultural and humanitarian activities.
 - Encourage intellectual and cultural exchanges between Islamic and non-Islamic institutions to enhance rational and ethical dialogue.
4. **Cautious Utilization of Digital Technology**
 - Develop educational platforms and interactive applications offering dialogical experiences based on authentic Islamic values, with oversight from cultural and religious experts.
 - Address potential misunderstandings or conflicts through effective mechanisms for digital mediation and rapid intervention.
5. **Reviving Authentic Islamic Concepts**
 - Reactivate *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to adapt Islamic jurisprudence to changing realities, including the acceptance of religious and cultural diversity as part of divine will.
 - Promote the concept of *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* (objectives of Islamic law), emphasizing major human values such as the preservation of life, intellect, and dignity as an ethical foundation for dialogue with others.
6. **Acknowledging Limitations and Differences**

- Accept disagreements and conflicts within Muslim societies without downplaying them, while working gradually to address them within a clear timeline.
- Recognize that building a culture of dialogue requires time, patience, and sustained effort, and that meaningful change occurs incrementally.

Modern dynamic platforms, global challenges like climate change, migration, and AI ethics offer new arenas for implementing these values. Contemporary frameworks such as the Document on Human Fraternity and the Marrakesh Declaration exemplify practical applications of Islamic ethical dialogue in global contexts.

Ultimately, restoring the Islamic dialogical legacy is a civilizational necessity. It positions Islam as an active participant in global ethical discourse, fostering shared humanity, ethical integrity, and peace while integrating internal reform and external engagement in a coherent and realistic manner.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Acknowledgement

The author sincerely thanks Beijing International Studies University for providing the academic environment and institutional support essential to this research. Special appreciation is extended to colleagues and mentors in Islamic studies, philosophy, and intercultural communication for their insightful feedback, which enriched the depth and clarity of this work.

Gratitude is also expressed to the China-Arab Research Center for Culture and Tourism Cooperation for supporting cross-cultural dialogue and providing valuable resources. The author further acknowledges the editorial and peer-review teams of the hosting journal for their constructive comments, which strengthened the study's methodological and analytical rigor.

Finally, heartfelt thanks go to all scholars—past and present—whose dedication to interreligious dialogue continues to inspire efforts toward justice, coexistence, and shared human dignity.

REFERENCES

- Abdulkader, M. (2024). *The philosophy of Moses Maimonides and the influence of Islamic thought: A study in ethics and hermeneutics*. Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies.
- Al-Arab. (2022, May 14). *Dialogue between religions: A strong Saudi signal of openness and tolerance*. <https://alarab.co.uk/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86-%D8%A5%D8%B4%D8%A7%D8%B1%D8%A9-%D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%82%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%A5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%81%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%AD-%D9%88%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%85%D8%AD>
- Al-Biruni, A. R. M. B. A. K. (1983). *Tahqiq ma li al-Hind min maqoola maqboola fil- 'aql aw marzoola* (2nd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: 'Ālam al-Kutub.
- Al-Ghazali, A. H. (1990). *Al-Radd al-Jamil li-Ilahiyyat 'Isā bi-Šarīḥ al-Injīl [The beautiful response on the divinity of Jesus in the explicit Gospel]* (M. A. al-Sharqawi, Ed.; 3rd ed.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Jīl.
- Al-Nasiri, M. (2020). *The guidance of the Prophet Muhammad in coexistence with others: The charter of the Christians of Najrān as a model*. Al-Rābiṭa al-Muḥammadiya Portal. <https://www.arrabita.ma/blog/%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%86%D8%A8%D9%8A-%D8%B5%D9%84%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%84%D9%87-%D8%B9%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%87-%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85%D8%8C-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA/>

- Al-Qāsimi, M. Q. D. (2014). Dialogue between religions in the light of the Qur'an. *Al-Dā'ir: Monthly Journal, Dār al- 'Ulūm Deoband*, 38(9–10).
- Al-Qurtubī, M. ibn A. al-Anṣārī. (2006). *Al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (A. al-Bardunī & I. Atfish, Eds.; Vol. 6). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Kutub al- 'Ilmiyya.
- Al-Sahli, M. (2022, January 26). *Tunisia signs national charter for interfaith coexistence*. Anadolu Agency. <https://www.aa.com.tr/ar/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%88%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%86%D8%B3-%D8%AA%D9%88%D9%82%D9%8A%D8%B9-%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%AB%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B4-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%B1%D9%83-%D8%A8%D9%8A%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AF%D9%8A%D8%A7%D9%86/2486212>
- Al-Shahoud, A. bin N. (2019). *Encyclopedia of intellectual and cultural invasion and its effects on Muslims* (Vol. 6). Al-Jāmi' al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya Library.
- Antar, R. (2024, February 14). *The UAE hosts a Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi: A pioneering model of coexistence and love*. Al-Ain News. <https://al-ain.com/article/uae-hindu-temple-abudhabi-peaceful>
- Bou Aisha, I. (2022). The subject of man in the new theology and the dialogue of sects and religion. *Al-Majalla al-Jadidah*, 8(1), 541–560.
- Huntington, S. P. (1996). *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- Ibn 'Āshūr, M. T. b. M. b. M. T. b. 'Āshūr. (2004). *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah al-Islāmiyyah* (M. al-Habib Ibn al-Khouja, Ed.; Vol. 3). Doha, Qatar: Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs.
- Ibn Rushd, M. (1968). *Faṣl al-Maqāl fī mā bayna al-Ḥikmah wa al-Sharī'ah min al-Ittiṣāl* (A. N. Nader, Intro. & Comment.). Beirut, Lebanon: Dār al-Mashriq.
- Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). (2019). *Charter of Makkah: An analytical reading*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Author. <https://charterofmakkah.org/resources/uploads/files/publications/reading%20COM%20ar.pdf>
- Kahteran, N. (2016). Recognising a model of postmodern pluralism through looking at Islam from the standpoint of Far Eastern traditions: A dialogue between Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism. *Synthesis Philosophica*, 62(2), 433–450. <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp31216>
- Khairi Kazem, F., & Kamel Jabr, Z. (2025). The etiquette of dialogue according to Imam al-Ṣādiq and its role in community education. *Lark Journal*, College of Imam al-Kādhim for Islamic Sciences (Wāsit Departments).
- Lewis, C. (2019, January 9). *The UAE's only Buddhist temple serves a growing population of Buddhists*. *Buddhistdoor Global*. <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/the-uaes-only-buddhist-temple-serves-a-growing-population-of-buddhists/>
- Maimonides, M. (2012). *Dalālat al-Ḥā'irīn*. Beirut, Lebanon: Al-Jamal Publications.
- Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. (2016, January 27). *Marrakech Declaration on the rights of religious minorities in the Muslim world*. Government of Morocco. <https://www.habous.gov.ma/%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%B4/7611-%D8%A5%D8%B9%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%85%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%83%D8%B4-%D9%84%D8%AD%D9%82%D9%88%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D8%B3%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85%D9%8A.html>
- Mukhoty, I. (2020). *Akbar: The great Mughal*. Rupa Publications India.
- Qarsaf, A. K. (2020, June 27). *Religious dialogue in al-Andalus between Qur'anic foundations and historical practice*. Department of Religious Studies, Mominoun Website. <https://www.mominoun.com/articles/512-الحوار-الديني-في-الأندلس-بين-التأسيس-القرآني-والفعل-التاريخي>
- Ramadan, T. (2005). *Western Muslims and the future of Islam*. Oxford University Press.

- Sakrani, R. (2018). The Dhimmi as the other of multiple *convivencias* in al-Andalus: Protection, tolerance and domination in Islamic law. *Rechtsgeschichte – Legal History / Journal of the Max Planck Institute for European Legal History*, 26, 95–138. <https://doi.org/10.12946/rg26/095-138>
- Selim, M. (2017, December 21). *The premises and promises of the Buddhist-Muslim dialogue*. Arab World Books. <https://www.arabworldbooks.com/en/e-zine/the-premises-and-promises-of-the-buddhist-muslim-dialogue>
- The Higher Committee of Human Fraternity. (2019, February 4). *Document on human fraternity for world peace and living together*. Abu Dhabi, UAE. <https://www.forhumanfraternity.org/ar/%D9%88%D8%AB%D9%8A%D9%82%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%86%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A%D8%A9/>
- Viladesau, R. (2011). [Review of the book *The sage learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic thought in Confucian terms*, by S. Murata, W. C. Chittick, & T. Weiming]. *Comparative Islamic Studies*, 5(2), 339–342. <https://doi.org/10.1558/cis.v5i2.339>
- 瓦希德 (Wahid), & 池田 大作 (Ikeda, D.). (2012). *和平的哲学·宽容的智慧 [The philosophy of peace and the wisdom of tolerance]*. 北京 (Beijing): 正因文化出版社 (Zhengyin Culture Press).