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Prophetic (PBUH) Treaties: A Framework for Inclusive Governance and Interfaith Harmony in Muslim–Non-Muslim State Relations

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Abstract

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This study examines the diplomatic and governance frameworks established by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through treaties with non-Muslim communities, analyzing their relevance to contemporary Muslim-state relations. By critically engaging with historical accords such as the *Constitution of Medina*, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, and agreements with Jewish and Christian tribes, the research highlights enduring principles of peacebuilding, interfaith coexistence, and minority rights. Central to these treaties was the prioritization of dialogue over conflict, exemplified by the 10-year Hudaibiyyah truce, which halted hostilities with Meccan polytheists despite entrenched animosity. The *Constitution of Medina* institutionalized pluralism, recognizing Jews and Muslims as a unified political entity (*ummah wahidah*) while guaranteeing religious autonomy—a model that prefigured modern secularism yet emphasized ethical accountability. The study also explores mechanisms for protecting minorities, such as the *jizya* system, which linked tax obligations to state protection while permitting non-Muslims to voluntarily

contribute to national defense without financial penalty. Furthermore, the work addresses contemporary challenges, including sectarian extremism and discriminatory policies, arguing for realigning governance with Prophetic ethics. Key recommendations include legislative reforms to safeguard minority worship and education, interfaith dialogue platforms, and multilateral alliances rooted in mutual respect. By contrasting the failure of modern treaties with the success of Prophetic diplomacy, the study underscores Islam's capacity to harmonize faith with inclusive statecraft. Ultimately, this research posits that reviving the Prophet's (PBUH) ethos—grounded in justice, empathy, and collective welfare—offers a transformative roadmap for Muslim-majority nations to counter polarization, foster global harmony, and reclaim their role as moral leaders in a fractured world.

Introduction:

The history of human civilization undeniably places Islam at its core. From the era of Adam (AS) to the present, humanity has traversed countless stages of cultural and civilizational evolution. The progress achieved through Islam's contributions during this journey remains unparalleled, unmatched by any other religious, intellectual, or reformist endeavor. As a faith aligned with human nature, Islam posits that humanity's survival depends on adhering to its universal principles, while deviation from them equates to self-destruction. History bears witness that nations and societies—whether openly embracing Islam or tacitly following its universal laws—have flourished and achieved prosperity.

The exemplary model of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) serves as the definitive standard for interpreting and implementing Islam's universal principles. Every aspect of his noble life offers boundless guidance for humanity. Among the many facets of his teachings, the treaties he established with non-Muslim communities continue to illuminate the path for Muslims until the Day of Judgment. In the modern era, rather than resolving political, economic, cultural, and social challenges through conflict or hostility, Muslim states can adopt dignified diplomacy and mutual agreements with non-Muslim nations. In this context, the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings remain a beacon of light for the Muslim Ummah, as Allah Himself declared his model to be the ultimate exemplar¹. Every dimension of his life is a wellspring of guidance.

The challenges confronting the Muslim world today—whether humanitarian crises, global or national peacebuilding efforts, economic

inequality, social justice, educational reform, or political wisdom—are not insurmountable. The Prophet (PBUH) left an indelible legacy of compassion, sincerity, and justice on all fronts. His life offers solutions to contemporary struggles, provided Muslims earnestly seek guidance from his Sunnah.

In these turbulent times, Muslim scholars bear a profound responsibility to illuminate the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) and disseminate his wisdom globally. This is essential to counter the deceptive narratives propagated by the so-called "developed" West, which often exploits discourses on peace, human rights, and individual freedoms to manipulate the world.

This study focuses on deriving guidance from the Prophet's (PBUH) treaties to shape the relations between Islamic and non-Muslim states. It is evident that Muslim-majority nations face systemic discrimination on the global stage. Over recent decades, narrow-minded religious factions in certain countries have exploited proselytization efforts to fuel divisive activities, misguiding many youths. The consequences are stark: the Muslim world is fractured and bleeding. Adversaries exploit emotional rhetoric to weaken Muslim unity, perpetuating intellectual chaos at individual, national, and international levels.

Islam, however, calls for peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and goodwill among all peoples, regardless of faith, race, or culture. It empowers Muslims to lead humanity with integrity. In this regard, the Prophet's (PBUH) life and treaties stand as the ultimate source of guidance. By reviving his teachings, the Muslim world can reclaim its role as a moral and intellectual leader, fostering global harmony rooted in justice and compassion.

The Spirit of Benevolence in Prophetic Treaties: Lessons for Contemporary Diplomacy

The treaties established by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with non-Muslim communities will forever serve as a guiding light for Muslims. In the modern era, these Prophetic accords offer invaluable insights through the following principles:

Goodwill and Human Welfare

At the heart of every action and treaty of the Prophet (PBUH) lay an unwavering commitment to humanity's welfare and benevolence. Sent as a mercy to all creation (Quran 21:107), his political, social, and spiritual endeavors were rooted in sincerity, compassion, and a timeless vision for uplifting humanity. Whether negotiating treaties during times of peace or addressing adversaries during conflict, his conduct consistently

exemplified integrity and empathy. Even in the fiercest battles, his actions never strayed from the principles of justice and moral clarity, leaving an enduring legacy of ethical leadership for all generations.

Contrasting Modern Treaties: A Critical Analysis

To fully appreciate the altruistic spirit of the Prophetic treaties, one must critically examine the outcomes of modern international agreements championed by so-called "civilized" powers. From political alliances to economic pacts, human rights frameworks to conflict-resolution accords, these treaties often prioritize self-interest over collective good. Consider the 1913 Treaty of London (Balkan Wars), the agreements forged during World Wars I and II, the 1987 Geneva Arms Reduction Treaty, or the 1988 Geneva Peace Accords. Similarly, decades of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations and Indo-Pakistani peace efforts reveal recurring patterns of political maneuvering, broken promises, and hidden agendas. Even when one party appears compliant, the other often engages in deceit, rendering such agreements ineffective.²

The consequences are stark: over the past century, hundreds of international treaties have failed to deliver lasting peace or justice. From Palestine and Kashmir to Bosnia and Chechnya, and the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East, distrust and bias dominate. The root cause lies in the absence of genuine goodwill—modern treaties are frequently tainted by greed, cultural prejudice, or strategic dominance, unlike the Prophetic model, which prioritized universal welfare above all.

Promoting Global Peace: Lessons from Prophetic Diplomacy

A study of the treaties established by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) reveals his unwavering prioritization of peace over conflict. Whenever opportunity arose, he dedicated himself to fostering harmony and preventing bloodshed, embodying a profound respect for human life. His lifelong commitment to peace offers timeless lessons for contemporary global diplomacy.

A Legacy of Peacebuilding

Throughout his life, the Prophet (PBUH) forged treaties with diverse religious and tribal communities, each emphasizing coexistence and mutual respect. These agreements remain a blueprint for modern efforts to advance global peace. By drawing insights from these Prophetic accords, Muslim nations today can play a pivotal role in resolving conflicts and fostering international stability.

The Prophet's (PBUH) mission was intrinsically tied to eradicating societal discord and establishing justice. Born into 7th-century Arabia—a region plagued by tribal warfare, lawlessness, and exploitation—he

confronted systemic injustices head-on. For instance, prior to his prophethood, he actively participated in the *Hilf al-Fudul* (Alliance of Virtue), a landmark pact formed to protect the vulnerable. This treaty, sparked by a merchant's plea for justice after being defrauded in Mecca, bound its signatories to stand with the oppressed until their rights were restored. The Prophet (PBUH) later praised this alliance, stating: “*If I were invited to a similar pact today, I would not hesitate to join.*”³ This early commitment to justice foreshadowed his lifelong dedication to peace.

The Constitution of Medina: A Model for Pluralism

Upon migrating to Medina, the Prophet (PBUH) encountered a fractured society divided along tribal and religious lines. To unify the city's Arab and Jewish communities, he drafted the *Constitution of Medina*—a groundbreaking social contract comprising 63 clauses. This document established:

1. **Collective Security:** All signatories pledged to defend Medina against external aggression.
2. **Religious Freedom:** Jewish tribes retained autonomy over their faith and laws.
3. **Equality Before Justice:** Discrimination based on religion or tribe was prohibited.
4. **Mutual Welfare:** Citizens agreed to counsel one another with honesty and goodwill.

Key clauses included:

- “Those who follow this treaty among the Jews shall receive support and equality; they shall not be wronged, nor shall their enemies be aided against them.”⁴
- “All parties shall uphold sincerity, integrity, and mutual benefit, avoiding betrayal.”⁵

Scholars like Dr. Hamidullah describe this as “the first written constitution establishing a civic state,” while historian Sir William Muir praised it as “a masterstroke of statesmanship, uniting disparate groups under a framework of transnational unity.” By recognizing Medina's diverse inhabitants as “one community distinct from others,” the Prophet (PBUH) laid the foundation for a pluralistic society grounded in shared values.

Relevance for Modern Conflict Resolution

Despite securing Medina's internal stability, external threats persisted. The Prophet (PBUH) responded by negotiating treaties with neighboring tribes, ensuring mutual protection and trade rights. These agreements,

rooted in fairness, contrast sharply with modern treaties often marred by hidden agendas or power imbalances. For example, contemporary accords in regions like Kashmir or the Middle East frequently fail due to partisan interests—a stark departure from the Prophetic emphasis on equity.

The Prophet's (PBUH) treaties exemplify how diplomacy anchored in justice and empathy can transcend divisions. In an era marked by polarization, reviving this ethos offers a path toward sustainable peace—one where mutual respect outweighs exploitation, and unity triumphs over fragmentation.

Peaceful Coexistence: A Prophetic Blueprint

Following the migration to Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) established the *Constitution of Medina*—a pioneering social contract that transformed diverse religious communities into a unified civic entity. This historic agreement not only dissolved political fragmentation but also introduced a model of *mutual coexistence* that remains unparalleled. Under its provisions, Jews, Muslims, and polytheists were integrated into a single political framework, prioritizing tolerance, dignity, and collective welfare. For modern societies divided by faith or ideology, this 7th-century document offers timeless principles: cooperation across differences, respect for pluralism, and shared responsibility for peace.⁶

The Constitution redefined governance by emphasizing:

- **Political Unity:** Tribes and faith groups were recognized as one community (*ummah wahidah*), bound by mutual rights and obligations.
- **Religious Autonomy:** Non-Muslims retained judicial and cultural independence, safeguarded against discrimination.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Disputes were to be resolved through dialogue, not force, fostering lasting stability.

This framework challenges modern states to move beyond mere tolerance and embrace *active coexistence*—where differences enrich societies rather than divide them.

Interfaith Dialogue: Bridging Divides through Prophetic Wisdom

The Prophet's (PBUH) treaties were rooted in open dialogue, even with ideological adversaries. Before signing the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with Meccan polytheists, he engaged in rigorous negotiations, demonstrating that diplomacy thrives on patience and empathy. Similarly, the *Constitution of Medina* emerged from extensive consultations with Jewish tribes, while later agreements with Christians of Najran and Jews of Khaybar were forged through respectful discourse. These examples

validate *interfaith dialogue* as a tool for resolving tensions—a practice as vital today as in the 7th century.⁷

Key lessons for contemporary interfaith engagement include:

1. **Common Ground Over Conflict:** The Najran Pact (631 CE) guaranteed Christians freedom of worship and protection under Islamic rule, proving that theological differences need not hinder cooperation.
2. **Ethical Negotiation:** The Prophet (PBUH) rejected coercion, insisting agreements must honor *both* parties' dignity and interests.
3. **Institutionalizing Rights:** Treaties formalized minority protections—such as tax exemptions for churches and synagogues—setting precedents for modern pluralistic governance.

Relevance for Today's World

In an era of rising sectarianism, the Prophet's (PBUH) approach to coexistence and dialogue dismantles the myth that diversity threatens stability. By institutionalizing mutual respect, his treaties reveal how societies can thrive amid heterogeneity. For instance, the *Constitution of Medina's* clause—“*To the Jews their religion, and to the Muslims their religion*”—prefigured modern secularism, yet with deeper ethical accountability.⁸

The Prophet's (PBUH) treaties were not mere political tools but moral imperatives. They teach us that peace is built not by erasing differences but by weaving them into a tapestry of shared humanity—a vision as urgent for today's fractured world as it was for 7th-century Arabia.

Fostering Interfaith Tolerance: Insights from Prophetic Diplomacy

The treaties of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplify a commitment to interfaith harmony that transcends religious divides. Whether engaging with People of the Book (Jews and Christians) or polytheists, he prioritized peace over doctrinal differences. His treaties with the Jewish tribes of Medina and Khaybar, the Christians of Najran, and the Meccan polytheists—such as the landmark Treaty of Hudaibiyyah—reflect a universal ethos: *coexistence is possible without compromising principles*.⁹

The Hudaibiyyah Model: A Decade of Peace

In 628 CE, the Prophet (PBUH) negotiated the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah with Meccan leaders, instituting a **10-year non-aggression pact** ([14]). As noted by historian Al-Tabari, this agreement mandated: “*A cessation of warfare for a decade, ensuring safety for all parties and mutual restraint from hostility*.¹⁰” Remarkably, this treaty was signed amid deep mistrust, proving that even adversaries can forge peace through

dialogue. Modern states embroiled in conflict—such as India and Pakistan—can draw lessons here: ceasefires and trade agreements need not wait for ideological alignment but can emerge from pragmatic diplomacy.

Countering Extremism: A Quranic Mandate for Peace

Some religious hardliners oppose treaties with non-Muslim nations, arguing that “Hindus (or others) cannot be trusted.” This mindset contradicts the Prophet’s (PBUH) teachings and the Quran’s explicit instruction:

*“If the enemy is inclined towards peace, make peace with them. And put your trust in Allah. Indeed, He ‘alone’ is the All-Hearing, All-Knowing.”*¹¹

This verse dismantles the myth of perpetual hostility, urging Muslims to reciprocate peace overtures *regardless of the other party’s faith*. The Prophet’s pact with pagan Meccans—who had persecuted Muslims for years—underscores that trust-building is a moral duty, not a sign of weakness.

Modern Applications: From Theology to Statecraft

1. **Interfaith Dialogue as Policy:** Just as the Prophet (PBUH) engaged Jews and Christians in Medina, modern governments must institutionalize dialogue with minority communities. For instance, safeguarding places of worship and cultural rights fosters social cohesion.
2. **Non-Aggression Pacts:** The Hudaibiyyah treaty’s 10-year framework mirrors modern *confidence-building measures* (CBMs), such as India-Pakistan trade corridors or joint counterterrorism efforts.
3. **Rejecting Tribal Mindsets:** The Prophet’s refusal to discriminate between “Ahl al-Kitab” and others challenges today’s sectarian politics. In multicultural nations, policies must prioritize citizenship over religious identity.

The Prophet’s (PBUH) treaties were not mere political tools but ethical imperatives. They teach us that peace is sustainable only when rooted in mutual respect—not conditional tolerance. In an era of polarization, his legacy calls us to replace suspicion with dialogue, proving that even the deepest divides can be bridged through courage and compassion.

Safeguarding Religious Freedom for Minorities: Lessons from Prophetic Governance

The treaties established by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with Jewish and Christian communities underscore Islam’s foundational commitment

to protecting religious minorities in a Muslim state. These agreements offer a timeless framework for ensuring minority rights, emphasizing dignity, autonomy, and justice.

A Divine Warning against Oppression

The Prophet (PBUH) issued unequivocal directives against harming non-Muslim minorities, declaring: “Beware, if anyone wrongs a contracting man, or diminishes his right, or forces him to work beyond his capacity, or takes from him anything without his consent, I shall plead for him on the Day of Judgment.”¹². This hadith transcends mere admonition; it enshrines a legal principle integral to Islamic governance. It obligates Muslim-majority states to protect minority rights, prohibiting exploitation or coercion based on faith.

Historical Precedents: From Najran to Medina

1. Treaty of Najran (631 CE):

When Christian delegates from Najran sought peace, the Prophet (PBUH) guaranteed:

- Immunity for their lives, property, and places of worship.
- Freedom to practice Christianity without interference.
- Protection for clergy and exemption from military service.¹³

This pact affirmed that *religious diversity need not threaten state cohesion*.

2. Constitution of Medina (622 CE):

Jewish tribes retained full religious autonomy, including the right to adjudicate internal disputes under their laws. Similar protections extended to pagan tribes like Banu Damrah and Banu Juhaynah, ensuring their rituals and traditions remained undisturbed.¹⁴

Modern Implications: Reforming Minority Policies

For Muslim-majority nations like Pakistan, these Prophetic models demand:

- **Legal Safeguards:** Formalize protections for non-Muslims (e.g., Hindus, Christians, Sikhs) against discrimination in law and practice.
- **Cultural Autonomy:** Allow minorities to observe festivals (e.g., Christmas, Diwali) openly and manage faith-based education without state interference.
- **Economic Equity:** Prohibit exploitative taxes or property seizures targeting minority communities.

Challenging Contemporary Missteps

Despite these ideals, many Muslim states falter. For instance, Pakistan’s blasphemy laws are often weaponized against minorities, while Saudi

Arabia historically restricted non-Muslim worship. Reviving the Prophetic ethos requires:

- Repealing discriminatory legislation.
- Promoting interfaith councils to address grievances.
- Educating Muslim majorities on the *dhimma* (covenant) system’s ethical core.

The Prophet’s (PBUH) treaties were not concessions but moral imperatives. They prove that a society’s strength lies in its ability to uphold dignity for all, irrespective of faith. By aligning modern policies with these principles, Muslim nations can counter extremism and model inclusive governance—a vision as urgent today as in 7th-century Arabia.

Inclusive Defense Alliances in Islamic Governance: Principles from the Constitution of Medina

The Constitution of Medina established a groundbreaking framework for collective security, permitting Muslims to form **defensive alliances with non-Muslim communities** during times of external aggression. One pivotal clause mandated:

“All signatories—Muslims and Jews alike—shall unite against any force that wages war on parties bound by this covenant”.¹⁵

Jizya and Civic Responsibility

In an Islamic state, non-Muslim citizens (*dhimmis*) historically paid *jizya*—a tax ensuring their protection, property rights, and exemption from military service. This system underscored the state’s duty to safeguard minorities without imposing defense obligations on them. However, the Prophet’s (PBUH) model also introduced flexibility:

- **Voluntary Participation:** Non-Muslims who *voluntarily* contribute to national defense are exempt from *jizya*, recognizing their civic engagement.
- **Trustworthiness as a Prerequisite:** Non-Muslims may serve in defense roles only if deemed loyal, with no risk of betrayal—a principle preventing internal threats.¹⁶

Modern Implications

This Prophetic precedent challenges the notion that citizenship duties in Muslim-majority states must align with religious identity. Key lessons include:

1. **Shared Security:** Collaborative defense pacts (e.g., joint military exercises with non-Muslim nations) align with Medina’s ethos of unity against common threats.

2. **Tax Equity:** Exempting minority volunteers from *jizya*-like levies incentivizes civic participation while honoring Islamic jurisprudence.
3. **Inclusive Patriotism:** Trustworthy non-Muslim citizens, like Pakistan's Hindu or Christian communities, can bolster national security without compromising Islamic principles.

The Constitution of Medina redefined defense as a collective responsibility, transcending religious divides. By reviving this model, modern Islamic states can foster inclusive patriotism, where protection is a shared duty—not a sectarian mandate—rooted in mutual trust and justice.

Conclusion: Reviving Prophetic Diplomacy for a Harmonious Global Order

The treaties and governance model of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) transcend time, offering a profound blueprint for addressing contemporary geopolitical, social, and ethical challenges. Rooted in justice, empathy, and inclusivity, these historical accords—such as the Constitution of Medina, the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, and agreements with Najran's Christians and Khaybar's Jews—reveal timeless principles that remain strikingly relevant today.

Core Principles for Modern Governance

1. **Peace Over Conflict:** The Prophet's prioritization of dialogue and non-aggression pacts (e.g., the 10-year Hudaibiyyah truce) underscores that sustainable peace emerges from patience and pragmatism, not domination. Modern states embroiled in protracted conflicts, such as India-Pakistan or Israel-Palestine, must embrace this ethos to replace cyclical violence with trust-building measures.
2. **Interfaith Coexistence as Policy:** By institutionalizing religious autonomy and minority rights (e.g., safeguarding churches in Najran, synagogues in Medina), the Prophetic model challenges modern nations to move beyond mere tolerance to *active pluralism*—where diversity strengthens societal fabric.
3. **Ethical Leadership:** The Prophet's warnings against oppressing minorities ("*I will be their adversary on Judgment Day*") redefine governance as a moral compact. Today, this demands dismantling discriminatory laws (e.g., blasphemy statutes) and ensuring equitable legal frameworks for all citizens.
4. **Inclusive Security:** The Constitution of Medina's collective defense clause reimagines national security as a shared responsibility, inviting non-Muslim participation in defense while ensuring their rights—a lesson for nations grappling with sectarian divides.

A Path Forward

For Muslim-majority states, reviving this legacy requires:

- **Legislative Reforms:** Aligning policies with the *dhimmah* covenant to protect minority worship, education, and cultural practices.
- **Interfaith Dialogue:** Establishing platforms for theological and civic exchange, mirroring the Prophet’s negotiations with Meccan pagans and Medinan Jews.
- **Global Diplomacy:** Championing multilateral alliances grounded in mutual respect, as seen in the Medina federation, to counter polarization and neo-colonial exploitation.

The Prophet’s (PBUH) treaties were not mere political tools but ethical imperatives that harmonized faith with humanity. In an era of rising nationalism and ideological extremism, his example illuminates a path where justice, compassion, and collective welfare transcend borders and beliefs. By embedding these principles into modern statecraft, Muslim societies can reclaim their role as moral leaders, proving that unity in diversity is not an idealistic dream but a lived reality—one forged fourteen centuries ago in the deserts of Arabia.

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