

Tolerance in Islam in Comparison with Western Tolerance

“Transformations of the Concept of Tolerance and Its Foundations”

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a comparative examination of the concept of tolerance in both Islamic thought and Western intellectual traditions, focusing on their philosophical roots, historical motivations, and practical manifestations. It demonstrates that tolerance in Islam is grounded in an inherent ethical and theological framework shaped by the objectives of Sharia and the values of justice, benevolence, and human dignity, and is embodied in historical examples such as the Constitution of Medina, the Hilf al-Fudul pact, and the coexistence witnessed in al-Andalus and Norman Sicily. By contrast, Western tolerance emerged within contexts of religious and political conflict, resulting in a functional concept primarily concerned with managing difference through legal and procedural mechanisms rather than a stable moral commitment. The comparative analysis reveals that the Islamic model is characterized by ethical consistency and a broader humanistic outlook, whereas the Western model historically fluctuates with social and political circumstances. The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of integrating shared human values from both traditions to cultivate a global culture of coexistence, enhance security and peace, and safeguard societies against extremism and hatred.