

Discovering The Convergence Between Religions and Cultures: An Effective Tool for the Peaceful Co-existence in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Religion, most of the time implicitly, creates culture because religion is also lived as a culture. Religion will always have a cultural "spinoff," because no community can exist exclusively on the basis of clear beliefs. Only when the dominant religion evolves as a culture—that is, as a symbolic, imaginary system that legitimizes the social and political order without making faith a requirement of communal life—can governance function. The distinction between a community and a society is that the foundation of a society is conformity rather than faith.

A religious "culture" unwilling to join a more advanced civilization is sometimes perceived as the divide between secularists and believers. Primitive people are consummate believers; civilized people, on the other hand, maintain a residue of belief, but they are also skeptical—and the more skeptical, the more civilized. Culture is frequently associated with religion, and civilization with more general civic phenomena grouped under the title of "civilization." Civilization is frequently thought to be "better" than culture and religion since it is more widespread. While much of the study focuses on religion's negative aspects, it's also crucial to recognize religion's potential for peace building through interfaith dialogue and other religiously driven activities. It was discovered that countries with a higher religious membership tended to be slightly more peaceful. Religion as well as cultures can serve as a motivators or catalysts for achieving peaceful co-existence by resolving conflicts and fostering strong social solidarity. Nevertheless, they can also operate as a type of social cohesiveness, and greater involvement in society, like membership in other groups, can improve the links between citizens, so strengthening the bonds of peace.

Pakistan is a country with diverse culture as well as rich historical civilization and majority Muslim population that makes it a perfect place for all the communities to interact and gain a lot of positive aspects from

each other's culture and religion. This will definitely instill tolerance in us which now a days is very much lacking in our society and root cause of many unrests. Also, such inter-communal interactions will drive us towards harmony peaceful co-existence and acceptance of each other's beliefs and cultural traditions.

How religion, culture and civilization are inter-connected and how do these three important factors of society intersect with each other? What impact will this relation and intersection be on peace-building process? How can Pakistan's rich cultural diversity provide a way forward to potential peaceful co-existence among different communities?

This research paper will investigate the gaps that are a breakdown in the peace-building process. Also, it will shed light on a potential roadmap that can be followed using religion, culture and civilization to encourage peaceful co-existence between different communities with special reference to Pakistani society.

Keywords: Religion, Culture, Civilization, Peaceful Co-existence, Pakistan

Introduction:

Many Christians and Muslims say secular culture is sterile, solely technical, boring, and culturally inadequate. "The present world, insofar as it is a secular world (...) is thoughtless, heartless, and gutless," according to Christian theologian John Betz, and Muslim cultural critic Ziauddin Sardar believes that secularists' goal is to "dominate, isolate, alienate, destroy, and finally bore all civilizations to death with uniformity"¹ Secularism, according to Sardar, means the end of history through monoculture, whereas "religious worldviews accept diversity of spiritual experiences".

Surprisingly, secularists attack Christians from the same perspective. They frequently view religion's failure to accept cultural values because they are "merely cultural" as nihilistic, and this anti-culture attitude as a rejection of precisely the values that they hold dear. Furthermore, they find religious people's dogmatism irreconcilable with their own beliefs about how values should be communicated. In other words, while they are not completely opposed to the idea of religion being absorbed into culture, they believe religious values are incompatible with cultural values when expressed in

purely religious rather than cultural terms. In light of this perplexing situation, it's important to separate culture from another term: civilization.

In this paper, I use cognitive patterns or paradigms that I believe are prevalent in Christian, Muslim, and secular traditions to examine the relationships between religion and culture, as well as religion and civilization. Many incorrect beliefs about religion and secularism can be traced back to misconceptions about how religion interacts with culture and civilization. I'm working with four paradigms: (1) secularism is civilization and thus "good," while religion is culture and thus "evil"; (2) secular civilization is "evil," while religion is culture and thus "good;" (3) secular civilization is "evil," while religion is culture and thus "good;" (4) secular civilization is "evil," while religion is culture and thus "good;" (5) secular civilization is "evil," while religion is culture and thus "good (3) Religion is civilization, thus it is "bad," whereas culture is "good." (4) Religion is civilization, so it is "good," whereas culture is "evil." Finally, I show that religion can escape both religious and scientific dogmatism only by integrating religion into society.

1. Culture, Religion, and Civilization:

A religious "culture" unwilling to join a more advanced civilisation is sometimes perceived as the divide between secularists and believers. According to Edward Jayne, "primitive people are consummate believers; civilised people, on the other hand, maintain a residue of belief, but they are also skeptical—and the more sceptical, the more civilised".² Culture is frequently associated with religion, and civilization with more general civic phenomena grouped under the title of "civilization." Civilization is frequently thought to be "better" than culture and religion since it is more widespread.

1.1 Culture and Civilization:

It is vital to clarify the difference between culture and civilization as precisely as possible before evaluating the relationships between religion, culture, and civilization.

Although the distinction between culture and civilization is not well-established in English, it has shown to be relatively relevant in other European languages. “Culture” (from the Latin *cultura*) is the older term, and it closely resembles the Latin etymology in both form and substance; “civilization” (from the Latin *civis*) was formed later and evolved swiftly, particularly in France and England during the eighteenth century.

To put it another way, the former refers to mechanical, technical, economic, and social truths, whereas the latter conceptualises spiritual, intellectual, and creative occurrences - individual or collective actual human manifestations rather than abstract systems. Civilisation has traditionally alluded to some utilitarian, outward component of human existence that is subservient to *Kultur*, which was viewed as the “real” being of humans, society, and their achievements, particularly in German usage. Norbert Elias discovered that the concept of civilisation has always had a "expansive" quality to it, and that it depicts a process referring to something that is continually in motion and going forward.³ Culture serves the opposite role of delimitation, and it is only possible because of this delimitation. The term culture is conceptually powerful only as long as it excludes most phenomena from itself, as it is the manifestation of a people's individuality. As a result, the French began to use the term culture to refer to anything that can be learned through education (manners, arts, and sciences for example); the Germans whittled down "culture" to more personal and personalised manifestations based on art and philosophy.

By linking civilisation with the most alienating kinds of manufacturing, Johann Gottfried Herder (1774) opposed all generalising forces of civilization and made the gap between culture and civilization very clear. Around 1880, a persistent antagonism between civilization and culture is firmly formed in German philosophy; German Romanticism creates an idealist understanding of *Kultur*, whilst civilisation in France takes on increasingly broad and supra-national meanings.

In this paper, I employ the terms culture and civilization in the sense that Herder and Elias use them. I avoid E. B. Tylor's (1958) broad definition of "culture" as a phenomenon that encompasses everything; Tyler's concept of culture was intended to liberate culture from its elitist connotations, which

it had acquired through the work of his contemporary Matthew Arnold's ideas will also be discussed in this paper.

2. Four Paradigms:

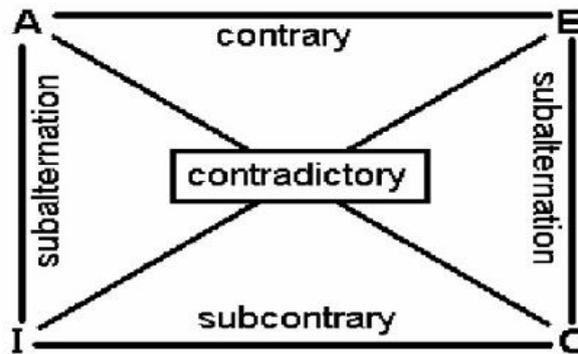
The four subsections that follow analyse the links between culture, religion, and civilization by crystallising four paradigms that I feel are deeply established in current discussions on these topics. First, it will be demonstrated how secular civilisation can be viewed positively by defining its stance in opposition to "backward" religion. The more backward religion is perceived as culture because this secular mindset identifies itself as progressive civilization. Then I describe the inverse pattern, in which secular civilization is described as a bad element that must be shielded from religion and culture. Then I present the perspective that views religion as a form of civilisation and argues that this "good civilization" should be used to battle "bad secular culture." Finally, I describe the polar opposite of this paradigm, in which religion is viewed as civilization and declared to be "bad," whereas culture is viewed as "good." The four paradigms can be summarised as follows:

(A) Good secular civilization	vs.	evil religion-culture
(E) Evil secular civilization	vs.	good religion-culture
(I) Good civilization-religion	vs.	evil secular culture
(O) Evil civilization-religion	vs.	good secular culture

Culture and civilization are seen as opposites in all of the preceding assertions. Given the symmetrical nature of the complete system of oppositions, the Aristotelian square of oppositions can be used to represent the links between the four paradigms:

**Good secular civilization
vs. evil religion culture**

**Evil secular civilization
vs. good religion-culture**



**Good civilization-religion
vs. evil secular culture**

**Evil civilization-religion
vs. good secular culture**

The top axis of the picture considers civilization to be secular and culture to be perhaps religious, however the two ideas disagree due to their diametrically opposed relationship. The A-proposition considers civilization to be good and religion to be evil, whereas the E-proposition considers the good and bad values to be inverted. Religion is classified as civilization on the bottom axis, whereas culture is classified as secular. Positive and negative values are distributed differentially using the subcontrary connection once again.

Civilization is viewed as “good” in the proposals on the left vertical axis. The subaltern link that connects ‘A’ and ‘I’ allows civilization to reappear as beneficial, albeit for new reasons. The same can be said for the right vertical axis, which portrays civilization as twice as terrible, but for different reasons each time. The diametrically opposite perspectives are linked by the contradicting relationship that runs across the square.

2.1 Good Secular Civilization vs. Evil Religion-Culture (A)

The equation of "religion equals culture" has repeatedly occurred in tandem with another equation: "secularism equals civilization" from a

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Western perspective. The goal of European colonisation of Muslim countries was to provide civilisation to uncivilised Muslims and democracy to those who lived under authoritarian governments. “Islam was not to be examined as a theology, but as a culture, in the meaning adopted by Herder, Kant, or Schiller,” according to the French who invaded Northern Africa.⁴ Of course, this was supposed to be a lower culture; nonetheless, as a "culture," it may be in opposition to civilization, which stands for modernity. Even religious individuals eventually came to believe in this paradigm: Saba Mahmood cites Egyptians who still regard “such quotidian attentiveness to religious practise as passé, or uncivilised” religious practice.

In this setting, the Muslim religion and its extremist offshoots may come to symbolise the antithesis of civilisation. “The supremacy of the West for the last two centuries has served to frame the debate about values largely in terms of those who are civilised, a synonym for Western principles, against those who are backward (Muslim),” writes Martin Jacques.⁵ In ordinary politics, the paradigm reappears on a regular basis. “Civilized people throughout the world are speaking out in horror—not simply because our hearts ache for the women and children of Afghanistan,” said US First Lady Laura Bush in a radio address in 2011.

Her husband had stated earlier and more explicitly – in the guise of a false dichotomy – that there is "no neutral ground in the war between civilization and terror (...) because there is no neutral ground between good and evil, freedom and enslavement, and life and death". Though religion is not specifically addressed, it is evident that fundamentalist religion is the non-civilized object.

Religious fanaticism is the epitome of non-civilization in all of these circumstance. As a result, Thomas Friedman follows the above pattern, declaring that he has discovered the “true problem” of terrorism, which is a confrontation between backwardness and civilization. In his New York Times editorial, he quotes Wafa Sultan, an Arab-American psychiatrist:

The conflict we are experiencing is not a battle of religions or civilizations. (...) It's a conflict between a Middle Ages

mentality and a twenty-first-century mentality. It's a battle between civilization and primitivism, between civilised and primitive, between barbarism and reason. (...) On the one hand, there is a conflict between human rights and their violations, and on the other hand, there is a conflict between human rights and their violations. It's a battle between those who treat women like animals and those who treat them like people.⁶

This is a simplification since fundamentalist "backwardness" sees itself as civilisation, implying that it is not opposed to modernity but rather seeks a different sort of civilization. Fundamentalism, as illustrated below, prefers the A-proposition ("good civilization-religion vs. evil secular culture") over the A-proposition ("good civilisation-religion vs. evil secular culture"), and hence views religion as civilization. Second, the "other side" (here referred to simply as "civilization") is more complicated than the civilization-backwardness dichotomy implies.

The A-proposition is confirmed by Terry Eagleton. He establishes the religious view as a "merely cultural" vision damaged by relativism, to which he opposes the secular, "civilizational" view based on robust enlightened principles, by arguing that religious fanaticism is antagonistic to "all values dear to civilization." "The line runs between civilization (in the sense of universality, autonomy, individualism, rational speculation, etc.) and culture (if we interpret by this all those unspoken attachments and spontaneous convictions)," Eagleton writes.⁷

2.2 The Contrary: Evil Secular Civilization vs. Good Religion-Culture (E)

Others agree that religion is culture and that civilization is secular, but they consider civilization as the "evil" part that must be protected from religion-culture. While culture (and religion, with which it was equated) has been condemned in the preceding situations for being incompatible with current civilizational standards, culture (in all of its relativism) can also be used to convey one's opposition to civilizational progressivism.

This is, however, a difficult strategy. When hearing of “religion vs. civilization” clashes, many people will think of fundamentalism and religious terrorism, which seem to go against all of the principles that civilised people hold dear. However, contrary to popular belief, pitting religion against civilization is not a common fundamentalist tactic. Fundamentalists, as indicated below, consider their religion as more of a civilisation and lean more towards the I-proposition.⁸

Sardar formulates an E-proposition because for him,

On the one hand, there is militant, dogmatic secularism, which regards literature as its new religion, an absolute in which the high priests of modern culture, the artists, should enjoy unfettered freedom. On the other hand, there is the religious worldview, which stems from the existence of the sacred and the concepts of sanctity, tolerance, and responsibility in the exercise of freedom.⁹

The E-proposition (“evil secular civilization vs. good religion-culture”) can also appear in the form of an internal social critique, such as when Muslims consider the relationship between religion and society. Universal social structures (which are plainly recognised civilizational structures due to their universal character) can be termed bad, whilst specific religion-cultures can be declared excellent. Islam (as a religion) can be described as “feminist,” whereas Muslim society can be described as “misogynistic”.¹⁰ This suggests that while Islam as a religion-culture has a positive potential, its values have so far been unable to be implemented inside Arab society's general and civilizational structures because those structures are not receptive to those values. In any event, this approach reintroduces the idea that religion and civilization are incompatible, but this time with the assumption that (Arab) civilization is bad and their religion-culture is excellent.¹¹

2.3 Good Civilization-Religion vs. Evil Secular Culture (I)

From a Muslim perspective, religion can be viewed as bringing one closer to civilization, owing to the tight relationship that exists between the concepts of *din* (religion) and *medina* (city) (city). The prophet Muhammad moved from Mecca to Yathrib, which was later renamed Medina, which meaning "city." *Din* grew from a religious community into a civic society that represented not just faith but also civilisation, and fundamentalist Islam-state equations merely support the 'religion equals civilization' equation.

However, seeing religion as civilisation is not an exclusively Islamic trait; the pattern can also be found in the United States, where religious zealots previously declared that "Christianity was the only basis for a healthy society".¹² Religion, not culture, was meant to be the focus here. "We had a religious version of our national destiny," writes Reinhold Niebuhr, "which saw the significance of our nationhood as God's endeavour to forge a fresh beginning in the history of mankind".¹³ In general, Protestantism has been regarded in America as a civil religion, because religious and political principles in America, like in Islamic countries, were "so linked as to be inseparable," as Alexis de Tocqueville remarked in the 1830s.¹⁴

Evangelical Christians frequently portray their "Intelligent Design" views in a scientifically advanced manner, implying that they seek to seem — at least momentarily — as anything other than religious. When discussing creationism or bioethical imperatives, they frequently base their arguments on a natural law rather than a Christian rule.¹⁵ If science isn't available, "common sense" will be employed as a non-religious foundation. This is especially evident in the United States, where evangelical discourse frequently invokes "common sense," indicating a peculiar desire to define religion and science on an equal footing, as offered by the Enlightenment. According to Marsden:

The devotion for science as a means of comprehending all elements of reality was practically boundless in a country born during the Enlightenment. Evangelical Christians and liberal Enlightenment thinkers both claimed that the cosmos was ruled by a rational system of laws established by an all-knowing and benevolent creator. Science's purpose was to

uncover such principles, such as Newton's laws of physics that were supposed to exist in all disciplines.¹⁶

Muslim reformer and puritan movements like Wahhabism, for example, make an explicit endeavour to reinvent religion as a kind of civilisation. This is what sets Wahhabism apart from other versions of Islam, which have traditionally allowed for a greater synthesis of religion and culture, even in the sense of religious incorporation into culture. Prior to the 1960s, "religious piety and practise across the Muslim world were anchored in Muslim traditions of study and practise while also being rooted to some extent in local traditions and practises," according to Ahmed.¹⁷ Wahhabism, with its obvious difference between civilizational religion and relativist (secular) culture, has become increasingly prevalent throughout the Muslim world since the 1960s.¹⁸

Religious persons who follow the I-proposition paradigm see the lack of absolutes in the secular model as a moral flaw that would eventually turn this "culture" into a technocratic society because it lacks actual values. However, unlike the proponents of the E-proposition, they propose replacing secular culture with religious civilization rather than secular culture with religious culture. Fundamentalism's recent spectacular rise, which adheres to a rigid "religion as religion" line, tries to separate religion from culture, and hence must be classified as an I-proposition paradigm, perceiving religion as civilization.¹⁹

2.4 Evil Civilization-Religion vs. Good Secular Culture (O)

The O-proposition paradigm can be used to develop a critique of the above I-proposition. The proponents of the O-proposition, like the I-proposition, believe that religion is civilization, but they want to defeat it with the help of secular culture. Any search for facts more absolute than those offered by culture will easily "kill culture," because a religious culture founded on absolute truths will turn culture into a rigid model of civilization. They discovered that civilizational rigidity frequently takes on the characteristics of both hard scientific progressivism and religious dogmatism. Those who are secular believe that critically reviewed standards of sincerity are

enough to build a culture. In other words, their secularism is cultural: it is opposed to any religion that claims to be civilized, rather than religion itself.

2.5 How some Scholars Disregard the Square

When culture and civilization are not correctly identified, as happens frequently, the square becomes dysfunctional. The analysts' language frequently switches between culture and civilisation at random. Anything religious, for example, can be superficially labelled as belonging to culture, even though it exhibits many characteristics of civilization. For example, historian Bassam Tibi refers to democratic and human rights ideals as "products of cultural modernity"²⁰ and dismisses the prospect of defining them as civilisation.²¹

The most obvious issue is that reality is frequently squeezed into one of two axes: top or bottom, with all vertical movements ignored. In other words, the most common way to criticise a position is to take the opposite position (thus moving horizontally on the square), rather than using subalternative or conflicting deductions. Eagleton, for example, considers the existence of the I-proposition but groups all "religion" together in the form of an E-proposition.²² As a result, he portrays religious fundamentalism as an anti-civilization attitude (shifting from his own A-proposition to an E-proposition), which is just as rash as equating religion with culture. Many people will discover that Eagleton is correct in his assessment of religion: does religion not contradict scientific civilization by proclaiming, for example, that evolution does not exist? Faith, on the other hand, disputes evolution not because of a relativistic culture, but because of a religion that claims to be more absolute than science. This should be labelled as an I-position, as it pits civilization-religion against secular culture. Vertical interferences of this nature are uncommon.

Wahhabism commits the same error. Absolute ideals defined by a puritan ideology are the foundation of everything for Wahhabism, just as universality, autonomy, individuality, and logical speculation are the foundation of (secular) civilisation for Eagleton. Wahhabism, however,

cries out against the very “culture” principles that many secular people hold dear as civilizational norms: democracy, pluralistic political institutions, human rights, and liberal tolerance, because those values are merely cultural for them. The reason for this is that it ignores the fact that the square's top axis exists.

2.6 Overcoming the Square

The square has been proven in the preceding section to be overused in a restricted way. Another issue is that the square's four places and five logical connections do not necessarily reflect current conditions. The square's fault is that it is too rigid: social reality is occasionally coerced into the square, most likely because its logical consistency is so appealing. Leila Ahmed, like Tibi, combines culture with civilization when she writes that “the Western interpretation of the veil [is] a proof of Islam's inadequacy as a religion, culture, and civilisation”.²³ In theory, Ahmed ascribes the A-proposition to “Westerners,” despite the fact that this is obviously reductive.

Many Western people are likely to accept the veil as a cultural symbol and are only disturbed by its religious connotations; however, they are disturbed by those connotations not because they find this particular religion inferior or opposed to their own religion or civilization, but rather because they find the dogmatic way in which the religion is practised objectionable. In other words, they are troubled by the fact that this practise, which should be referred to as “cultural” in every sense, accentuates its universal importance by promoting itself as a civilizational religion.

This indicates that, because they oppose “civilization-religion,” they incline toward an O-proposition rather than the A-proposition to which Ahmed tries to pin them down. Simultaneously, they do not resist “civilization-religion” by erecting a wall of “secular culture” around them (as the O-proposition would suggest), but rather by adopting an attitude that does not exclude “religion-culture” as well. In other words, the square is missing a

combination of the E- and O propositions. “Evil civilization-religion vs. good religion culture” would be the title of this new concept.

Many people writing about religion don't seem to think outside the box. This can sometimes result in bizarre constellations. As seen above, Betz (who represents the E proposition) portrays secular individuals as stereotypical enlightenment thinkers who see reason as the only foundation of civilization. For Betz, returning to tradition (which enlightenment frequently scorns) naturally entails returning to the objects that he considers to be the essence of culture: religion and faith. Surprisingly, despite coming from the opposite end of the square (A-proposition), Eagleton makes quite identical assumptions. His thesis is that secular enlightenment people can only be against religion because religion is essentially cultural, as he states in the passage where he defines culture as "all those unreflected attachments and impulsive convictions".²⁴

Eagleton's perspective must be viewed as a direct response to a post-secular pattern that places a heavy emphasis on the union of religion and culture. Eagleton decides to reject the influence of tradition in this argument because he prefers universal principles and reason. However, his reasoning ultimately plays into the hands of Eproposition advocates such as Betz and Sardar. Eagleton, like them, conflates culture and religion and condemns both for their relativism. This problem would be solved by the aforementioned new proposition (“Evil civilization-religion vs. good religion culture”). We need to take a closer look at this new paradigm.

3. Overcoming the Square through “Sweetness and Light”

By differentiating culture from civilization, the preceding exercise was able to disentangle the paradox of culture (as a part of religion and at the same time as a feature that might be perceived as opposed to religion). The four paradigms assigned to the square of oppositions have been demonstrated to be solid, although they can also be reductive. The second goal was to demonstrate that the square is too rigid to reflect all possible scenarios. It

can be a useful conceptual instrument, but it also precludes the proper conception of the “religion-culture” alternative. The "thinking inside the square" replies equally dogmatically to a dogmatic view of religion as civilization. To demonstrate that cultural forms of religion are the most effective means of deconstructing civilizational forms of religion, an extension of the logical model is required.

To propose such an extension, I'd like to use a formula devised by Victorian critic and poet Matthew Arnold to trace the term culture. Furthermore, Arnold distinguishes culture from the above-mentioned concept of civilisation. Culture, according to Arnold, is a condition of civilization that contains both truth and beauty, as well as a quality he refers to as "sweetness and light".²⁵ This definition of culture is intriguing in the current context since it emphasises "aesthetic" elements on the one hand, while remaining related to a certain level of enlightenment on the other. Arnold's emphasis on the aesthetic quality (beauty) of culture in conjunction with "light" is rare. Though "light" is clearly associated with enlightenment, Arnold's concept of "light" does not limit culture to civilization; rather, the "light" metaphor can even suggest a religious dimension to culture. The enlightenment heritage is not rejected, but confirmed in Arnold's model of culture; on the other hand, culture becomes "sweetness and light" not through slavish adherence to the enlightenment's scientific, universal, and rational principles, but rather through subtle reflections on the self and the other, which can produce "sweet" qualities like tolerance.

Arnold isn't the only one who uses a stylistic-existentialist approach to define culture. Clive Bell, an English art critic, makes the same point over a century later, albeit he refers to the trait in question as civilization rather than culture: “tolerance, receptivity, magnanimity, unshockableness, and desire for, and sympathy with pleasure, are prime characters of civilization”.²⁶ Bell also mentions a certain level of aesthetic sensitivity, stating that “the cultured man will be highly sensitive to aesthetic impressions, and not of one sort only”.

Apart from that, Arnold and Bell's use of the term culture is similar to how some religious people use the term religion today: culture is "the great help

out of our present difficulties"²⁷, and it is capable of opposing the type of materialism that emerges "in a Britain that holds that coal and iron constitute England's greatness". A civilisation founded on universality and rational speculation is antithetical to this culture.²⁸

It is also in opposition to fundamentalist religious ideas because it is not based on absolute qualities, truths, or essences. Puritans, Bell claims, are the cultural enemies because "for all their good intentions, they are the enemies of good, because they make it more difficult than it needs to be for themselves and everyone else to have good states of mind".²⁹

4. Impact of religion, culture and civilization on peaceful co-existence in Pakistan:

Societal conflicts arising from political, cultural, ethnic, racial, geographical, and religious disputes are one of the world's current social challenges. Humans are tired of heartbreaking, disastrous, and catastrophic fights and conflicts these days, and they are looking for a means to live in a peaceful and non-violent society. This article asserts that religion provides significant foundations for the culture of peace and the fulfilment of a non-violent society while evaluating the notion of peace and, in contrast, expressing all forms of violence. The teachings of Islam are emphasised in this article. I shall now argue that interaction, peace, tolerance, and friendliness are the essential principles of Islam, whether in dealings with Muslims or non-Muslims, and that war is forbidden in Islam except in self-defense. In other words, in Islam, war is a defensive rather than an attacking endeavour. Given that world religions account for a sizable portion of the global population, their perspectives on themes like tolerance, peace, and reconciliation are crucial. "There will be no peace among the peoples of this globe unless there is harmony among the various religions," argues Catholic theologian Hans Kung (1996).

In recent years, the number of persons killed in battle has been exceptionally high. Millions have killed in the Congo, Sudan, and other

African countries since the 1990s, while hundreds of thousands have died in the former Yugoslavia, Iraq, Yemen, and Syria. As a result, civilians account for more than 80% of the casualties, and the number of refugees and displaced persons has risen dramatically. As a result, there is a greater need than ever for reconciliation, peace, and tolerance.

Pakistan was founded on the 14th of August, 1947, on the basis of Islamic doctrine. At the time of partition in 1947, the majority of Pakistan's population was Muslim, with non-Muslim individuals accounting for over 23% of the country's population. Non-Muslims now make up about 3.7 percent of the population, owing to a variety of obstacles such as employment discrimination, societal discrimination, forceful conversion to Islam, intimidation, violence, and more.

4.1 Treatment of Non-Muslim Minorities by Islam's Primary Sources in a Muslim Political System:

Love, affection, kindness, and mercy are the epistemic foundations of Islam. As a result, Islam firmly supports religious liberty. "There is no compulsion in religion," the Qur'an affirms. "From now on, the correct path will be distinguished from wrong" (The Holy Qur'an, 2: 256). This passage makes it clear that no one has the authority to force another person to accept Islam. Whoever does this has committed a sin. It's worth noting that this verse also advises Muslims to protect the fundamental rights of others, notably their religious freedom. People have the option of accepting or rejecting Islam as a religion. Islam also teaches people to accept Islam after conducting intellectual research and examination. The Holy Qur'an (The Holy Qur'an, 2: 164; 5: 58; 13: 4) frequently invites humanity to ponder, think, contemplate, and observe. As a result, Islam requires people to adopt faith with deep conviction based on factual evidence and observation. The Qur'an encourages people to believe in God but never forces them to do so. The Qur'an recognises that uniting all human beings under a single religion is an unachievable job that God does not intend.

The Qur'an makes no mention of fighting battles in order to convert people to Islam. Most modern scholars believe that all of the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) battles were fought in self-defense or to avert an impending invasion. For five years, the early Muslims were tormented and tortured in Makkah. However, authorization to fight was not granted early on, and they were asked to patiently bear their treatment. "Pardon and forgive until God sends his command," the Qur'an instructs Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) (The Holy Qur'an, 2: 109). God only gave them permission to fight in defence after they were pushed out of their homes and town, and those who remained were abused. Jihad became a duty "to preserve religious freedom and self-defense" (The Holy Qur'an, 2: 190) and "to defend oppressed people" (The Holy Qur'an, 4: 75).

"Unto you, your moral law, and unto me, mine!" says the Holy Qur'an, guiding humanity to avoid any type of confrontation between people of different religious faiths. (109: 6 in the Holy Qur'an). "Allah created and supervised the entire humanity, and the most adored among them is he, who is most useful for mankind," the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said. (Al-Tabrani, Hadith No. 10033, n.d.) "O, people!" the Prophet (PBUH) stated in his final sermon, Hajja Tul-Wada (The Last Pilgrimage). No Arab is superior to a non-Arab, and no non-Arab is superior to an Arab, since your Lord is One. There is no black that is better than red, and there is no red that is better than black. Then piety is the sole criterion for supremacy and honour."

4.2 Considerations on How to Promote Social Harmony among Religious Groups:

We are fomenting discord and hatred by threatening to destroy the sacred scriptures of other religions. There can be no cooperation or understanding without conversation and dialogue. The impasse in interreligious dialogue is caused by each religion's assertion that it has absolute truth and that no truth exists outside of it. In other races, though, winners are not required. When it is possible, one should forgive others because one backward step

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opens a larger path in front of oneself. "If someone hits you on the right cheek, turn to him the other cheek," according to the Bible. If we practised tolerance to the utmost extent feasible, we could cut the number of disagreements on the planet in half. Living together would be much easier if religions were less exclusive and more inclusive, and we should collectively assume our societal obligations to promote religious peace in society. When every faith takes a stand and acknowledges its obligations, the impact will be multiplied by a factor of ten. "Harmony gives rise to unity; unity gives rise to power," said Xunzi, a brilliant thinker from ancient China. We build power by uniting our strengths, and we triumph with this power" (Wang 2013).³⁰

The experience of working together and sharing tasks could foster mutual trust and respect among the diverse faith groups. To promote religious concord, we should avoid utilising religion for nefarious purposes. People, sects, and groups have always attempted to exploit faith for evil reasons throughout history.

To eliminate any opportunity for wrongdoing by individuals or groups, all religions should protect the purity of faith and restore religion to its real face.

Similarly, we should resist and condemn the use of religion as a banner for establishing hallowed ground for disputes. We must guard against religious fanaticism and extremism in order to promote religious concordance. Every religion strives for world peace, promotes universal love, preaches goodness, and condemns violence. When people stray from the path, they can become subject to fanaticism and intolerance, and eventually be dragged into fanaticism. Provocation of hatred and terrorist attacks carried out under the banner of religion are tremendously damaging and put the entire globe in risk. Furthermore, all religions should put their teachings into practise and spread compassion, love, restraint, and moderation.

4.3 The Initiatives Undertaken in Pakistan:

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In a multi-religious society, honouring the diverse faith underpinnings is also critical for ensuring national unity and concord.³¹ For example, if the majority of Muslims embraced diverse religious sects such as Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists, inter-religious relations would be strengthened. Furthermore, the Pakistani community must consider embracing and welcoming religious diversity as an essential aspect (Abdullah et al. 2016).³²

Pakistan's government may play a vital role in maintaining inter-religious harmony by implementing a variety of initiatives and tactics. As a result, the government created a variety of activities, laws, and initiatives to ensure that all members of Pakistani society, regardless of religion or ethnic origin, have the opportunity to socialise. The preservation of social harmony has been on the state's national agenda for the past decade. Pakistan's Supreme Court has ordered the establishment of a National Council for Minorities' Rights. Under the judgement of the Supreme Court of Pakistan, it was proposed that a National Council for Minorities' Rights be constituted (IV). The National Council for Minorities' role should include, among other things, monitoring the practical application of constitutional rights and protections guaranteed to minorities under Pakistan's Constitution. The Council would also force the federal and provincial governments to structure policy recommendations in order to preserve and protect minorities' rights (Supreme Court of Pakistan: Original Jurisdiction 2014).

It is important to remember that religious peace is fundamental for maintaining interfaith relations. The government strives to maintain a harmonious community, and on January 16, 2018, in Islamabad, a National Narrative (Paigham e Pakistan) for a Peaceful and Moderate Pakistani Society Based on Islamic Principles was presented under the supervision of government officials.

"The national counter-terrorism narrative would help eradicate terrorism and prove important in rehabilitating the individuals who lost their path owing to bad propaganda of aberrant forces," declared Mamnoon Hussain, Pakistan's former president, at the introduction of this National Narrative.

Paigham-e-Pakistan has been working to combat religious extremism since 2018 by hosting workshops, seminars, and conferences in academic institutions, colleges, and universities to promote religious harmony and unity in diversity. In January 2019, the Paigham-ePakistan Centre for Peace and Reconciliation Studies released a fatwa (declaration) signed by over 1800 Pakistani religious scholars condemning suicide attacks, armed uprisings, and terrorism in the name of Sharia.

The Christian Study Centers Rawalpindi (CSC) in Pakistan also plays an important role. The CSC was founded in 1967 as a branch of the Henry Martyn Institute (HMI, Hyderabad, India) to promote interfaith dialogue, tranquilly, and good relations among Pakistan's many faiths.³³ The Christian Study Centre Rawalpindi provides excellent services and makes significant contributions to Pakistan's interfaith dialogue, social harmony, and peaceful coexistence.³⁴ It's worth noting that, as a result of these efforts, the Pakistani government has begun to provide military forces to guard Pakistan's temples and churches from radicals. The Forman Christian College and University in Lahore is run by Christians, and many Christians from over Pakistan attend. These Christian institutions operate independently of the government or any other group in society.³⁵

Interfaith dialogue and sectarian concord have been repeatedly called for by the government at the highest levels to promote tolerance, moderation, and minority rights (Pakistan International Religious Freedom Report 2019). Religious tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and religious liberty problems were discussed at meetings attended and hosted by embassy staff alongside government officials, leaders of all sects and faiths, and non-governmental organisations. Officials from the embassy looked into these organisations to see whether they could develop programmes and projects to promote religious tolerance.

In Pakistan, the government, policymakers, and a large number of dedicated individuals are working hard to assist religious minorities in overcoming the problems mentioned in this study. Religious segregation has been an efficient tool for Pakistan's religious and political elites to obtain more power, and political and religious leaders have utilised religion to achieve this goal, emphasising on "divide and rule" and suppressing the

position of "unity in diversity." Religious segregation has become ingrained in Pakistani culture and a powerful tool for inciting violence against non-Muslims.

Extremist organisations have successfully brainwashed students in madrasahs (religious schools), teaching them to believe that everyone but Muslims are unbelievers and enemies of Islam and Muslims.³⁶ This encourages extremism by instilling jihadist ideology in the adherents of extremist groups, motivating them to murder people of other faiths in the name of God. As a result, any exploitation of religion for nefarious reasons must be condemned. Similarly, we should resist and condemn the use of religion as a banner for sanctifying conflicts. We must guard against religious fanaticism and extremism in order to promote religious unity. Under the guise of religion, encouragement to hatred or even terrorist activity is damaging and a menace to the globe.

5. Conclusions:

Many of the world's main religions are represented in Pakistan. Pakistan's multicultural history is enhanced by its diverse cultural and religious heritage, which should not lead to communal or religious disputes. Unfortunately, today's Pakistan lacks tolerance for religious minorities. The current reality in Pakistan is in sharp contrast to Muhammad Ali Jinnah's multifaceted ideal of a tolerant Pakistan, which he stated at the state's inception. Extremist groups exploit minorities, and some elements of society harbor animosity toward them, removing religious minorities from mainstream society only because of their faith. To end this scenario, new generations in the country must be educated that both Islam and the national Constitution aspire to treat religious minorities with justice and fairness. In any multi-religious society, everyone must accept and comprehend religious difference. Understanding the religion and teachings of different religious organizations may lead to acceptance and respect for other religious beliefs. Whether a person is Muslim or non-Muslim, the

freedom to practice religion is a fundamental human right that must not be overlooked in any society or country.

6. Recommendations:

To ensure religious and cultural harmony in our country, the government of Pakistan should consider the following directions and recommendations and implement them at grass root level to achieve the full fruits of peaceful coexistence between various ethnic communities that make our motherland diverse, peaceful and unique place to live:

- a) Develop adequate courses for cultural, religious harmony and social tolerance at the secondary and postsecondary levels of education.
- b) Constitute a government task team to devise a plan for promoting religious and cultural tolerance.
- c) Curb hate speech in social media
- d) Create a national council for the rights of minorities.
- e) Create a special police unit with specialized training to defend minorities' places of worship.
- f) Ensure that the necessary policy directives on quotas for minorities in all services are enforced at the federal and provincial levels.
- g) When religious minority' constitutional rights are abused or their places of worship are desecrated, swift action is required, including the filing of criminal charges.

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⁵ Jacques, Martin. 2009. When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New World Order. New York: Penguin.

⁶ Friedman, Thomas L. 2006. "Dubai and Dunces" in New York Times March 15.

⁷ Eagleton, Terry. 2008. "Die Gottesfrage" in Die Zeit 20, 8 Mai 2008, 46.

⁸ Friedman, Thomas L. 2006. "Dubai and Dunces" in New York Times March 15.

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- ²¹ Jacques, Martin. 2009. *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New World Order*. New York: Penguin.
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<http://sonar9.com/selection/EO7m6l8Rk6,proxy.html>
- ²³ Ahmed, Leila. 2011. *A Quiet Revolution: The Veil's Resurgence, from the Middle East to America*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
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