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Islamic Unity Between the Constitutional Ideal and the Reality of Its Implementation: A Comparative Study of Experiences in the Islamic World

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ABSTRACT

Islamic unity constitutes a strategic dimension in shaping the collective identity of the Muslim Ummah and, beyond being an emotional slogan, has become a civilizational necessity requiring solid legal and intellectual foundations. This study analyzes Islamic unity from the perspective of contemporary constitutional law and examines the prospects for its realization despite challenges such as divergent intellectual approaches, differences among legal systems, sectarian divisions, and the ambiguous relationship between religion and the state. Employing a comparative analytical method, the constitutions of several Islamic countries are examined in order to assess the status of Sharia, Sharia courts, and Islamic identity. The findings indicate that constitutional unity can be achieved through genuine political and legislative commitment, stronger institutional cooperation, educational reform, and the development of constitutional models that promote legal convergence while strengthening Islamic integration and collective identity.

Keywords: *Muslim Ummah, Islamic Unity, Constitutional Law, Islamic Countries, Legal Challenges*

Introduction

The issue of achieving a single Islamic Ummah within the framework of the constitutions of Islamic countries constitutes a central and profound question in comparative constitutional law, particularly within its Islamic context. It is an issue in which religious, political, and legal dimensions are intertwined and which, at its core, reflects a profound intellectual and political aspiration among scholars and thinkers of the Islamic world: the revival of the project of Islamic unity. This project has historically constituted, and continues to constitute, a cornerstone of Islamic political thought, closely associated with the concept of the caliphate and with the unity of legal and legislative authority throughout the Islamic world. This ideal vision, grounded in the concept of a comprehensive Islamic entity, is based not only on the objectives of Islamic Sharia and its general principles of unity and integration, but also on the actual historical experiences of the Islamic world during periods of civilizational flourishing. This makes it a legitimate vision worthy of examination and realization in light of contemporary realities.



Nevertheless, this ideal vision is confronted in practice by a range of structural, legal, and political challenges arising from the modern nation-state, which was largely established upon the ruins of the Islamic caliphate and is based on constitutional systems that differ in their normative references and in their political and legal structures. This has resulted in a significant gap between the Islamic principle of the unity of the Ummah and the existing legal and political systems of Muslim-majority countries. This divergence has created a genuine dilemma concerning how this major project of unity can be realized within the legal and practical framework of sovereign Muslim-majority states. Consequently, it has become a genuinely academic problem requiring careful examination, reflection, and in-depth analysis from multiple perspectives. Given its profound implications for the concepts of the Ummah, legitimacy, sovereignty, and the structure of the state in Islamic political jurisprudence, this issue constitutes a central concern of contemporary jurisprudential, legal, and political debates. In the Islamic conception, unity is not merely an ethical idea or an emotional aspiration; rather, it is a fundamental principle of social and political organization in Islam, associated with faith and regarded as one of the highest objectives of Sharia. Likewise, consultation (shura), as a mechanism for the circulation of power and the participation of the Ummah in decision-making, forms an integral part of Islamic political theory. Justice, which constitutes the core of the philosophy of governance in Islam and expresses the ultimate purpose of authority and the state, is similarly an integral part of Islamic political theory. These values are not utopian slogans but constitute a comprehensive normative system that should find clear expression in the constitutional systems adopted by Islamic countries. The challenge, however, lies in the fact that the constitutional systems currently prevailing in Islamic countries, although some are based on Sharia or declare it a principal source of legislation, remain in most cases governed by an imported legal and philosophical legacy reflecting Western influence on the formation of the modern state. This influence has resulted in the emergence of a conception of the state grounded in individualized sovereignty, national isolation, and legal and legislative pluralism, thereby making the realization of the idea of a “single Ummah” difficult within these legal structures. This raises a fundamental question: Can these legal structures be reformed or developed in such a way as to incorporate the values of unity, consultation, and justice? Can each state preserve its sovereignty and political independence while simultaneously forming part of a broader project for the Islamic Ummah? The significance of this research lies in an approach that goes beyond merely raising the question from theoretical or ethical perspectives. Through a comparative and analytical study of selected constitutions of Islamic countries, the research adopts a practical and applied approach. Its objective is to examine these constitutions in order to determine the extent to which they contain provisions and principles upon which a common legal foundation can be established, thereby enabling a degree of coordination or integration without compromising state independence. Such a comparison makes it possible to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as points of convergence and divergence, thereby facilitating the formulation of reform proposals that take into account the political and legal characteristics of each country while simultaneously seeking to realize the desired Islamic unity. Within this context, the research falls within the field of Islamic constitutional law, a branch of public law characterized by distinctive theoretical and methodological features in which Islamic jurisprudence intersects with constitutional politics. Accordingly, the methodology adopted in this study proceeds gradually from the general to the specific, moving from a comprehensive conception of the Ummah and its unity as presented in Islamic texts toward the actual political challenges confronting the modern state in the Islamic world. The study then progressively examines the details of the legal problem, particularly the question of “national sovereignty,” which is regarded as one of the most significant obstacles to any form of political or legal unity among Islamic countries. Within this framework, the research seeks

to move beyond abstract ideals and enter into a realistic dialogue with existing legal and political realities. This is achieved through examining constitutional principles, the structure of public authorities, legislative mechanisms, the relationship between religion and the state, the distribution of power, and points of convergence among these systems. Such an approach makes it possible to envisage a flexible legal system capable of evolving toward an integrated model. This model need not necessarily take the form of a complete political union; rather, it may begin with gradual legal and legislative coordination, paving the way for the establishment of common institutions or a comprehensive Islamic constitutional charter that respects the sovereignty of individual states while linking them through common objectives and shared values. Regarding the temporal scope of the research, the study covers the period from the beginning of the twentieth century, following the collapse of the Ottoman Caliphate, to the present reality in which the Islamic Ummah faces unprecedented existential challenges.

The Concept of the Single Islamic Ummah

From a linguistic perspective, the word “Ummah” derives from a triliteral root associated with multiplicity, generality, and comprehensiveness. The term refers to a group whose members share a particular bond, whether religious, national, or otherwise. It appears in numerous Qur’anic verses emphasizing the unity of the Muslim community and describing it as a “single Ummah” characterized by cohesion and spiritual and social interconnectedness. Accordingly, the unity of the Ummah is regarded as fundamental, indivisible, and inseparable. This linguistic meaning indicates that the Ummah is not merely a numerical or geographical entity, but rather an ethical and spiritual entity encompassing religious values and social solidarity. (1)

From a terminological perspective, the concept of the “single Islamic Ummah” has been subject to various interpretations and explanations depending on the intellectual, political, and social contexts within which it has been discussed. While some regard it as a political and ideological aspiration requiring the establishment of a single state or political entity, others understand it as a religious and spiritual reality that does not necessarily require tangible political unity. Still others emphasize its cultural and social dimensions, viewing unity as an extension of value-based and cultural solidarity among Muslims without necessarily transcending existing national borders. This plurality of perspectives and interpretations adds complexity to the concept and makes its study essential for understanding the challenges confronting the project of unity in the contemporary Islamic world. (2)

Linguistic Dimension

Turning to the word “Islamic,” it derives from the triliteral Arabic root s-l-m, from which the word “Islam” is derived. Islam is a noun denoting submission and obedience to God, and its meaning has expanded to encompass the religion founded upon belief in the oneness of God and the message of the Prophet Muhammad. It also encompasses the doctrinal and legal system upon which Muslim life is based. The word “Islamic” functions adjectivally and denotes affiliation with Islam. It expresses the distinguishing characteristics of a society associated with the religion of Islam, whether in terms of doctrine, culture, or a legal system grounded in Sharia. Grammatically, “Islamic” functions as an adjective qualifying “Ummah,” clarifying the nature of its affiliation and identity and thereby deepening the meaning of unity by connecting the community to a specific religious source embodying the values of monotheism, obedience, and faith.

Although the term “Islamic” has retained its doctrinal meaning, its uses and interpretations have changed over time in accordance with changing social and political circumstances. On the one hand, it defines the identity of the

Ummah, while on the other hand, it serves as a fundamental determinant in the formulation of laws and systems regulating relationships among its members, particularly within constitutional texts that adopt Islamic Sharia as a source of legislation. This reflects the dual significance of the term, encompassing both religious identity and a legal framework. This dimension is clearly evident in contemporary usage, where the concept of “Islamic” is associated not only with doctrine but also with legislative and legal frameworks.

The concept of the “single Islamic Ummah” is not merely a linguistic expression or a simple morphological construction; rather, it is a linguistic structure referring to a complex cognitive, social, and political entity. It therefore requires a multidimensional understanding and constitutes the theoretical foundation upon which this research examines the constitutional and legal dimensions of Islamic unity in the modern era. It also enables the researcher to undertake a precise analysis of legal and legislative texts that interpret and develop this concept, thereby enhancing the accuracy and objectivity of the study. (3)

Terminological Dimension

The constitutional experiences of Tunisia and Egypt, despite their different contexts and distinctive historical events, offer important models for understanding how constitutional thought developed in the Arab-Islamic world. They demonstrate how constitutions evolved from merely legal documents into fundamental components of national struggles and political movements, and how this development was influenced by internal factors such as political and social conflicts as well as external factors such as colonial pressure and foreign intervention. Studying these experiences is therefore essential for understanding the dialectical relationship between law and politics in the formation of the modern state. These experiences also demonstrate that constitutional texts are not static but living documents that interact with temporal and spatial variables and move from one stage to another through amendment, repeal, and renewal in accordance with evolving political and social realities. (4)

The adoption or amendment of a constitution reflects a collective aspiration or political pressure to achieve a balance of power, safeguard fundamental rights, and ensure stability. This is reflected in the constitutional development of Islamic countries, whose constitutional frameworks have continuously interacted with the requirements of their respective eras and specific circumstances. Constitutional frameworks have not merely been rigid legal documents; rather, they have provided arenas for seeking legal solutions adapted to the characteristics of each state and responsive to the aspirations of its people amid complex challenges such as colonialism, sectarian disputes, and rapid social change. This reinforces the importance of studying such texts in light of the political and legal history of each country.

The Concept of the Constitutional Framework

Constitutions possess several defining characteristics, including their supremacy over ordinary legislation, their role as the principal source governing the distribution of powers and shaping political structures, and their function in defining rights and guarantees of individual freedoms. Accordingly, the “constitutional framework” is not merely a collection of texts but an interconnected legal system that establishes the foundations of political legitimacy, defines the limits of power, and protects the state from deviation from the rule of law. This reflects the importance of the constitutional framework in establishing the foundations of good governance, stabilizing the political system, and strengthening the rule of law. Structurally, this framework contains several integrated elements, including the definition of the form of the state and its system of government, the powers of legislative, executive, and judicial

institutions, and general principles such as justice, equality, and human rights. These elements must function together to create a coherent constitutional system capable of maintaining a balance of power and protecting rights. Given the cultural and political diversity characteristic of Islamic countries, this represents a major challenge. (5)

The concept of the “constitutional legal framework” evolves historically in accordance with transformations affecting states and societies. Flexibility in constitutional interpretation and implementation is one of the most prominent characteristics of this framework. Constitutional arrangements differ from one country to another according to cultural, political, and social characteristics, resulting in diverse models of constitutional frameworks. Some achieve high levels of integration and coherence, while others suffer from fragmentation and inconsistency between laws and practices. This directly affects the ability of states to achieve their national objectives and desired unity, making comparative study and in-depth analysis of constitutional frameworks in Islamic countries essential for understanding their potential for success or the causes of failure. (6)

Linguistic Dimension

The concept of the “constitutional framework” is a complex notion incorporating multiple linguistic and legal elements. Understanding its various linguistic dimensions requires careful examination in order to grasp its essence and precise meaning within the Arabic language. The expression consists of two principal components: “framework” and “constitutional laws,” each of which has its own linguistic roots, grammatical derivations, and morphological patterns that contribute to shaping the overall meaning of the concept. The word “framework” derives from an Arabic root conveying the meaning of enclosing, restricting, and establishing boundaries. In Arabic usage, it denotes the limits or surrounding structure of something. Its derivations fundamentally convey organization and arrangement and refer to a form or structure defining the limits and scope of an object or concept. Its use in Arabic is characterized by rhetorical flexibility, enabling it to express both spatial and abstract notions. It therefore denotes a structure that frames something and unites its constituent parts within a coherent whole.

The structure of the expression is characterized by a degree of morphological harmony among its constituent terms, facilitating its comprehension and integration into legal and intellectual texts. This harmony also permits its frequent and convenient use in formal legal discourse. The term “framework” possesses an abstract structural meaning, which makes it flexible in both linguistic and legal applications, whereas the plural term “laws” expresses the multiplicity of legal systems encompassed by the concept and thereby indicates its comprehensiveness.

The term is frequently employed in legal and constitutional texts to emphasize the importance of an integrated system governing political relations and defining the scope of legislative, executive, and judicial action. It is also used in official discourse and legislative policies to express the necessity of adhering to constitutional principles when enacting laws. This indicates an advanced constitutional awareness grounded in the principle of the rule of law and in the prohibition against exceeding limitations imposed by the constitution. Such usage is consistent with the nature of modern societies seeking to establish a law-governed state in which transparency and justice prevail against potentially deceptive practices that undermine the integrity of commitment. Such practices may sometimes occur under the appearance of obedience and discipline while, in substance, corrupting the system from within without being readily perceptible to the superficial observer. (7)

Terminological Dimension

Islam acquires another dimension in constitutional texts through requirements that holders of the highest leadership offices in the state be Muslim. This is articulated in specific constitutional provisions, such as Article 38 of the Tunisian Constitution and Article 3 of the Syrian Constitution. Such a religious requirement is intended to ensure that state leaders represent the Islamic values and principles upon which the political and legal order is founded. This condition reflects the character of the Islamic state as combining a religious component with civil governance within a framework balancing religious and political legitimacy. It confirms that Islam, in this context, is not merely a cultural symbol but an active element in determining eligibility to exercise political authority, with profound implications for the legitimacy of government and public institutions. (8)

An examination of these constitutional provisions demonstrates that Islam, within the Arab constitutional context, is not confined to the status of an individual or social religion. Rather, it extends beyond this role to constitute a fundamental basis for the construction of the political and legal system, providing an integrated meaning to political legitimacy and legislative authority derived from Islamic Sharia. This requires other laws and systems to be compatible with this normative reference, obliges legislators to adhere to the principles of Sharia, and requires state institutions and governing bodies at all levels to comply with these principles. This profound connection between religion and the state distinguishes the Arab-Islamic constitutional experience and makes it a distinctive model different from secular constitutional systems.

Historical and Intellectual Foundations of the Unity of the Islamic Ummah

Among the Qur'anic texts, there is a clear call for unity and solidarity among Muslims. The Qur'an emphasizes that the Muslim community constitutes a single entity with common roots and a common destiny. This strengthens the concept of shared belonging that transcends ethnicity, language, and geographical boundaries and promotes the social and political solidarity that constitutes a cornerstone of a cohesive Islamic polity. Prophetic traditions complement this Qur'anic approach by clarifying and elaborating upon this call. They address unity from jurisprudential and spiritual perspectives, emphasize the importance of fraternal and spiritual bonds among Muslims, and encourage the avoidance of conflicts that may lead to fragmentation and division. This is reflected in traditions encouraging the preservation of communal unity and emphasizing collective action as a means of safeguarding the public good. (9)

The cultural and social role in shaping the concept of Islamic unity cannot be overlooked. Shared customs and traditions, together with the Arabic language, played a pivotal role in strengthening bonds among the peoples of the Islamic world, facilitating communication and mutual understanding, and disseminating universal Islamic values. This cultural dimension gave the concept of unity a distinctive character, transforming it from a rigid and inflexible political arrangement into a dynamic process interacting with the everyday realities of individuals and societies and providing a solid foundation for constructing a renewed Islamic identity responsive to contemporary requirements. In this context, the call for dialogue among different schools of thought and intellectual traditions emerges as one of the most important instruments for promoting unity. Historical experience confirms that genuine unity can be achieved only through acceptance of diversity and difference in a spirit of tolerance and recognition of the right of others to differ, while maintaining commitment to common religious principles. (10)

This comprehensive perspective on the historical and intellectual foundations of Islamic unity is not merely a narration of events or a restatement of texts. Rather, it constitutes a precise analysis reflecting a profound understanding of the nature of the challenges and opportunities confronting the Islamic world. Such analysis seeks to establish a robust intellectual framework capable of contributing to overcoming obstacles to the realization of the desired unity. Within this framework, the importance of combining historical inquiry with religious texts becomes evident, providing a firm foundation for strengthening efforts to consolidate unity. It offers researchers and decision-makers an effective instrument for understanding the complex phenomena affecting the present and future of the Islamic world so that Islamic unity may become a tangible reality grounded in sound knowledge and shared understanding. Such unity strengthens collective action and builds bridges of cooperation and integration among the diverse peoples of the Islamic world.

Qur'anic and Prophetic Foundations of the Unity of the Ummah

The Prophetic traditions complement this Qur'anic perspective with precise details that reinforce the concept of the unity of the Muslim community and define its parameters. The Sunnah addresses the dimensions of unity through multiple frameworks combining spiritual, social, and political aspects. It describes the Muslim community as a single body: when one part suffers, the entire body responds with sleeplessness and fever. This reflects a high degree of collective responsibility and solidarity among its members and calls for resistance to anything that threatens communal cohesion. These traditions do not merely advocate unity but offer practical guidance concerning how it can be preserved through respect for diversity within unity and rejection of anything likely to generate discord or fragmentation. This reflects the wisdom of Islamic Sharia in preserving the stability of the Muslim community. (11)

Within this context, attention must also be given to the role of Qur'anic and Prophetic concepts in establishing a comprehensive vision of the Muslim community as a living and interactive entity. This vision is not confined to the theoretical sphere but extends into practical reality through emphasis on collective action and commitment to advancing the interests of the community as a whole. Such an approach ensures the continuing strength and effectiveness of unity and transforms it into a genuine force capable of defending religion and society against any threat or attempt to generate discord. This comprehensive perspective forms a solid foundation upon which future studies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the unity of the Muslim community in the modern era may be built, drawing upon divine wisdom and Prophetic guidance that are not confined to a specific time or place but serve as a light guiding humanity toward peace, unity, and justice. (12)

Qur'anic Texts Concerning the Unity of the Ummah

Qur'anic texts also establish a solid foundation for understanding unity in light of the pluralism recognized by Islam, whereby unity does not mean eliminating difference or diversity but integrating diversity in faith within a single Islamic normative order. The Ummah, despite the diversity of its races, languages, and regions, must preserve unity of belief and destiny. This is what makes the Qur'an a guide for establishing a unity capable of encompassing all these elements without dissolving them into a homogeneous whole or reducing them to superficial uniformity. Rather, it is a form of unity arising from the fact that Muslims constitute one Ummah with common objectives and enduring values.

The Qur'an employs terms embodying profound and multidimensional meanings in its description of the unity of the Muslim community. These include the word "Ummah," which denotes comprehensiveness and collectivity, and "ikhwan" or "brothers," which emphasizes fraternal bonds among individuals. Expressions such as "the rope of God" indicate that this unity is connected to a firm divine source that cannot legitimately be severed or compromised. These expressions convey a powerful message concerning the nature of unity, which must be based on sound teachings and firm commitment to authentic Islamic values. The Qur'an therefore provides a distinctive linguistic and cognitive model for understanding unity, combining profound meaning with practical application in the lives of Muslims.

Prophetic Traditions Affirming Unity

The Prophetic traditions (hadiths) supporting the concept of the unity of the Islamic Ummah constitute an essential part of the sources illuminating the path toward a profound understanding of such unity within the Islamic framework. They reflect a Prophetic vision that is not confined to theoretical considerations but manifests itself in practical rulings and positions directing Muslims toward cohesion and harmony among the members of their Ummah. These traditions are embodied in clear Prophetic teachings encouraging harmony and cohesion and calling for the rejection of division and discord, which were among the matters strongly prohibited by the Prophet. Consequently, they constitute a cornerstone for any project of unity founded upon the sound principles of authentic Islam. These texts reflect the Prophet's concern to emphasize that only a unified Ummah can achieve its existential purpose of spreading justice, mercy, and truth. This requires every Muslim to become an active part of a cohesive entity uniting Muslims through mutual love and cooperation. (13)

The Prophetic traditions also draw the attention of the Ummah to the danger that division and discord pose to unity and demonstrate that fragmentation and conflict are among the principal causes of weakness and failure. These traditions contain serious warnings against divisions that separate Muslims and corrupt their relations. This reflects a profound concern for establishing unity upon solid foundations that protect the Ummah from the causes of dispersion and fragmentation and make it more resilient and capable of confronting the challenges it faces. This emphasizes the importance of adherence to the Prophetic Sunnah for preserving the unity of the Islamic Ummah and protecting it from the causes of division and weakness. (14)

The Prophetic traditions likewise repeatedly contain texts calling for the elimination of injustice and the removal of divisions among Muslims, since the Prophet emphasized justice as the foundation for preserving unity. He rejected all forms of discrimination and injustice that create divisions among members of the Ummah and promoted the principles of equality and fairness, thereby establishing a conception of unity grounded in justice, which constitutes the essence of Islam and the foundation for building righteous societies. The Prophetic Sunnah thus becomes an intellectual and ethical document calling for the construction of a cohesive Ummah founded upon justice and tolerance and rejecting discrimination or injustice in all its forms.

Evolution of the Idea of the "Unity of the Ummah" Throughout Islamic History

Throughout Islamic history, the idea of the unity of the Islamic Ummah has constituted a central and multidimensional issue addressed in religious texts as well as historical and social records across different periods. This unity was not merely a political or geographical concept but a comprehensive vision incorporating doctrinal, spiritual, social, and political dimensions and uniting Muslims within a cohesive entity capable of confronting the

challenges of time and place. The idea developed alongside various civilizational transformations, beginning with the Prophetic mission, which established the concept of unity on the foundations of shared faith and social solidarity. It continued through the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphate, which represented the apex of such political and religious unity, and extended into the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, which witnessed the geographical expansion of Islam as well as the emergence of ethnic and cultural diversity and new challenges to the concept of unity. Despite the challenges that such diversity generated, it did not negate the underlying unity that these Islamic empires sought to express through politics and religion while continually attempting to renew and adapt the concept of unity to changing historical circumstances. (15)

With the emergence of the modern era, the concept of the unity of the Islamic Ummah underwent profound transformations. It was affected by colonialism and political partition, which imposed new boundaries upon the Islamic world and resulted in the emergence of nation-states based on new geographical and political foundations distinct from traditional Islamic unity grounded in religious and spiritual principles. This transformation compelled Muslim thinkers and leaders to reconsider the concept of unity and to seek ways of reconciling modern national loyalties with the broader conception of the unity of the Islamic Ummah. It consequently led to the emergence of various intellectual and political movements expressing different attempts to preserve a unified Islamic identity amid these challenges. The central question became: How can the unity of the Ummah be preserved in light of these modern political and social divisions, and how can such unity be revitalized under the complexities of contemporary conditions? (16)

The development of the idea of the unity of the Islamic Ummah must also be examined through the diverse historical experiences of different regions of the Islamic world. These experiences have been characterized by continuing attempts to formulate a conception of unity appropriate to the local and political circumstances of each region. This reflects the flexibility of Islam in accommodating diversity while preserving its fundamental principles. Unity did not reject differences; rather, it sought to integrate them within a general framework uniting Muslims under a common banner. This highlights the practical dimensions of the idea and makes it applicable across diverse and evolving contexts. Consequently, studying the development of the idea of the unity of the Ummah throughout Islamic history reveals the complexity and enduring significance of this concept, which transcends time and place and continues to occupy a central position in Islamic political and social thought.

Classical Era: The Rightly Guided, Umayyad, and Abbasid Caliphates

The Umayyad state subsequently emerged as a pivotal stage in Islamic history, as the Islamic world expanded geographically and diverse peoples and cultures came under the banner of Islam, creating new challenges for maintaining unity. Within this context, the Umayyad state reorganized the priorities of political authority to preserve the integrated structure of the state despite sectarian and ethnic differences. Notwithstanding the criticisms directed against it, the Umayyad state sought to consolidate the idea of a single Ummah governed from a strong political center exercising sovereignty over diverse regions with different languages and cultures. The religious bond nevertheless remained the dominant element and a determining factor in political and social affiliation. The Arabic language and the Qur'an played fundamental roles in creating a unifying identity that contributed to preserving the cohesion of the Ummah amid major political conflicts. (17)

Geographical factors did not prevent the crystallization of this unity; rather, geographical expansion sometimes contributed to enriching and consolidating the idea. Spatial distance was perceived not as an obstacle but as a

broader horizon for disseminating a common message. This resulted in extensive cultural interaction among different Muslim peoples, helping to activate diversity within unity rather than against it. Such interaction manifested itself through cooperation among scholars from different regions and through the translation and transmission of knowledge that flourished during the Abbasid era. The unity of the Ummah meant unity of message, purpose, and destiny, rather than complete uniformity in language or customs. This laid the foundation for a profound and contemporary understanding of the Islamic Ummah as an entity uniting believers within a framework of creative diversity and balanced integration. (18)

Modern and Contemporary Era

In the modern and contemporary era, the idea of the unity of the Islamic Ummah re-emerged as a central issue and regained its place in the collective consciousness of the Islamic world after centuries of political fragmentation and geographical and sectarian divisions. Qur'anic and Prophetic texts calling for Muslim unity resonated in religious discourse as well as in intellectual and reformist movements that emerged in response to the challenges generated by Western colonialism and the collapse of the Islamic caliphate. These developments resulted in the fragmentation of Muslim societies into separate nation-states, each seeking to establish an independent identity. This structural transformation in the political and social fabric of the Islamic world generated a profound awareness of the need to return to concepts of unity, mutual support, and Islamic solidarity as vital instruments for reviving the spirit of the Ummah and resisting cultural and political domination.

The intellectual and technological developments of the modern era further deepened this process. Media, education, publishing, migration, and ease of mobility became influential factors in reshaping Muslim awareness of themselves as part of a larger entity not confined by national borders or limited by differences in dialects and customs. Direct communication among Muslim peoples and access to intellectual and jurisprudential production across the Islamic world generated an increasing sense of belonging to a single community sharing common texts, facing similar challenges, and drawing upon a collective memory. Recent decades have witnessed renewed interest in the hadith tradition, particularly texts calling for fraternity, unity, commitment to the community, and the necessity of solidarity. This suggests that religious consciousness has once again become centered on concepts of community and Ummah rather than individualism or factionalism. (19)

The role of scholars, preachers, and religious authorities in renewing the discourse of Muslim unity became increasingly prominent through emphasis on shared doctrinal and ethical principles rather than the reinforcement of peripheral disagreements. Many scholars revived the concept of "loyalty to the community" as a continuing religious obligation, not restricted to the period of the caliphate but applicable to every context in which Muslims seek unity on common foundations. Calls also emerged for restructuring the priorities of da'wah activities so that unity would become a fundamental objective rather than merely an incidental outcome. This requires balanced discourse that promotes tolerance and justice, rejects exclusion, and transcends sectarian prejudices that have impeded the development of Muslim society for centuries. Islamic revivalist literature has therefore emphasized that the unity of the Muslim community is not a slogan but a continuous process of construction, inspired by the foundational texts and responsive to the challenges of the age. (20)

Theoretical Framework of the Research and Its Significance

Within this context, the Holy Qur'an does not present the unity of the Muslim community merely as an ethical principle; rather, it presents it as a fundamental element in the divinely ordained structure of Islamic society and as a legitimate objective possessing its own doctrinal and practical requirements. The Qur'anic approach to the Muslim community originates in the principle of monotheism and develops into a doctrinal and social structure that transforms the Muslim community into an organic unit possessing a single point of reference, shared values, a common responsibility, and a common history. In light of this understanding, the unity of the Muslim community is not the product of social or political circumstances but a necessity arising from the nature of the final divine message, which was revealed for the guidance of all humanity. Accordingly, the theoretical framework derived from the Qur'an interprets unity not as a temporary gathering but as the manifestation of a profound bond of faith and the practical embodiment of the meaning of the "middle Ummah," which serves as a civilizational witness to other nations.

This theoretical framework also extends to an analysis of Qur'anic and Prophetic terminology describing the Muslim community, including such terms as Ummah, jama'ah, believers, emigrants, supporters, and those united through the "rope of God." These expressions are not merely linguistic; rather, they are grounded in precise legal purposes expressing behavioral, organizational, and normative realities and representing essential elements for understanding the collective structure of the Ummah. The theoretical examination of this issue is not confined to the analysis of individual terms but extends to the exploration of the semantic network and conceptual relationships governing them within the foundational texts. This leads to the construction of an integrated understanding of the unity of the Ummah as simultaneously a devotional, social, and historical entity. The theoretical framework in this context is not based on abstract descriptive approaches but on in-depth semantic and contextual analysis in light of the original textual structure of the Qur'an and Sunnah, beginning from a conception of dignity and responsibility rather than guardianship or domination, whereby bearing witness before humanity is synonymous with the responsibility of civilizational testimony rather than merely numerical or social distinction. (21)

The importance of linking the theoretical framework with the missionary and civilizational function of the Muslim community is substantial, since this function can be realized only through genuine unity expressing the divine will for the Muslim community to serve as a "witness" to humanity. Such a function can be achieved only through unified discourse, coherent collective conduct, and effective solidarity in confronting challenges. Studying unity is therefore not an intellectual luxury but a response to a central Qur'anic principle. Rooting this meaning in the theoretical framework of the research gives the concept a practical and strategic dimension in Islamic life. The framework also provides a basis for broader reflection on the nature of the relationship between faith and society, doctrine and organization, and spiritual values and institutional structures—relationships that cannot be separated without compromising the essence of the Islamic message. (22)

This framework is not confined to theoretical description. Rather, it clearly defines the place of unity within the Islamic value system as the sphere within which the objectives of Sharia—such as the protection of religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property—are realized. At the same time, it strengthens an Islamic worldview in which the fundamental struggle is understood as one between truth and falsehood rather than between races or regions. This makes the unity of the Muslim community an instrument for bearing witness to humanity, establishing justice, and conveying the divine message. The theoretical framework therefore becomes a comprehensive interpretive

foundation that not only explains concepts but also produces a coherent Qur'anic-Prophetic reading of contemporary Islamic reality with all its complexities and challenges.

The Significance of Islamic Unity in Constitutional Thought

Although the Lebanese Constitution does not explicitly describe Lebanon as an “Islamic state,” its formulation of the principle of freedom of belief, as expressed in Article 9, presents a distinctive constitutional model that clearly highlights the multiconfessional structure of the state without denying the centrality of religions as legislative and normative references for their respective communities. The article provides that the state, in fulfilling its obligations toward God Almighty, shall respect all religions and denominations. This formulation does not signify complete doctrinal neutrality; rather, it presents the state as an entity acknowledging the existence of the divine and assuming obligations of respect toward it. This places the state in a distinctive religious position despite the plurality of officially recognized denominations. It therefore means that the state is not secular in the strict sense of the term but rather a religiously informed state possessing multiple references, regulating religious freedoms not on the basis of separating religion from the public sphere but by respecting religious practices within the framework of public order—that is, within a religious-social consensus incorporating overlapping notions of coexistence and unity amid diversity.

The deeper significance of this principle appears in its function of framing the concept of plurality within unity. This is similarly illustrated by the Moroccan constitutional formulation, which emphasizes diverse components of identity but reunites them within a comprehensive Islamic unity presented as the principal framework encompassing the remaining components. In this sense, the principle of unity becomes a framework that reorganizes cultural diversity within a hierarchy of symbolic and normative values and assigns the Islamic component a central position without excluding or marginalizing other elements. This model of constitutional arrangement highlights a distinctive form of Islamic state with a civil character, seeking to reconcile religious particularity with social pluralism without losing sight of the normative compass intended to guide the construction of its political and identity system. (10)

Political Dimensions

Constitutional documents adopted in several predominantly Muslim Arab countries clearly demonstrate that the status of Islamic Sharia is not merely a symbolic reference within the structure of the state but a fundamental component reproduced in changing political contexts and repeatedly reaffirmed when confronted with attempts to amend or abolish it, often motivated by human rights, sectarian, or secular considerations. This is clearly evident in the case of the Egyptian Constitution, where the designation of Islamic Sharia as the principal source of legislation in the 1980 constitutional amendment to the 1971 Constitution represented a turning point in the constitutional formulation of the state. Despite changing contexts and the multiplicity of political actors following the events of 2011, this formulation remained unchanged, reflecting a profound social and political understanding of the status of Sharia. Any attempt to remove or amend this reference therefore became capable of mobilizing collective Islamic consciousness, as clearly demonstrated by movements that launched broad popular campaigns demanding preservation of the provision and emphasizing rejection of interference with what were regarded as doctrinal constants connected with the identity and existence of the state. (23)

In the Jordanian Constitution, the reference to Islam as the “religion of the state” and Arabic as the official language is particularly notable. Although this concise formulation does not elaborate upon legal sources or

supervisory mechanisms, it nevertheless establishes a powerful symbolic structure confirming that Islamic affiliation is not an incidental addition but an integral part of the legal definition of the state. The significance of the provision lies not in its length or conceptual density but in its location within a sovereign constitutional document that defines the nature of the political entity through its referential connection to religion and language—two pillars forming the symbolic foundation of any conception of national unity. Within this framework, defining Islam as the religion of the state becomes a decisive indication that the political entity is not secular in an absolute sense and that the political sphere inherently includes identity-based elements grounded in a doctrinal framework that organizes the public sphere and guides cultural, educational, and legislative policies, albeit in a non-detailed manner. (24)

The significance of these constitutional references derives from their capacity to establish a shared public sphere based on a distinctive normative system. This system reorganizes public-policy priorities and provides political and social actors with a conceptual framework enabling them to invoke religion in the political sphere without departing from higher principles. This dual—symbolic and institutional—use of religious provisions in constitutional documents constitutes the essence of the political dimension of Islamic unity. Here, the doctrinal reference emerges not as an abstract principle but as a legislative and supervisory instrument redefining the relationship between ruler and ruled. It provides a basis for the legitimacy of policies intended to protect and strengthen religion without resorting to doctrinal coercion or suppression of freedoms.

Social Dimensions

The connection between religion and language in constitutional texts is not merely symbolic; rather, it manifests itself in a social framework that reproduces Islamic affiliation as a cultural and normative source of coexistence. The constitutions of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain clearly indicate that Islam is not optional but constitutes a fundamental element of state identity reflected in national culture, educational and media programs, and social events, all of which are shaped around common religious and cultural values. This convergence of religion and identity creates a condition of social cohesion deriving its strength from a unifying Islamic framework and generates a public life based on the values of solidarity, moderation, and compassion.

In Bahrain, where Sharia is established as a principal source of legislation and Arabic as the official language, the social presence of Islam is reconstructed as a unifying factor within a structure characterized by religious, sectarian, and ethnic diversity. Constitutional provisions guarantee the freedom of religious communities within a framework compatible with the overarching system of Islamic values, thereby establishing a balance between recognition of pluralism and preservation of unity. This social balance creates a framework in which diverse components of society can coexist under a single normative reference that constitutes a common basis for social action and interaction while respecting the distinctive characteristics of each component within the values of faith and citizenship. This demonstrates how approaches based on constructive engagement can create common ground among highly diverse groups through the conscious use of cultural and affective instruments to win hearts and minds.

The designation of Islam as the official religion and Arabic as a principal language of legislation reflects concern with the function of Sharia not only in the legislative sphere but also in regulating social relationships and norms through a coherent value system. This system supports the sustainability of social life, including family, civil society, education, and cultural practices, thereby transforming Islamic unity from theoretical discourse into a mode of life expressed through everyday practices. Within this framework, Islamic identity is emphasized not as a ceremonial

matter but as a normative reference for social progress and fraternal solidarity within society, constituting a common foundation upon which values are constructed and linked with collective destiny. (25)

Accordingly, the social dimension of Islamic unity is incorporated into constitutional texts. It does not end with the sphere of political governance but extends into the fabric of cultural values and everyday relationships, forming a strong foundation for social identity based on Islam as a central pillar around which national culture is reconstructed. This constitutionally grounded social structure increases stability, reinforces a sense of belonging, and establishes a shared value system in the face of international changes and domestic challenges, transforming Islamic unity from a slogan into a living social experience manifested in every dimension of public life. (26)

Research Motivations and Limitations

The motivations for examining the centrality of Islam in legal, political, and social identity are not merely theoretical reflections but arise from a legislative reality reflecting the will of peoples who have chosen Islam as their principal normative reference despite the diversity of intellectual and political orientations within society. The constitutions of Tunisia and Algeria, notwithstanding differences in their historical and political experiences and contexts, converge in establishing this reference, indicating that Islam, as the official religion, has become an essential component in formulating the relationship between the state and its citizens and in establishing major consensuses concerning the nature of the political, social, and cultural system. This is not necessarily understood as the abolition of pluralism but rather as an affirmation of unity in normative affiliation.

These constitutional provisions emphasize that the objective is not to establish a religious state in its classical sense but to construct a civil constitutional order deriving its authority from Islam as a religion that shapes values, guides legislation, and structures social relationships. Hence, it becomes important to examine the practical implications of these constitutional provisions, not only in relation to the legal system but also in establishing a coherent national identity based on a comprehensive Qur'anic and Prophetic framework. Such a framework contributes to strengthening national unity and preserving diversity within the inclusive structure provided by Islam and enables societies to remain cohesive in confronting the cultural and political challenges arising from rapid global transformation.

Research Problem

The research problem arises from the intersection between religious references and social and political pluralism. The central question concerns the extent to which constitutional provisions adopting Islam as a principal reference can accommodate differences and diversity within environments characterized by multiple denominations and ethnic groups, and the extent to which unity of the Ummah can be consolidated within a democratic framework that respects pluralism while simultaneously preserving national sovereignty. This requires a precise understanding of the constitutional mechanisms employed to address these challenges as well as the limitations of constitutional provisions and the degree of flexibility or rigidity they permit in managing internal differences. Perhaps the most significant of these challenges is achieving a balance between maintaining the unity of religious reference and recognizing cultural and political diversity within Islamic societies. This makes the research problem a point of departure for a deeper understanding of the nature of Islamic unity as a contemporary constitutional phenomenon.

When the dimensions of the research problem are considered from the perspective of the relationship between religion and the state, it becomes necessary to deconstruct prevailing understandings of sovereignty and examine

how sovereignty is interpreted in the contemporary Islamic context. The overlap between religious and national sovereignty raises questions regarding who ultimately possesses authority, how such authority is exercised, and how multiple sources of legislation—whether derived from Islamic law, popular traditions, or positive law—are to be reconciled. This makes the research problem central to understanding the balance that must be achieved among these sources within a framework that respects Islamic unity and national identity, while acknowledging that tensions among these elements constitute the essence of political and legal conflicts in many Islamic countries. (24)

The research problem focuses on the relationship between religious and civil laws and on how constitutional texts can be used to strengthen Islamic unity. The conflict between religious and legal references constitutes one of the most complex and problematic issues in contemporary constitutional thought. The study therefore requires careful and detailed examination of this issue, focusing on how constitutional texts integrate these normative references in a manner capable of achieving the necessary balance between preserving religious identity and guaranteeing citizens' rights within the framework of the modern state. This issue constitutes the core of the research problem and clearly defines its parameters. (27)

Research Objectives and Limitations

Constitutional provisions declaring Islam the official religion of the state and Sharia a principal source of legislation raise questions concerning how these principles are applied within a changing reality comprising diverse social components. The research problem also involves examining the extent to which these provisions conform to the principles of justice, equality, and pluralism and the extent to which their application is influenced by political and social factors governing relationships among the constituent groups of the Ummah. Moreover, the challenge lies in achieving unity of the Muslim community in a manner that does not marginalize any component of this diversity. Here, the role of constitutional texts emerges either as an instrument for achieving this objective or as an obstacle to it. This requires in-depth analysis of ambiguities and contradictions that may arise within different constitutional texts, particularly where religious rights intersect with civil liberties and human rights. (28)

The research problem is also situated at the heart of the relationship between religious identity and national identity, which may intersect or diverge depending on the context. Many constitutional texts define Islam as the official religion while simultaneously emphasizing the existence of multiple other components within the national fabric. This generates a complex question concerning how religion can become a unifying force for the nation without excluding or diminishing these components. This is one of the most important dimensions of the problem and requires careful analysis in order to understand the extent to which constitutional texts can accommodate such plurality and difference. The challenge also requires religion to be understood as a unifying and framework-producing reference rather than as a factor generating division and conflict.

The research problem focuses on the relationship between religious and civil laws and on the use of constitutional texts to strengthen Islamic unity. The conflict between religious and legal references constitutes one of the most complex and problematic issues in contemporary constitutional thought. The study requires precise and careful examination of this issue, focusing on how these references can be integrated into constitutional texts in a manner capable of achieving the necessary balance between preserving religious identity and guaranteeing citizens' rights within the framework of the modern state. This matter constitutes the core of the research problem and clearly defines its parameters. (7)

Conclusion

1. Constitutional provisions stipulating that Islam is the official religion and a principal source of legislation constitute a foundation for consolidating Islamic identity because they provide a legal framework that protects shared values, promotes justice and equality, and strengthens social and political cohesion, thereby contributing to reducing fragmentation and supporting societal unity.
2. Constitutional provisions guaranteeing freedom of religious practice and respect for other monotheistic religions reflect an approach that promotes peaceful coexistence, protects minority rights, and limits sectarian conflicts, thereby supporting social harmony and strengthening solidarity among the constituent groups of society.
3. Reconstructing religious and intellectual discourse through educational curricula and media constitutes a fundamental step toward achieving Islamic unity by consolidating shared values, promoting a culture of belonging, and confronting extremist discourses in a manner that supports cooperation and integration among Islamic nations.
4. Constitutional provisions recognizing Arabic as an official language play an important role in consolidating cultural identity, promoting communication among Muslim peoples, and preserving cultural heritage, thereby supporting cultural unity and reducing the divisive effects of linguistic plurality.
5. Religious institutions play a pivotal role in promoting Islamic unity by harmonizing jurisprudential perspectives and disseminating moderate Islamic values, thereby reducing sectarian disagreements, increasing social stability, and contributing to the establishment of a cohesive society capable of confronting challenges.

Recommendations

1. Legislators should devote particular attention to strengthening the role of Islamic Sharia as a principal source of legislation within national constitutions. This requires the formulation of clear and specific constitutional provisions guaranteeing the protection of religious and national values. Such provisions would contribute to establishing strong and sustainable national unity, increasing social stability, and deepening connections among the diverse components of society. These provisions should also take into account the social, cultural, and economic transformations occurring in Muslim countries while preserving the fundamental principles of Islamic Sharia as an inviolable foundation. This would ensure a state-level balance between preserving Islamic identity and accommodating the demands of the modern era, thereby facilitating sustainable development compatible with global transformations without compromising national and religious principles.
2. Governments and legislative institutions should establish explicit legal guarantees ensuring freedom to perform religious rites for all segments of society without discrimination or deprivation, while emphasizing respect for the rights of religious and cultural minorities, since such protection constitutes a fundamental pillar of peaceful coexistence and national unity. Institutional legal frameworks capable of guaranteeing the protection and effective implementation of these rights should be established alongside cultural and social awareness programs promoting the values of mutual respect and tolerance. Such measures would reduce the causes of sectarian or religious conflict, positively affect social security and stability, and strengthen the cohesion of the national fabric in all its diversity.

3. Comprehensive modernization of educational curricula and official media is recommended in order to instill the values of unity and intellectual moderation. This may be achieved through the adoption of educational and media content that accurately reflects religious and national principles while ensuring that such content rejects extremism and intellectual division and strengthens citizens' collective awareness of the importance of national belonging and the principle of coexistence among different denominations and schools of thought. Educational and media institutions should also play a central role in cultivating a culture of dialogue and tolerance and in providing open spaces for constructive discussion capable of strengthening mutual understanding among citizens. This would contribute to creating a cohesive and informed society capable of confronting intellectual and social challenges.
4. Legislators and official institutions should consolidate the status of the Arabic language within educational systems and official media as a fundamental medium of cultural and spiritual communication uniting the Islamic Ummah. This may be achieved through national policies supporting the use of Arabic as an official language and encouraging the development of advanced Arabic-language programs in educational institutions at all levels. Such measures would help cultivate new generations proficient in and proud of their language, thereby strengthening their sense of identity and national belonging. Moreover, such efforts should not remain confined to the educational sphere; rather, the quality of Arabic-language discourse across different media should also be enhanced. This would contribute to disseminating shared Islamic culture and history and to fostering greater convergence of intellectual and political perspectives among the peoples of the Islamic world.
5. Material and moral support for religious institutions should be strengthened, and their vital role in disseminating moderate Islamic thought should be recognized. Their role in national and religious dialogue should be reinforced so that they may contribute to greater convergence in jurisprudential perspectives and reduce the causes of conflict among different schools of thought and intellectual currents. Furthermore, such institutions should participate actively in shaping relevant religious and social policies, thereby contributing to political and social stability and strengthening national unity. These efforts should be grounded in sound Islamic principles as well as scientific and professional standards and should ensure a balanced approach to religious discourse capable of addressing both established principles and contemporary issues while promoting tolerance and respect for others within the framework of Islamic Sharia.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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