

## The Medina Charter's Enduring Relevance: A Foundational Constitutional Model for Malaysia's MADANI Vision

Baidar Mohammed Mohammed Hasan<sup>1</sup>, Ahmad Zaki Salleh<sup>2</sup>, Hussein 'Azeemi  
Abdullah Thadi<sup>3</sup>

Faculty of Syariah and Law Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia

Email : baidar1984@usim.edu.my

**ABSTRAK:** *Studi ini secara kritis mengkaji potensi konstitusionalisme Islam, yang dicontohkan oleh Piagam Madinah, untuk dijadikan sebagai kerangka landasan yang autentik dan mendalam bagi falsafah "Malaysia MADANI" kontemporer. Studi ini berpandangan bahwa inisiatif pembangunan masyarakat modern seperti gagasan MADANI memerlukan landasan aksiologis, etis, dan konstitusional yang kokoh untuk menjamin implementasi yang efektif, berkelanjutan, dan non-selektif, terutama dalam perlakuan yang adil terhadap seluruh komponen masyarakat, termasuk minoritas, penduduk asing, dan populasi pengungsi. Penelitian ini berargumen bahwa prinsip-prinsip abadi yang termaktub dalam Piagam Madinah—konstitusi tertulis pertama dalam Islam—secara unik paling memenuhi kualifikasi untuk menyediakan struktur esensial ini. Melalui analisis sistematis terhadap filosofi MADANI, diikuti dengan pengujian mendalam terhadap ketentuan-ketentuan Piagam terkait konsep Ummah, kewarganegaraan kontraktual, keadilan, keamanan, dan hak-hak fundamental, studi ini bertujuan untuk mengelaborasi bagaimana prinsip-prinsip Islam klasik ini dapat menjadi sumber legitimasi moral dan kekuatan konstitusional bagi konsep MADANI. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa adopsi kerangka acuan ini, jika diterapkan secara adil, akan berperan penting dalam membangun masyarakat Malaysia yang lebih adil, sejahtera, dan kohesif, serta mendorong koeksistensi peradaban dan mewujudkan kewarganegaraan yang komprehensif.*

**Kata kunci:** *Konstitusionalisme Islam, Piagam Madinah, Malaysia MADANI, Kerangka Landasan, Kewarganegaraan*

**ABSTRACT:** *This study critically examines the potential of Islamic constitutionalism, exemplified by the Medina Charter, to serve as an authentic and profound foundational framework for the contemporary "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy. It posits that modern societal development initiatives, such as the MADANI vision introduced by the Malaysian Prime Minister, require a robust axiological, ethical, and constitutional underpinning to ensure their effective, sustainable, and non-selective implementation. This is particularly crucial for guaranteeing the just treatment of all societal constituents, including religious and ethnic minorities, resident aliens, and displaced populations. The research contends that the timeless principles enshrined in the Medina Charter—the first written constitution in Islam—are uniquely qualified to provide this essential structure. Through a systematic analysis of the MADANI philosophy's six core pillars, followed by an in-depth examination of the Charter's provisions on the Ummah (political community), contractual citizenship, justice, security, shared responsibility, and fundamental rights, this study elucidates how these classical Islamic principles can form the moral and legal wellspring from which the MADANI concept derives its legitimacy and operational strength. The paper concludes that a sincere and holistic adoption of this referential framework, applied equitably, can be instrumental in building a more just, prosperous, and cohesive Malaysian society, thereby fostering profound civilizational coexistence and actualizing comprehensive, responsible citizenship.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Constitutionalism, Medina Charter, Malaysia MADANI, Foundational Framework, Citizenship*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The contemporary global landscape is characterised by a persistent endeavor among nations and societies to formulate comprehensive visions and projects for renaissance. These initiatives aim to address modern challenges while striving for progress, prosperity, and social harmony. In this context, the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy emerges as an ambitious national framework, officially introduced in early 2023 by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. This vision seeks to guide Malaysia towards becoming a more civilized, skilled, and inclusive nation, built upon a foundation of shared values and good governance (Anwar Ibrahim, 2023).

The MADANI framework is articulated through six core pillars: Sustainability (Kemampanan), Prosperity (Kesejahteraan), Innovation (Daya Cipta), Respect (Hormat), Trust (Keyakinan), and Compassion (Ihsan). Collectively, these pillars aim to foster a balanced development model that transcends mere economic growth, focusing instead on achieving social justice, national unity amidst deep-seated diversity, and robust, transparent governance (Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2023).

However, any national vision of this magnitude and ambition confronts a foundational challenge: the need for a solid and enduring referential framework. Noble slogans and declared values, while essential, require a deeper axiological, ethical, and constitutional anchor to grant them depth, resilience, and coherence. Such a framework is vital to protect the vision from political vicissitudes, selective interpretations, or instrumentalization, thereby ensuring it's just and comprehensive application. This reference point serves as the moral compass that directs the nation's trajectory and provides the shared criteria upon which performance is evaluated, and national consensus is built.

This study argues that Islamic constitutionalism, as uniquely embodied in the historic Medina Charter (*Ṣaḥīfat al-Madīnah*), offers precisely such an authentic and potent referential framework. The Charter, established by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) upon his arrival in Medina (c. 622 CE), represents not merely a historical document but a pioneering constitutional model. As the first written constitution in Islam, it laid down timeless principles for governing a pluralistic society based on the rule of law, contractual rights, and mutual responsibilities (Hamidullah, 1985; Serjeant, 19787 & Sadzali, 2019).

Therefore, this research aims to demonstrate that the principles and values embedded within the Medina Charter can and should constitute the foundational wellspring from which the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy draws its conceptual depth and ethical direction. By examining the Charter's core tenets—such as its redefinition of the Ummah as a political community, its establishment of contractual citizenship, and its unwavering commitment to justice and security for all—this study will illustrate its profound relevance to Malaysia's contemporary aspirations. The central thesis is that a conscious and holistic adoption of the Charter's spirit and principles can powerfully reinforce the MADANI agenda, enhancing its capacity to build a just Malaysian society, foster genuine civilizational coexistence, and address pressing challenges, including the imperative of guaranteeing the rights and dignity of all inhabitants. Adopting an analytical and foundational-comparative methodology, this paper will explore this critical relationship, arguing that the path to a successful "Malaysia MADANI" is substantively enriched by turning to this luminous model from a foundational period of Islamic history.

## **2. The Philosophy of Malaysia MADANI: Genesis, Pillars, and Aspirations**

A coherent analysis of any proposal to adopt a foundational reference for a contemporary philosophy first requires a clear and thorough understanding of that philosophy itself. This section provides a concise overview of the Malaysian MADANI

concept, examining its origins, its core principles, and its stated objectives, thereby establishing the necessary context for the subsequent analysis.

### **2.1. The Genesis and Context of the MADANI Framework**

The "Malaysia MADANI" concept was launched by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in January 2023, shortly after his appointment to office. Its introduction occurred within a specific political, social, and economic context. Malaysia, a nation characterized by profound ethnic and religious diversity, has long been engaged in a continuous effort to foster national unity and sustainable development. The MADANI framework emerged as a response to persistent challenges, including issues of governance, corruption, economic inequality, and social polarization, while also seeking to fulfill the aspirations of a new generation for a more progressive and equitable future (Anwar Ibrahim, 2023).

The very choice of the term "MADANI" is semantically and civilizationally significant. Derived from the Arabic root M-D-N, it relates to the city (madīnah), civilisation (madaniyyah), and civility (tamaddun). The term deliberately evokes the model of the city of Medina during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, renowned in Islamic tradition as the first well-organised, pluralistic, and just civil society. While this historical connection may not be the sole official interpretation, it provides fertile ground for the kind of linkage this study seeks to explore, suggesting a conscious attempt to ground a modern national project in a historically resonant and ethically rich tradition (Esposito & Voll, 2001). Thus, MADANI is positioned as a holistic vision that extends beyond purely material progress, aiming to build what is described as a "Civilized Nation" or a "Civil State" in its comprehensive sense—one that rests on values and ethics as much as it does on economic development.

In this context, the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy emerges as an ambitious national framework, officially introduced in early 2023 by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, in an act described by analysts as transformational leadership and strategic communication towards building a "Madani Ummah" (Aziz & Rusli, 2024).

### **2.2. The Six Core Pillars of MADANI**

The MADANI philosophy is structured around six interconnected core pillars or values that collectively form the general framework for the government's agenda across its civil service (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam Malaysia, 2023; Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia, 2023).

**Sustainability (Kemampanan):** This pillar emphasises the need for balanced development that preserves the environment and safeguards the rights of future generations. It advocates for a long-term vision that transcends short-term economic gains, ensuring ecological and social sustainability, a vision that aligns well with both the global Sustainable Development Goals and the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-Shari'ah) (Zakaria et al., 2024).

**Prosperity (Kesejahteraan):** This extends beyond mere economic growth to encompass the holistic well-being of all members of society. It aims to reduce economic disparities, ensure a dignified life for everyone, and promote shared prosperity.

**Innovation (Daya Cipta):** This pillar focuses on encouraging creativity and innovative thinking across all sectors as a driving force for progress and national competitiveness in a rapidly changing world.

**Respect (Hormat):** This involves fostering mutual respect for Malaysia's religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. It also includes upholding human rights, respecting the rule of law, and honoring national institutions.

**Trust (Keyakinan):** This pillar aims to build and restore trust between the government and the people, as well as among the different components of society. Its key instruments are transparency, accountability, and good governance.

Compassion (Ihsan): This represents a higher ethical value, signifying benevolence, excellence in action, empathy for the vulnerable, and a commitment to the common good that transcends narrow self-interest. (Iskandah et al., 2025).

These six pillars, taken together, reflect a national ambition to construct a society that is not only materially advanced but also ethically, morally, and socially robust.

### **2.3. Stated Goals and Aspirations**

Through the implementation of these pillars, the MADANI philosophy seeks to achieve a set of clear objectives. These include strengthening good governance and combating corruption by institutionalizing transparency and the rule of law; achieving sustainable and inclusive economic development, a vision operationalized through policies such as the "MADANI Economy" framework aimed at revitalizing the national economy (HSBC Business Go, n.d.) building a cohesive, harmonious, and tolerant society that respects diversity and promotes national unity; enhancing the quality of education, healthcare, and social services; and elevating Malaysia's standing on the regional and international stage as a model of a progressive and civilized nation.

Despite the clarity of these pillars and goals, any such renaissance project faces the challenge of ensuring its sustainability, effective implementation, and protection from political co-optation or conflicting interpretations. This underscores the critical need for a foundational reference that gives it normative weight and moral clarity, a role this paper argues the Medina Charter is uniquely suited to fill.

### **3. The Medina Charter: Reframing Ummah and Citizenship**

To understand the profound role that Islamic constitutionalism can play as a foundational reference for the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy, one must first engage in a precise and thorough grounding of the central concepts that shaped the state and society in the first prophetic experiment in Medina. This section deconstructs the concepts of Ummah (Community/Nation) and Muwatanah (Citizenship) as they were articulated and operationalized in the Medina Charter, highlighting their originality, inclusivity, and capacity to provide a solid foundation for a modern, diverse national identity.

#### **3.1. The Concept of Ummah: From a Community of Faith to a Political 'Community of the Pact'**

The term Ummah carries rich and layered meanings within the Islamic tradition. In the Qur'an, it primarily refers to the global community of Muslim believers, united by a shared faith and a universal civilizational mission. This is the "best community raised for mankind" (*...كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ*), (Qur'an, 3:110), characterized by its moderation and role as a "justly balanced community" (*أُمَّةً وَسَطًا*), that stands as a witness over humanity (Qur'an, 2:143).

The Medina Charter, however, took this foundational religious concept and brilliantly operationalized it in a concrete political and social reality, adding a revolutionary political and contractual dimension. The most pivotal clause appears at the very beginning of the document: "This is a writing from Muhammad the Prophet between the believers and Muslims from Quraysh and Yathrib and those who follow them and join them and struggle with them. They are a single community (ummah wāḥidah) distinct from all other people" (*هذا كتاب من محمد النبي بين المؤمنين والمسلمين من قريش ويثرب ومن تبعهم فلحق بهم وجاهد معهم، إنهم أمة واحدة من*) (*دون الناس*), (Ibn Hisham, 1955, Vol. 1, p. 501; Hamidullah, 1985). This text establishes the Ummah not only as a faith community but as a coherent and distinct political-social entity. This "single community" was a new polity that transcended the pre-Islamic tribal loyalties and blood feuds that had long plagued Medinan society, grounding collective identity in a shared allegiance to the prophetic leadership and the principles of the new constitutional document.

Crucially, the genius of the Charter lies in its inclusive extension of this concept of the Ummah to include non-Muslim groups, most notably the Jewish tribes of Medina, based on a political pact. The text unequivocally states, "The Jews of Banu 'Awf are a community with the believers (ummah ma'a al-mu'minīn). To the Jews their religion and to the Muslims their religion..." (﴿...وإن يهود بني عوف أمة مع المؤمنين، لليهود دينهم وللمسلمين دينهم﴾), (Al-A 'zami, 2016). This represents a radical and sophisticated innovation in political thought for its time. It signifies that the Ummah in the practical, political context of the Medinan state was not merely an "Ummah of Muslims" in the exclusive religious sense. Rather, it was closer to the concept of a "composite community" or a "community of the social contract" (ummat al-'aqd), which brought together different religious groups under a single political and legal framework (Ramadan, 2004). This comprehensive understanding, which masterfully combines the faith-based dimension for Muslims with a contractual political dimension that includes others, is precisely what gives Islamic constitutionalism its profound capacity to build stable and just pluralistic societies. It is this model that the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy can draw upon to forge a unifying Malaysian national identity that respects diversity and ensures the participation of all.

### **3.2. Contractual Citizenship (Muwatanah): A Paradigm of Rights and Responsibilities**

While the Medina Charter does not use the modern Arabic term *muwāṭanah* for citizenship, it laid down its functional substance and core principles in a remarkably clear and practical manner. It established a model of contractual citizenship rooted in a meticulously defined system of mutual rights, duties, and responsibilities binding all individuals and groups within the new polity. This provided an early and powerful articulation of citizenship based on a social contract.

This groundbreaking establishment of contractual citizenship offers "Malaysia MADANI" an inspirational model. However, its modern application requires an understanding of how contemporary factors, such as gender and urban-rural origins, influence the perceptions of citizenship and leadership among university students who represent the nation's future (Wan Mokhtar et al., 2025).

#### **3.2.1 Shared Identity and a Common Homeland**

A primary basis of citizenship is the definition of the politico-geographical space that unites all citizens. The Charter explicitly declared that the valley of Yathrib (Medina) is a "sanctuary (ḥaram) for the people of this document" (﴿إن يثرب حرام جوفها لأهل هذه الصحيفة﴾), (Al-Umari, 1994). This text not only delineates the sacred geographical boundaries of the new city-state but also identifies its citizens—"the people of this document" (ahl hādhihi al-ṣaḥīfah). They are the citizens of this nascent state, who share in its sanctity and bear the collective responsibility for its protection and defense. This created a powerful bond to a homeland and to the political system established therein.

#### **3.2.2. Clear Delineation of Rights and Responsibilities (The Essence of the Social Contract)**

The Charter was far from a mere declaration of general principles; it was a detailed social and political contract. It carefully specified the rights of the various contracting parties (the Muslims of various tribes and the Jews of various clans) while defining their corresponding obligations.

**Fundamental Rights:** Among the fundamental rights guaranteed to all citizens were: security of life, property, and honor; freedom of religious belief and practice; the right to justice and equity before the law, summarized in the powerful principle "The oppressed shall be given support" (﴿وإن النصر للمظلوم﴾); and protection from injustice and aggression.

**National Obligations:** Among the binding national obligations for all citizens were: mutual defense of Medina against external aggression; equitable contribution to the

common expenses required for defense ("The Jews shall contribute to the expenses with the believers so long as they are at war" - {وإن اليهود ينفقون مع المؤمنين ما داموا محاربين}); cooperation in righteousness and piety while renouncing wrongdoing; and sincere adherence to the provisions of the Charter as the supreme law of the land.

### **3.2.3. The Principle of Equality before the Law**

Although the Charter recognized the existence of distinct religious and cultural norms for each community, especially in matters of personal status law, the overarching principles it established regarding public security, criminal justice, mutual defense, and financial obligations applied to all citizens ("the people of this document") without discrimination based on religion or ethnicity. No group of citizens was above the law, and none was exempt from its core obligations (Fadlallah, 1995).

This groundbreaking establishment of a contractual citizenship, based on a clear balance of rights and duties and a commitment to equality and justice, offers "Malaysia MADANI" an inspirational and profoundly relevant model. It provides a historical and ethical precedent for building Malaysian citizenship on the foundations of equal rights, shared responsibilities, and a collective commitment to the nation, reinforced by the rich moral and legal heritage of Islamic constitutionalism.

## **4. Core Constitutional Tenets of the Charter and their Relevance to MADANI**

The Medina Charter was not limited to defining the overarching concepts of Ummah and citizenship. It went further to establish a complete and balanced system of core constitutional principles that formed the solid foundation for a new state and a just society. These timeless principles, with their depth, comprehensiveness, and civilizational precedence, are precisely what make the Charter a living and effective foundational reference for the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy. This section explores four of these core principles and analyzes their direct relevance to the pillars and aspirations of MADANI.

### **4.1. The Principle of the Rule of Law and a Supreme Authority**

The rule of law is the cornerstone of any stable, just, and rational system of governance. The Medina Charter established this vital principle with remarkable clarity and foresight by identifying a supreme, binding authority for adjudicating disputes and making final decisions. The Charter explicitly states: "Whenever you differ about anything, its reference is to God and to Muhammad" (وإنه ما كان بين أهل هذه الصحيفة من حدث أو { } وإلى محمد رسول الله { } اشتجار يخاف فساده، فإن مرده إلى الله عز وجل، وإلى محمد رسول الله (Ibn Hisham, 1955)). This clause establishes a definitive judicial and legislative authority, represented by the principles of divine guidance and the ultimate judgment of the Prophet in his capacity as head of state and chief justice. The existence of such a unified and binding authority for all "people of the document" prevented anarchy, guaranteed the impartial resolution of conflicts, and placed all individuals and groups under the supremacy of a single legal framework (Al-Rayyis, n.d.).

It provides a moral and historical anchor for the principle that no one is above the law, a system whose legitimacy depends on a culture of ethical communication between the state and its citizens (Jamil, 2024).

### **4.2. Relevance to MADANI**

This foundational principle of a supreme constitutional authority is directly mirrored in the MADANI pillar of Trust (Keyakinan). Trust in a political system can only be built when all institutions and individuals are subject to the authority of the constitution and the law. By drawing on this Islamic constitutional precedent, MADANI can reinforce its call for the supremacy of the Malaysian Constitution and the rule of law, ensuring that

governance is transparent, accountable, and free from arbitrary power. It provides a moral and historical anchor for the principle that no one is above the law.

#### 4.3. The Principle of Justice (ʿAdl) and Equality (Musāwāh)

Justice is a central and non-negotiable value in Islam. This was reflected in the core constitutional principles of the Medina Charter, which aimed to build a society where justice and fairness prevailed. The Charter's commitment to justice was absolute and universal.

It emphatically asserted the principle of "support for the oppressed" (وإن النصر للظلوم), making it a fundamental duty of the state to ensure justice for any victim, regardless of their identity (Al-Barakati, 1986). This protection was explicitly extended to non-Muslims, as a related clause states, "Whoever of the Jews follows us shall have support and equality; they shall not be wronged, nor shall their enemies be aided" (وإن من تبعنا من يهود، فإن له النصر والأسوة غير مظلومين ولا متناصر عليهم) (Al-Suhayli, 1992). This absolute and non-discriminatory conception of justice is a powerful reference point. Furthermore, the Charter established the principle of individual criminal responsibility ("No man is to be held guilty for the crime of his ally"), which aligns with the Qur'anic dictum that "no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (وَلَا تَزِرُ وَازِرَةٌ وِزْرَ أُخْرَى) (Qur'an, 35:18). This prevents collective punishment and guarantees individual justice.

Relevance to MADANI: This unwavering commitment to universal justice directly supports the MADANI pillars of Respect (Hormat) and Compassion (Ihsan). Respect for diversity and the rights of all citizens becomes meaningful only when it is backed by a system of impartial justice. The Charter's model empowers MADANI to champion a legal system that truly protects the vulnerable and ensures equality for all Malaysians, irrespective of their background. Compassion is not merely charity but is fundamentally expressed through the establishment of justice for the wronged.

#### 4.4. The Principle of Protecting Fundamental Rights and Freedoms

A key measure of any civilized society is its protection of fundamental human rights. The Charter laid down clear guarantees for these rights, making it a pioneering document in the history of human rights.

The Right to Life, Security, and Property: The Charter gave utmost importance to the sanctity of life, blood, and property, making any transgression against them a grave crime requiring just retribution ("Whoever kills a believer intentionally...shall be liable to retaliation, unless the heir of the victim is satisfied" - وإنه من اعتبط مؤمنا قتلاً عن بينة فإنه قود به - {إلا أن يرضى ولي المقتول}).

Freedom of Belief and Worship: As previously mentioned, the principle of "to the Jews their religion, and to the Muslims their religion" (لليهود دينهم وللمسلمين دينهم), stands as a historic constitutional affirmation of the right of each community to its faith and practices within the framework of the public order (Al-Dhahabi, 2016). This stems from the foundational Qur'anic principle of "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion" (لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ) (Qur'an, 2:256). stands as a historic constitutional affirmation of the right of each community to its faith and practices. This foundational principle for regulating Muslim and non-Muslim relations remains a vital topic of interest in contemporary comparative religious studies (Zailani et al., 2025).

The Right to Movement and Residence: The Charter guaranteed safe movement, stating that "he who goes out is safe, and he who stays in Medina is safe, unless he has committed injustice or a crime" (وإنه من خرج آمن ومن قعد آمن بالمدينة، إلا من ظلم أو أثم) (Ibn Kathir, 1988).

Relevance to MADANI: These guarantees provide a powerful Islamic constitutional basis for Malaysia's commitment to multiculturalism and human rights, a core aspect of the MADANI vision. This model helps frame the protection of the rights of all religious and ethnic groups not as a concession to modernity or external pressure, but as an

authentic expression of foundational Islamic principles. It lends moral weight and indigenous authenticity to MADANI's pledge to build an inclusive society where the dignity of every individual is protected.

#### **4.5. The Principle of Shared Responsibility and Social Solidarity (Takaful)**

The Charter did not overlook the importance of forging a strong, cohesive, and supportive community by embedding the principles of shared national responsibility and social solidarity into its legal framework.

It mandated collective responsibility for the common defense ("They shall have mutual support against any who attacks Yathrib" - {وإن بينهم النصر على من دهم يثرب}). It also instituted a system of social solidarity, stipulating that tribes must continue their pre-Islamic custom of cooperating to pay blood-money or ransom their captives, ensuring that no one was left to face catastrophic costs alone ("The believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them, but shall help him in kindness for ransom or blood-money" - {وإن المؤمنين لا يتركون مفرحًا بينهم أن يعطوه بالمعروف في فداء أو عقل} - (Ibn Hisham, 1955). The principle that "a neighbor is as oneself, not to be harmed or wronged" ({وإن الجار كالنفس غير}) extended this web of responsibility to the micro-level of society.

Relevance to MADANI: This integrated system of shared responsibility and solidarity provides a profound reference for the MADANI pillars of Sustainability (Kemampuan) and Prosperity (Kesejahteraan). True prosperity is shared prosperity, and sustainability requires a society where all members feel a sense of mutual responsibility for the collective good. The Charter's model can inspire MADANI to foster policies that strengthen social safety nets, promote a spirit of national service, and build a cohesive society where citizens actively contribute to the nation's well-being and security, moving beyond individualistic pursuits to a powerful sense of collective purpose. (Hamid et al., 2025).

### **5. Discussion: Opportunities and Challenges in Adoption**

The proposition of adopting Islamic constitutionalism, as represented by the Medina Charter, as a foundational reference for the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy holds both substantial opportunities and foreseeable challenges. A mature and realistic discussion requires honest appraisal of both. This section outlines the key benefits of such an approach before addressing the potential hurdles and proposing mechanisms to navigate them from a sophisticated and civilizational Islamic perspective.

#### **5.1. Opportunities and Foundational Benefits**

**Authenticity and Moral Depth:** Grounding MADANI in the principles of the Medina Charter provides the project with profound moral depth and historical authenticity. For Malaysia, a country with a Muslim-majority population, this linkage resonates deeply with its cultural and civilizational heritage. It transforms MADANI from a set of modern administrative goals into a project rooted in sacred history and enduring ethical values (AbuSulayman, 1992).

**A Unifying Framework for National Cohesion:** The Charter's principles, particularly its universal call for justice, its protection of all communities, and its foundation of contractual citizenship, offer a powerful, value-based framework for national unity that transcends ethnic and religious differences. These principles can constitute a shared moral ground to which all Malaysians can commit... This is not merely a theoretical proposal; scholars have already pointed to the Medina Charter as a foundational reference for navigating socio-religious relations in Malaysia's multi-ethnic context (Khasasi et al., 2020) and for practical applications such as inspiring contemporary Islamic city planning (Ismail & San, 2017).

**A Stable and Resilient Constitutional Anchor:** Islamic constitutional principles are characterized by stability in their core tenets and flexibility in their application. This

provides MADANI with a firm yet adaptable constitutional anchor, protecting its long-term objectives from the whims of short-term politics and ensuring its continuity towards the goal of a just society.

**An Endogenous Model for Progressive Governance:** Successfully implementing a MADANI model inspired by the Charter would present a compelling and authentic Islamic model of progressive, pluralistic, and just governance. This could serve as an inspiration not only for Malaysia but also for other Muslim-majority nations grappling with the challenges of modernity, diversity, and democracy (Ramadan, 2004). For example, the Charter's constitutional spirit and principles have been examined for their relevance to Indonesia's state ideology, Pancasila, and its 1945 Constitution (Elkhairati, 2019; Nurhadi, 2019).

**Inoculating Society Against Extremism:** Promoting a historically grounded, authoritative, and moderate reading of Islamic political thought—one that champions pluralism, rights, and justice as the Charter does—is the most effective antidote to extremist and exclusionary narratives. It helps fortify society, especially its youth, against radical ideologies by offering a compelling and authentic alternative.

## **5.2. Challenges and The Imperative of Non-Selective Application**

Despite the immense opportunities, adopting this framework is not without significant challenges that require wisdom and foresight.

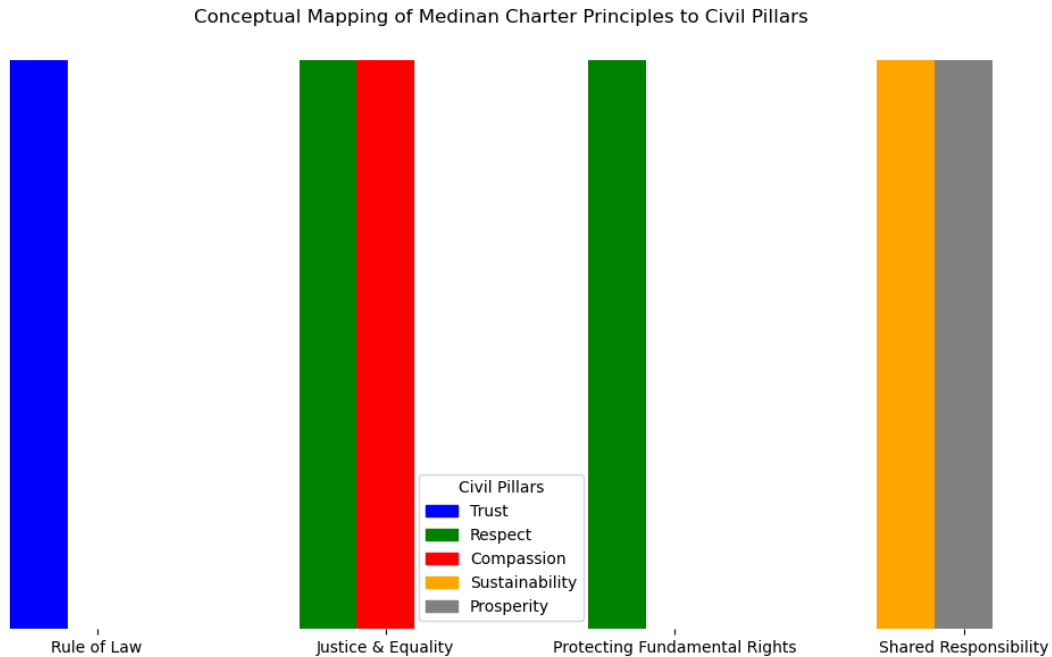
**The Challenge of Competing Interpretations:** Foundational religious and historical texts can be subject to diverse interpretations. There is a risk that some groups may attempt to impose narrow, literal, or exclusive readings of the Charter's principles, undermining its universal and inclusive spirit.

**The Challenge of Political and Social Resistance:** Change can be met with resistance from various quarters. This could come from conservative groups who view any re-interpretation as a threat, or from secularist groups who may be apprehensive of any framework rooted in a religious tradition. Indeed, recent studies highlight the challenge of ensuring public understanding and acceptance, which is contingent on how the philosophy aligns with the population's existing Islamic values (Lateh, 2024). Indeed, recent studies highlight the challenge of ensuring public understanding and acceptance, which is contingent upon how the philosophy aligns with the population's existing Islamic values (Lateh, 2024) and how it is portrayed and analysed in major media outlets (Hamzah & Yanfang, 2025).

**The Core Challenge of Universal and Non-Selective Application:** The most critical test of the MADANI philosophy's credibility and success lies in its ability to apply its declared principles of justice, compassion, and respect universally and non-selectively. This must extend to all individuals residing within Malaysia's borders, including those who may not hold full citizenship status, such as resident non-citizens, migrant workers, and asylum-seekers. The plight of forcibly displaced populations, such as Rohingya refugees, provides a stark and urgent case study.

Here, the referential power of Islamic constitutionalism becomes indispensable. The Medina Charter itself provided for "those who follow them and join them" (من تبعهم فالحق {بهم}), and guaranteed safety to all within its sanctuary "unless he has committed injustice or a crime." Islamic jurisprudence has a long and rich tradition of dealing justly with non-citizens, such as the *musta'min* (an individual granted safe passage and protection). This tradition mandates providing protection, upholding basic human dignity, and dealing with all individuals with justice and compassion (Ihsan) (Al-Qaradawi, 2001). For the MADANI philosophy, claiming the mantle of Ihsan while selectively excluding the most vulnerable from its circle of concern would represent a fundamental contradiction. The true test of its principles lies not in how it treats the powerful, but in how it upholds the dignity and rights of the stranger, the worker, and the refugee. A failure to apply these values universally would render the entire philosophy hollow.

Navigating these challenges requires a concerted effort. This includes fostering open and scholarly dialogue led by credible institutions; engaging in wise and balanced political discourse that builds bridges of trust; and developing educational and media programs that disseminate a sophisticated and compassionate understanding of Islamic constitutionalism (An-Na'im, 2008). Most importantly, it requires the political will to translate these sublime principles into concrete, just, and universally applied policies.



## 6. Conclusion

After this study, which has sought to establish that Islamic constitutionalism, as exemplified by the peerless model of the Medina Charter, offers an authentic, robust, and effective foundational reference for the contemporary "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy, several core findings and a foundational vision emerge.

This analysis has demonstrated, unequivocally, that the Medina Charter was not a transient political agreement dictated by fleeting circumstances. Rather, it constituted a pioneering and integrated constitutional model in the history of Islamic, and indeed global, political thought. It established timeless principles for the founding of a pluralistic, diverse society built on the firm foundations of a voluntary social contract, inclusive citizenship that transcends creed in the political sphere, absolute justice for all, collective security, constitutionally protected freedom of belief, and shared national responsibility.

The detailed comparative analysis revealed a profound and substantive congruence between the lofty principles laid down by the Medina Charter and the noble aspirations of the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy. This study has argued that these classical Islamic principles are not merely "compatible" or "similar" to some of MADANI's goals; they are, in their very essence, uniquely qualified to be the solid and enlightened foundational reference that the philosophy needs. It is from this wellspring that MADANI can draw its intellectual depth, its ethical legitimacy, its motivating force, and its operational standards.

This paper concludes that the conscious, creative, and holistic inspiration from the model of the Medina Charter and the heritage of Islamic constitutionalism offers a constructive path forward for the "Malaysia MADANI" national project. Such an inspiration is key to enabling Malaysia to build a modern civil state that rests on enduring

foundations of justice, fairness, responsible freedom, and civilizational coexistence. While potential and expected challenges exist in the implementation process—most critically, the need for universal and non-selective application of MADANI's principles to all inhabitants, including foreign residents and displaced populations, these challenges can be overcome. They require constructive dialogue, enlightened scholarly and jurisprudential reasoning (ijtihad) that honors the higher objectives of Islamic law (Maqasid al-sharī'ah), the political will for reform, and a return to the profound ethical and humanistic values with which Islamic constitutionalism is replete.

The optimal and most authentic path to the success of the "Malaysia MADANI" philosophy and the realization of its noble aspirations for Malaysia's future lies in its earnest, wise, and creative return to the authentic and timeless wellspring of Islamic constitutionalism. In the unique and inspiring model of the Medina Charter, it will find the light, guidance, strength, and legitimacy to direct its strategic path and its comprehensive program of action.

### **Recommendations**

Based on this study's conclusion that the Medina Charter offers a viable constitutional and ethical framework for Malaysia MADANI, the following policy-oriented recommendations are proposed:

- 1- Formalizing a Philosophical Keystone: To anchor the MADANI framework, it is proposed to formally recognize the core principles of Islamic constitutionalism specifically the Charter's emphasis on contractual citizenship, universal justice, and protected diversity, as a key philosophical and ethical reference in official policy documents and national charters.
- 2- Establishing a Scholarly Policy-Research Nexus: The creation of a dedicated research cluster or institute is advocated for. Its function would be to translate the historical principles of the Medina Charter into evidence-based policy solutions for contemporary challenges, such as social cohesion, economic equity, and the legal status of non-citizens, thereby bridging the gap between historical precedent and modern governance.
- 3- Developing a Societal Integration Strategy: A long-term strategy should be developed for integrating the civilizational values derived from the Charter into both the national education system and public discourse. This includes curating educational modules and fostering multi-stakeholder dialogues aimed at cultivating a deep-seated, shared understanding of responsible citizenship and mutual respect among all communities.

### **Acknowledgement:**

PROGRAM: THE FEATURES OF HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA: A CASE STUDY OF SELECTED MALAYSIAN STATES PROJEK: A SHARIAH VIEWPOINT ON THE FEATURES OF HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE BETWEEN MUSLIMS AND NON MUSLIMS IN MALAYSIA. PPPI/TRANSDISIPLINARI/FSU/USIM/112224

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