

Assessing the Capacity of the Qur'anic Principle of Peace for the Just Resolution of Disputes among Communities

Abstract

The Qur'an's approach to peace and war constitutes a central issue in Qur'anic studies and social exegesis, particularly within political theology. Scholarly discourse has often reduced Qur'anic teachings to a binary opposition between verses on peace and those on fighting. Utilizing a descriptive-analytical methodology and a contextual, network-based framework, this study analyzes verses pertaining to peace and conflict, demonstrating that the Qur'an neither advocates perpetual warfare nor supports passive peace. The analysis reveals that a comprehensive examination of interconnected verses produces a "Situation-Oriented" model for conflict regulation, wherein the governing principles for confrontation between individuals and communities are determined by behavioral circumstances rather than solely by religious identity. In this model, non-combatants are entitled to righteousness and justice; faithful treaty partners are owed fulfillment of covenants; those seeking protection are granted security; and aggressors or covenant-breakers are subject to limited, purposeful confrontation. The study concludes that Qur'anic peace is justice-oriented, restorative, and multilayered. Initially, it emphasizes ethical prevention of conflict; subsequently, it prioritizes reconciliation and dialogue; in cases of aggression, it prescribes just containment of violence; and ultimately, it resolves conflicts through justice and the restoration of relations. Thus, the capacity of Qur'anic teachings is best understood through an integrated analysis of verses related to war and peace, with the resolution of disputes among communities framed as a model for the "Just Regulation of Conflict" rather than a mere ethical injunction against war.

Keywords: Peace in the Qur'an, Fighting, Reconciliation, Regulation of Disputes among Communities, Justice-Oriented Peace.

Introduction

The resolution of disputes and the management of intra- and inter-community conflicts are central concerns within the social sciences, significantly contributing to the health, stability, and cohesion of societies. These conflicts may arise among individuals and groups or at broader levels involving communities, nations, and adherents of different religions. Consequently, the approaches to addressing disputes and the methods employed for their resolution are critical topics in social, ethical, legal, and religious scholarship. Rational and just dispute resolution fosters coexistence, security, and the restoration of social relations, whereas inadequate responses can exacerbate hostility, erode social trust, and promote violence. Persistent conflict underscores the necessity of re-examining intellectual and religious resources that may help reduce discord and promote peace.

Islamic teachings, and particularly the Holy Qur'an, offer significant potential for advancing peace, reconciliation, and the restoration of social relations through a comprehensive network of ethical, legal, and social principles. A core tenet of Qur'anic teachings is the principle of peace and the prioritization of reconciliation over conflict. The Qur'an acknowledges the reality of conflict and the possibility of war within societies, and accordingly, provides a series of verses aimed at regulating human and social relations. These include calls to truth, the observance of justice, avoidance of transgression, fulfillment of covenants, cessation of hostilities when the opposing party seeks peace, just arbitration, and reconciliation. Therefore, peace in the Qur'an is not merely an ethical recommendation but serves as a strategic principle for managing disputes and regulating inter-community relations.

The central problem of this study is that, on the one hand, numerous verses of the Holy Qur'an indicate peace, reconciliation, justice, fulfillment of covenants, and avoidance of aggression. On the other hand, there are verses concerning fighting and confrontation with aggressors. Therefore, explaining the relationship between these two groups of verses and determining how they can be understood systematically, as well as identifying the necessary sequence and stages for achieving ultimate peace, constitutes the fundamental problem in understanding the Qur'an's approach to the process of resolving disputes among communities. The present study seeks to systematically elucidate the principle of peace in the Holy Qur'an and reconstruct its capacities for resolving disputes by examining, within a single interconnected network rather than separately, the verses related to relations among believers, social groups, and the interaction of the Islamic community with other communities.

This study's primary innovation, in contrast to previous scholarship, which has variously addressed the rulings of *jihad*, the limits of fighting in Islam, Islam and violence, peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims, or ethical and exegetical analyses of peace and reconciliation, lies in its network-based rereading of verses related to peace, reconciliation, justice, covenants, and conflict. The study examines the principle of peace as an organizing rule within the interconnected network of Qur'anic verses and systematically elucidates its relationship with mechanisms for resolving disputes at individual, intra-religious, and inter-social levels.

A further innovative aspect of this study is its examination of all verses related to war and peace within their revelatory context and according to the generally accepted chronological order of revelation. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of the development of these teachings over time.

The principal question of this article is: ‘What is the logic governing the numerous Qur’anic verses related to conflict and confrontation with the other, and how are these verses arranged in a puzzle-like configuration in which they complement one another?’ ‘To what extent can this logic be formulated as a step-by-step model defining the necessary stages for resolving disputes among communities?’

The present study also seeks to answer the question of when, according to the Qur’anic logic, peace and reconciliation take precedence over conflict and confrontation, and what mechanisms are proposed for realizing them.

The hypothesis of the study is that, within the Qur’anic system, peace is neither marginal nor merely an ethical recommendation; rather, it constitutes a strategic and organizing principle for regulating relations and resolving disputes, while fighting acquires legitimacy within the framework of repelling aggression. More importantly, by bringing together the verses related to peace and fighting, a precise conceptual framework can be developed that teaches humanity how to manage conflicts from beginning to end by following a defined path and what course of action to adopt at each stage in order to attain the ultimate goal of lasting peace.

١. Conceptual Framework and Analytical Review of the Research Literature

This section analyzes key concepts related to peace and reviews the existing literature to clarify the position of the present study within the broader scholarly discourse.

١.١. Conceptualization of Peace and Its Derivatives in the Qur’an

The lexical and Qur’anic meanings of the term "Peace" and its derivatives require clarification as a foundational step.

١.١.١. The Lexical Meaning of Peace

The term peace is used in Arabic lexicographical sources primarily in two general senses: first, as the opposite of corruption; and second, as reconciliation and the resolution of disputes among individuals. *Ibn Manẓūr*, *Farāhīdī*, and *Rāghib Iṣfahānī* regard *ṣalāḥa* and *ṣalāḥ* as opposites of corruption (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: ٢, ٥١٦; Farāhīdī, ١٩٨٩ AD/١٤١٠ AH: ٣, ١١٧; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, ١٩٨٣ AD/١٤٠٤ AH: ١, ٤٨٩). Likewise, *Ibn Manẓūr* and Qarashī define peace as reconciliation among people and *Iṣlāḥ* as the establishment of affection and the termination of conflict (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: ٢, ٥١٧; Qarashī, ١٩٥١ AD/١٣٧١ AH: ٤, ١٤٥). Rāghib also considers one of the semantic implications of this root to be the elimination of hostility and the restoration of human relationships (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, ١٩٨٣ AD/١٤٠٤ AH: ١, ٤٨٩). Accordingly, in the Arabic lexicographical tradition, peace refers both to the removal of corruption and to restoring human relationships to a state of harmony and reconciliation.

١,١,٢. The Meaning of Peace in Qur'anic Usage

An examination of the verses of the Holy Qur'an indicates that the root (*ṣ-l-ḥ*) is used in several semantic fields, the most important of which include the following:

A) Removing Corruption and Restoring Proper Order

In verses such as "And do not cause corruption on the earth after it has been set right," (al-A'rāf: ٥٦) *Iṣlāḥ* is presented in opposition to corruption and indicates refraining from corruption after the establishment of proper order.

B) Reconciliation and Ending Conflict

In verses such as "And reconciliation is best" (al-Nisā': ١٢٨) and "Then they made peace between them," (al-Baqarah: ١٨٢) peace and *Iṣlāḥ* are used in the sense of reconciliation, conciliation, and the resolution of disputes among individuals. This usage presents peace as a practical means of managing conflict.

C) Reconciliation as a Divine Act or Value-Laden Process

In verses such as "He will set their condition right," (Muḥammad:٢) "He will rectify your deeds," (al-Aḥzāb:٧١) and "And make my offspring righteous," (al-Aḥqāf:١٥) *Iṣlāḥ* is presented in the sense of improving, putting in order, or rendering something worthy, either as an act performed by God or as something requested from Him.

In this study, "peace" specifically denotes reconciliation, conflict resolution, and the reconstruction of human and social relations. This interpretation is situated within the broader meaning of *Ṣalāḥ*, which encompasses the removal of corruption, the establishment of just order, and the restoration of relationships to their proper state.

١,١,٣. Derivatives of Peace in the Qur'an

The root (*ṣ-l-ḥ*) and its derivatives appear in the Qur'an in verbal, infinitival, and nominal forms. This study primarily focuses on those derivatives that, within the context of human, social, and inter-community relations, emphasize reconciliation, restoration of relations, and the resolution of disputes.

In addition, the term "*Silm*" is regarded in some lexicographical sources as having a semantic relationship closely related to peace (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, ١٩٨٣ AD/١٤٠٤ AH: ١, ٤٢١).

١,٢. Analytical Review of the Research Literature

The discussion of verses concerning peace and war in the Qur'an has been examined in contemporary Qur'anic studies, social exegesis of the Qur'an, theology and Islamic jurisprudence, peace studies, international law, and security studies. Overall, the existing literature can be categorized into several principal approaches:

١,٢,١. The Defensive-Peace-Oriented Approach

According to this approach, the governing principle of the Qur'an is peace, justice, coexistence, and the rejection of aggression. At the same time, the verses concerning fighting pertain to specific circumstances such as defense, the removal of *Fitnah*, confrontation with oppression, and responses to covenant violations. Verses ٣٩ and ٤٠ of Surah *al-Hajj* and verses ١٩٠ and ١٩٣ of Surah *al-Baqarah* are among the most important textual bases for this approach. Among classical exegetes, emphasis on the prohibition of transgression and the necessity of observing the limits of warfare can be found in the works of Ṭabarī, Qurṭubī, Fakhr Rāzī, and Ibn Kathīr. Among contemporary Muslim thinkers, Muhammad Abū Zahrah, Mahmūd Shaltūt, Faḍl al-Raḥmān, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī, and Murtaza Mutahhari, despite differences in their interpretation of certain verses, have generally regarded Qur'anic *jihad* as defensive, deterrent, or reactive (Shaltūt, *al-Qur'an wa al-Qitāl*; Abū Zahrah, *International Relations in Islam*; Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *al-Mīzān*, commentary on *al-Baqarah*: ١٩٠-١٩٣). Among non-Muslim scholars, some works by Reuven Firestone, John Kelsay, and Rudolph Peters are also close to this approach.

١,٢,٢. The Classical Jurisprudential Approach

In traditional Islamic studies, verses concerning war and peace have primarily been examined within three fields: exegesis, jurisprudence, and *Sirah*. Exegetes such as Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Fakhr Rāzī, Qurṭubī, Ibn Kathīr, and Ṭabrisī have analyzed the verses concerning fighting in relation to such issues as the occasions of revelation, context, general and specific expressions, unrestricted and restricted rulings, and abrogating and abrogated verses. In Islamic jurisprudence, these verses have been addressed in chapters dealing with *jihad*, *siyar*, *aman*, *hudnah*, *jizyah*, and the rulings concerning prisoners of war, and have been transformed into legal

rules governing the relations of the Islamic community with others. The literature on *Sirah* and *Maghāzī* has likewise provided a historical context for understanding these verses through accounts of events such as *Badr*, *Uḥud*, *Aḥzāb*, *Ḥudaybiyyah*, the Conquest of Mecca, and *Tabūk*. Nevertheless, the emphasis in many cases on non-definitive historical reports has prevented the principle of peace from being formulated as an organizing rule that transcends specific rulings concerning war and peace (Ṭabarī, commentary on al-Baqarah: ١٩٠; Qurṭubī, commentary on al-Baqarah: ١٩٠ and al-Anfāl: ٦١; Fakhr Rāzī, commentary on al-Ḥajj: ٣٩-٤٠; Ibn Kathīr, commentary on al-Baqarah: ١٩٠-١٩٣).

١,٢,٣. Orientalist and Western Academic Studies

An examination of the works of Watt, Donner, Sinai, Kelsay, Firestone, *Afsaruddīn*, and *Abū Nimir* indicates that the Western and Orientalist literature on war and peace in the Qur'an has proceeded along four major lines: "Historical, legal-ethical, critical approaches to the violence-oriented image of Islam, and peace-oriented approaches."

The first is the historical and contextual approach, which analyzes verses concerning peace and fighting in connection with the circumstances surrounding the formation of the early Muslim community, the relations between Muslims and polytheists and the People of the Book, and the political and social developments of the early Islamic period. The works of scholars such as Rudy Paret, Montgomery Watt, Fred Donner, and Nicolai Sinai can be placed within this framework. The strength of this approach lies in its attention to historical context and its avoidance of abstract readings. Its limitation, however, is that the normative and trans-historical capacity of the verses to formulate a principle of peace and regulate social conflicts sometimes receives less attention.

The second is the conceptual, legal, and ethical approach, which examines *jihad* and fighting in relation to the legitimacy of war, the limits of the use of force, and the ethical constraints governing armed conflict; works such as those of John Kelsay, Majid Khadduri, and David Cook fall into this category. The significance of this approach lies in moving the discussion from historical description to the level of legal and ethical theorization. Nevertheless, its primary focus is generally on the conditions under which war is legitimate rather than on reconstructing peace as a prior and organizing principle within Qur'anic logic.

The third approach concerns a critical rereading of the war-oriented image of Islam and an emphasis on the multilayered nature of the concept of *jihad*. Scholars such as Reuven Firestone, *Asmā Afsaruddīn*, and Juan Cole have sought, by distinguishing the Qur'anic, exegetical, jurisprudential, and political dimensions of *jihad*, to criticize reductionist interpretations of Islam. The strength of this approach lies in highlighting elements of tolerance, dialogue, covenant, and the restriction of violence. However, in some formulations, criticism of the violence-oriented image of Islam does not culminate in the extraction of a coherent model of the principle of peace in the Qur'an.

The fourth is the peace-studies and conflict-resolution approach, which is particularly evident in the works of *Muḥammed Abū Nimir*. This approach focuses primarily on the capacity of Islamic sources for mediation, reconciliation, violence reduction, and the restoration of social relations. Its strength lies in connecting Islamic studies with contemporary literature on peace-building and conflict resolution. Its limitation in some works, however, is that applied analysis takes precedence over textual analysis, and the relationship between conflict-resolution models and the internal structure of Qur'anic verses is not systematically explained (Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*; Firestone, *Jihad*; Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in*

Islam; Cook, *Understanding Jihad*; Afsaruddīn, *Striving in the Path of God*; Abū Nimir, *Nonviolence and Peace Building in Islam*).

Overall, Western scholarship has opened important avenues for research on war and peace in the Qur'an by highlighting the historical context of revelation, raising legal and ethical questions, criticizing stereotypical representations of Islam, and drawing attention to the potential for peace-building. Nevertheless, a considerable portion of this scholarship either remains at the level of historical description, approaches the Qur'an through external frameworks, or fails to reconstruct the principle of peace as an organizing rule within the network of Qur'anic concepts. Accordingly, the present study seeks, through a critical engagement with the findings of this scholarship, to elucidate the principle of peace in relation to concepts such as reconciliation, justice, fulfillment of covenants, rejection of aggression, prevention of *Fitnah*, and restriction of fighting, on the basis of the Qur'an's internal logic.

١,٢,٤. The Hermeneutical and Objective-Oriented Approach

Within this approach, verses concerning war and peace are interpreted in light of the overarching objectives of the Qur'an and Islamic law, such as justice, preservation of life, removal of oppression, human dignity, fulfillment of covenants, and preference for just peace. According to this perspective, understanding the verses concerning fighting is not possible merely through a literal and atomistic reliance on certain texts; rather, the relationship among the text, the context of revelation, the structure of Qur'anic discourse, ethical foundational principles, and the objectives of Islamic law must be taken into account. This approach is associated with criticism of the theory of the extensive abrogation of verses concerning peace and with the distinction between their "Original Meaning" and their "Normative application in the present." The

hermeneutical approach takes a step beyond the historical approach: "That is, it acknowledges the historically influential contexts but does not stop there; instead, it rereads them in light of the overarching objectives of Islamic law. Historicism may arrive at a merely descriptive conclusion. In contrast, objective-oriented hermeneutics is norm-generating and seeks to derive rules and ethical orientations from the text that are also applicable to the present."

Among objective-oriented thinkers, one may mention *Shāṭibī*, *Ibn ‘Āshūr*, *‘Allāl Fāsī*, *Jāsur A‘ūda*, and *Yūsuf Qarḍāwī*. Among contemporary hermeneutical approaches, *Faḍl al-Raḥmān*, *Muḥammad Arkoun*, *Khālīd Abū al-Faḍl*, and *Mohammed Abū Nimir* may also be mentioned (*Shāṭibī*, *al-Muwāfiqāt*; *Ibn ‘Āshūr*, *Objective al-Sharī‘ah al-Islāmīyyah*; *Auda*, *Objective al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law*; *Rahman*, *Islam and Modernity*; *Abou El Fadl*, *Speaking in God’s Name*).

١,٢,٥. Research Gap and Position of the Present Study

A review of the literature indicates that existing studies have each shed light on a particular aspect of the issue of peace and war in the Qur’an. Nevertheless, three major gaps remain. First, relatively few studies have reconstructed the principle of peace as an organizing rule within the network of Qur’anic verses. Second, the relationship among concepts such as peace, reconciliation, justice, covenant, prohibition of aggression, and defensive fighting has not been explained as a coherent system. Third, the capacity of this system to resolve disputes among communities has rarely been examined in the form of a practical, step-by-step model. The present study seeks to address this gap, to some extent, through an analysis of Qur’anic discourse and attention to the objectives of Islamic law.

٢. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing descriptive-analytical methods and relying on library-based, text-oriented data collection. The methodology aims to transcend mere description by providing a systematic analysis of the "Principle of Peace" as a macro-model within Qur'anic logic. Verses were purposively selected based on their direct or indirect relevance to the regulation and resolution of disputes.

The selection criterion for verses was their relevance to one of three principal levels: "Prevention of conflict, regulation of confrontation during conflict, and restoration of relations to a state of peace."

۳. Findings: The Capacity of the Principle of Peace for Resolving Disputes from the Qur'anic Perspective

In addressing human, social, and inter-community conflicts, the Holy Qur'an provides a normative, network-based system for regulating disputes. Within this system, peace constitutes one of the principal foundations of the Qur'anic ideal of order. On the one hand, the Qur'an promotes peace, reconciliation, justice, benevolence, fulfillment of covenants, and acceptance of reconciliation; on the other hand, in situations involving aggression, *Fitnah*, expulsion, covenant violation, rebellion, and organized oppression, it recognizes fighting as a limited, purposeful, and terminable instrument. This study elucidates the "Qur'anic system for regulating disputes."

Within this system, the ruling governing relations with others is determined not merely on the basis of religious identity, but according to the legal, behavioral, and political circumstances of the parties involved. Accordingly, the Qur'an distinguishes among different groups, including non-combatants, faithful treaty partners, covenant-breakers, aggressors, instigators of *Fitnah*, rebels, and those who oppress the vulnerable, and prescribes an appropriate directive for each. This

constitutes one of the overlooked capacities of the Qur'an in the field of resolving disputes among communities.

In the findings section, an effort has been made to follow, to a considerable extent, the chronological sequence of revelation of the verses under discussion. An examination of the chronological development of the verses also indicates that Qur'anic discourse begins, at its early stages, with an emphasis on self-restraint, tolerance, forgiveness, gracious speech, and avoidance of escalating conflict, and culminates in the regulation of social and political conflicts within a legal, ethical, and normative framework.

٣,١. The Qur'an Speaks of "Ethical Peace": Reducing Tension before the Outbreak of War

In addition to legal and political peace, the Qur'an addresses a deeper layer that may be termed "Ethical Peace." Verses such as "Repel [evil] by that which is best," (Fuṣṣilat:٣٤; al-Mu'minūn:٩٦) "Whoever pardons and reconciles," (al-Shūrā :٤٠) and "Good and evil are not equal" (Fuṣṣilat:٣٤) demonstrate that the Qur'an emphasizes restraining the psychological and social drivers of hostility. These verses constitute the first stage of the "Theory of dispute resolution," because they clarify that, from the Qur'anic perspective, many conflicts take shape at the level of language, resentment, and reciprocal behavior before they ever reach the level of fighting. Thus, at its first stage, peace in the Qur'an is preventive and anti-hostility in nature. This point, considered alongside the verses of Surah *al-Hujurāt* concerning the avoidance of suspicion, ridicule, spying, and backbiting, provides a more comprehensive picture. In his commentary on verse ٩٦ of Surah *al-Mu'minūn*, Allamah Ṭabāṭabā'ī states: "Repay the evil you see from them with good." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٧٣: ١٥, ٩٢) *Majma' al-Bayān* likewise states, in a similar vein: "Repel the evil of evildoers through forgiveness," adding that this directive

applied at a time when the command to fight had not yet been issued (Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۳۷۲ SH: ۱۷, ۷۸).

۳.۲. "Fitnah" in the Verses Concerning Fighting: A Key to Understanding the Purpose of War and Its Relationship to Peace

One of the central issues in understanding the verses concerning fighting is the interpretation of the concept of *Fitnah*. In verses ۱۹۱-۱۹۳ of Surah *al-Baqarah* and verse ۳۹ of Surah *al-Anfāl*, fighting continues until *Fitnah* has been removed. If *Fitnah* is interpreted vaguely and expansively, it can provide grounds for the unlimited expansion of warfare. However, when understood in light of the context of the verses, the Meccan experience, expulsion, religious persecution, pressure to renounce faith, and deprivation of religious security, it becomes clear that *Fitnah* in this context refers less to mere disbelief or doctrinal disagreement than to an oppressive and disruptive system that undermines freedom of faith and security in religious life. In interpreting these verses, Ṭabāṭabā'ī, considering their context, understands *Fitnah* as referring to religious persecution, expulsion, and prevention of the practice of religion, rather than simply the existence of disbelief (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۷۳: ۲, ۶۱). Ṭabrisī likewise interprets *Fitnah* as the severe affliction inflicted upon believers by the polytheists and their prevention from practicing their religion (Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۳۷۲ SH: ۲, ۵۱۰).

Verses ۱۹۲ and ۱۹۳ of Surah *al-Baqarah* also state: "But if they cease ... then there is to be no aggression except against the wrongdoers." Among Sunni exegetes, *Fakhr Rāzī* and *Qurṭubī* both draw attention to the point that the cessation of *Fitnah* entails the cessation of the legitimacy of fighting, since the verse, through the phrase "But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression," rejects the continuation of war after hostilities have ceased (Rāzī, ۱۹۹۹ AD/۱۴۲۰ AH: ۵, ۲۹۱; Qurṭubī, ۱۹۸۵ AD/۱۳۶۴ SH: ۲, ۳۵۳). This interpretation reinforces

the argument of the present article that war in the Qur'an is purposeful and terminable, and that the objective of fighting in the Qur'an is defined not as "Imposing Religion," but as "Eliminating mechanisms that oppose religious freedom and justice." This understanding is more consistent with verses such as "There is no compulsion in religion," (al-Baqarah: ٢٥٦) "Then, would you compel the people?" (Yūnus: ٩٩) and "So whoever wills, let him believe; and whoever wills, let him disbelieve." (al-Kahf: ٢٩) Accordingly, in seeking to eliminate *Fitnah*, the Qur'an aims to remove coercion and religious persecution, not to eliminate freedom of religious dissent.

٣,٣. Fighting in the Qur'an as an Instrument for Preserving Just Peace, Not as a Violation of the Principle of Peace

The verses concerning fighting do not necessarily stand in opposition to the principle of peace. Rather, in many cases they should be understood as an instrument for preserving a just order and eliminating conditions that are incompatible with peace. Surah *al-Baqarah*: ١٩٠ states:

"And fight in the way of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress."

In this verse, the legitimacy of fighting is restricted by two fundamental conditions: First, which the opposing party is engaged in fighting; and second, that the response does not cross the boundary into transgression. Thus, fighting here is not presented as the normal state of relations, but as a response conditioned by aggression.

In the Qur'an, fighting is restricted by the phrase "Those who fight you"; the phrase restrains it "But do not transgress"; and it is brought to an end by the phrase "But if they cease." The Qur'an thus presents a model of constrained, defensive-reactive, and terminable warfare. Accordingly, fighting in the Qur'an should be understood as part of a system for controlling conflict.

In his interpretation of this verse, *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, taking into consideration the context of verses ١٩٠-١٩٣, regards the subject of fighting as those who are engaged in fighting the Muslims and derives from the phrase "Do not transgress" a prohibition against exceeding legitimate limits (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٧٣: ٢, ٥٩). *Ṭūsī* likewise understands this verse as prohibiting both initiating aggression and transgression in the manner in which warfare is conducted (*Ṭūsī*, n.d.: ٢, ١٤٣).

Among Sunni exegetes, *Ṭabarī* explicitly states that the fighting referred to in this verse is directed against those who fight the Muslims, not against every religious opponent (*Ṭabarī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ٣, ٢٨٩). *Qurṭubī*, in his commentary on the same verse, also discusses juristic opinions concerning the prohibition against killing women, children, the elderly, and monks who do not participate in warfare, placing these rulings under the principle of "Do not transgress." (*Qurṭubī*, ١٩٨٥ AD/١٣٦٤ SH: ٢, ٣٤٧) Thus, even within the classical exegetical tradition, fighting in the Qur'an is not absolute or unconstrained.

Furthermore, verses ٣٩ and ٤٠ of Surah *al-Ḥajj* grant the first permission to fight to those who have been wronged, expelled from their homes, and subjected to threats against their places of worship. In these verses, the Qur'an regards fighting as legitimate even for the protection of monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques from destruction. From this perspective, warfare in the Qur'an can be understood not as serving the elimination of religious diversity, but as serving the preservation of the possibility of religious life and preventing its violent destruction. This represents one of the less frequently recognized capacities of the Qur'an for theorizing interreligious peace.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī understands these verses as concerning the granting of permission to fight to those who have been wronged and subjected to aggression. Oppression, expulsion, and the deprivation of religious security are emphasized in these verses (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٧٣: ١٤, ٣٨٤). These verses provide important support for the claim

that, at the level of the initial legislation, fighting in the Qur'an is connected with defending the oppressed and removing injustice rather than with expansionism.

Accordingly, fighting in the Qur'an should be contrasted not with peace, but with oppression, *Fitnah*, expulsion, rebel, and covenant violation. In other words, legitimate warfare in the Qur'an is not intended to disrupt peace; rather, it is intended to bring an end to conditions that are incompatible with peace.

٣,٤. War in the Qur'an Is Purposeful and Terminable, Not Absolute and Perpetual

The Qur'an identifies the grounds that render warfare legitimate and also specifies the conditions for its termination. In verse ٦١ of Surah *al-Anfāl*, if the opposing party inclines toward peace, Muslims are likewise commanded to accept it: "And if they incline to peace, then incline to it." Thus, the Qur'an also provides guidance concerning how to bring warfare to an end.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī regards verse ٦١ of Surah *al-Anfāl* as indicating the obligation, or at least the necessity, of accepting peace when the enemy genuinely inclines toward reconciliation. He explicitly states that concern over the enemy's possible deception does not invalidate the basic ruling; rather, such a possibility should be addressed through reliance upon God and vigilance (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٧٣: ٩, ١١٧).

Likewise, in verse ٩٠ of Surah *al-Nisa'*, when they withdraw and offer peace, "There is no cause [for fighting] against them." *Tafsir Nemooneh* also interprets this verse as emphasizing "Readiness for Peace." (Makarem Shirazi, n.d.: ٧, ٢٣٠)

The Qur'an regards conflicts as inherently terminable and establishes legal and ethical mechanisms for bringing warfare to an end. This point stands in contrast to interpretations that regard war with non-believers as a permanent condition or as the default state of relations. Rather, the Qur'an maintains that once the cause of war has disappeared, the ruling governing warfare must likewise be lifted.

Theoretically, this principle demonstrates that the legitimacy of fighting in the Qur'an is contingent upon the continued existence of its cause and is not independent of it. Through these verses, the Qur'an articulates a principle of the "Transformation of rulings in accordance with changes in the state of conflict," meaning that when a state of hostility is transformed into a state of peace, the applicable ruling must likewise change accordingly. This capacity is highly valuable for Qur'anic theorizing on ceasefires, temporary agreements, gradual peace, and the phased resolution of disputes.

٣,٥. The Criterion for Regulating Relations in the Qur'an Is Not Religious Identity but Hostile or Peaceful Conduct

In regulating relations with others, the Qur'an does not follow a purely identity-based logic. Although some verses concerning fighting may, at first glance, create the impression that the boundary governing relations is simply that between faith and disbelief, consideration of the totality of the verses, particularly their context, makes it clear that the primary criterion in the Qur'an is the conduct of the opposing party rather than mere doctrinal difference.

Verse ٨ of Surah *al-Mumtaḥanah* plays a central role in this regard:

"Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them."

This verse not only prohibits general hostility toward non-Muslims; it goes further by considering righteousness and justice toward those who are not engaged in religious warfare, expulsion, or hostility to be legitimate and desirable. It does not merely permit tolerating non-combatants; rather, it recognizes two levels of positive relations with them: "Benevolence and Justice." Thus, the verse establishes the legitimacy of just coexistence with non-combatant non-Muslims.

Exegetes have regarded this verse as rejecting absolute hostility toward non-Muslims.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī understands righteousness as benevolence and good social interaction, and justice as justice in dealing with those who have neither engaged in warfare nor expelled the Muslims from their homes (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۷۳: ۱۹, ۲۳۳). *Ṭabrisī* likewise explicitly states that the verse regards kindness and fairness toward non-combatants as permissible and even desirable (Ṭabrisī, ۱۹۹۳ AD/۱۳۷۲ SH: ۹, ۴۰۸).

Among Sunni exegetes, *Ṭabarī* regards this verse as indicating the permissibility of kindness and justice toward those who have not fought the Muslims (Ṭabarī, ۱۹۹۱ AD/۱۴۱۲ AH: ۲۲, ۵۷۱), while *Qurṭubī* considers it evidence for the permissibility of maintaining ties, showing benevolence, and acting justly toward non-combatants (Qurṭubī, ۱۹۸۵ AD/۱۳۶۴ SH: ۱۸, ۵۸).

By contrast, verse ۹ of the same surah restricts the prohibition to those who have fought the Muslims, expelled them from their homes, or assisted in their expulsion. This internal contrast within the context of the surah demonstrates that the principal criterion for regulating relations is not mere doctrinal difference, but the opposing party's hostile or peaceful conduct.

The same logic is further developed in verse ۹۰ of Surah *al-Nisā'*, which, concerning groups that withdraw from conflict and offer peace, states: "Allah has not made for you a way against them." This is a particularly strong expression, as it indicates that when the opposing party's circumstances change and it withdraws from hostility, any avenue for continuing violence against it is closed.

Accordingly, the Qur'an does not make war legitimate on the basis of the "Identity of the enemy"; rather, it conditions it upon "Hostile Conduct." *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* understands this verse as indicating the loss of the legitimacy of warfare when the opposing party withdraws and refrains from hostilities (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ۱۹۷۳: ۵, ۳۱).

٣,٦. Peace in the Qur'an Is a Normative Principle, Not Merely the Absence of War

In the Qur'an, peace does not merely mean the temporary cessation of hostilities; rather, it possesses a positive normative status. This meaning can be inferred from a group of verses in which peace and reconciliation are presented not as emergency solutions, but as goods and desirable states. Verse ١٢٨ of Surah *al-Nisā'* states, "And reconciliation is best." Although revealed in the context of a family dispute, its linguistic structure has the form of a generalizable value principle. Likewise, in numerous verses such as "Then make peace between them," (al-Ḥujurāt:٩) "Make peace among yourselves," (al-Anfāl:١) and "Reconciliation between people," (al-Nisā':١١٤) reconciliation and restoration of relations are presented as desirable actions endorsed by God.

Verse ٩ of Surah *al-Ḥujurāt* is recognized in both Shi'i and Sunni exegesis as one of the most important verses concerning the resolution of social conflicts. *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* understands the structure of the verse as comprising three stages: "First, reconciliation; then, fighting against the rebellious group if it persists in aggression; and finally, renewed reconciliation on the basis of justice after the group returns to compliance." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٧٣: ١٨, ٣١٥) *Ṭabrisī* likewise emphasizes this sequence and defines rebel as the transgression of one group against another (Ṭabrisī, ١٩٩٣ AD/١٣٧٢ SH: ٩, ٢٠٠).

Qurṭubī, in his commentary on this verse, discusses extensively the jurisprudential rulings concerning rebels; at the same time, he explicitly states that the ultimate objective is to restore them to the truth and establish just reconciliation between the two parties (Qurṭubī, ١٩٨٥ AD/١٣٦٤ SH: ١٦, ٣٢٢). *Rāzī* likewise emphasizes that the repetition of "Then make peace" at the beginning and end of the verse indicates the priority of reconciliation and its restoration following coercive confrontation

(Rāzī, ١٩٩٩ AD/١٤٢٠ AH: ٢٨, ١٠٦). These exegetical considerations support the article's understanding of peace as restorative and justice-oriented.

Within Qur'anic logic, peace is not merely a passive condition; rather, it constitutes a civilizational obligation to reconstruct damaged relationships. In particular, the term *Iṣlāḥ* demonstrates that the Qur'an does not understand peace merely as the cessation of conflict, but as a process of restoring disrupted relations. Accordingly, Qur'anic peace is more than simply the "Absence of War"; it is the process of restoring relationships to a just and sustainable condition.

٣,٧. In Internal Conflicts, the Qur'an Provides a Justice-Oriented and Restorative Model of Peace

Verse ٩ of Surah *al-Hujurāt* presents one of the Qur'anic methods for resolving collective conflict. The verse begins with reconciliation: "Then make peace between them." If rebel is identified, it then permits limited and temporary confrontation with the rebellious group; finally, once the group returns, it once again emphasizes, "Then make peace between them with justice and act justly." This sequence makes clear that the ultimate objective is not the suppression of one party, but the restoration of both parties to a just order and the reconstruction of their relationship.

The Qur'an is not satisfied with merely formal peace; therefore, even after the cessation of rebel, it once again stipulates reconciliation with the qualification of justice and equity. In Qur'anic logic, if peace is not based on the actual removal of injustice and the restoration of relations, it cannot be regarded as complete peace. In this verse, the Qur'an presents a model of restorative and justice-oriented peace in which the cessation of violence, the containment of aggression, and the fair reconstruction of relations are interconnected.

This model is also applicable to contemporary societies, as it demonstrates that the Qur'an neither accepts passive neutrality in the face of aggression nor endorses endless retaliation. Rather, it proposes a middle yet decisive solution: reconciliation, containment of injustice, and then the just restoration of relations.

٣,٨. The Qur'an Distinguishes among Different Levels of the "Other," and This Distinction Is the Key to Its Theory of Peace

In addressing relations with others, the Qur'an does not employ a general and uniform discourse; rather, it speaks of a spectrum of situations. At one end of this spectrum is the non-combatant, who is the object of righteousness and justice (al-Mumtaḥanah:٨). At another is the faithful treaty partner, whose covenant must be respected until the end of its term (al-Tawbah:٤, ٧). In another situation, even a polytheist seeking protection and willing to listen to the truth is entitled to security and safe passage: "And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection ... then deliver him to his place of safety." (al-Tawbah:٦) In contrast to these groups are covenant-breakers, initiators of war, those who expel others, and instigators of *Fitnah*, who become the subjects of fighting.

The structure of Qur'anic rulings is based on the behavioral classification of the "Other," rather than subsuming all others under a single category such as disbeliever or polytheist. Accordingly, any interpretation that places all non-Muslims under a single ruling is inconsistent with the internal network of Qur'anic verses. At the level of intersocial relations, the Qur'an presents a situational jurisprudence in place of an absolute identity-based jurisprudence.

٣,٩. Fighting Verses, Particularly the Verse of the Sword, Cannot Be Properly Understood Apart from Their Context

One of the key issues in discussions of Qur'anic peace concerns how to approach verses that appear, at first glance, to possess a high degree of force and generality:

"Then kill the polytheists wherever you find them." Without considering the preceding and following verses, this verse might be read as a general and trans-historical ruling. However, the body of authoritative exegetical literature indicates that major exegetes understood it in connection with covenant-breaking and active hostility. Before this verse, the Qur'an explicitly exempts those treaty partners who have not violated their covenant: "So complete their treaty with them until their term." (al-Tawbah: ٤) Thereafter, even a polytheist seeking protection is granted the right to security and safe passage: "And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection ... then deliver him to his place of safety." (al-Tawbah: ٦)

Ṭabāṭabā'ī explicitly states that the opening verses of Surah *al-Tawbah* concern polytheists who violated their covenants or adopted a position of active hostility. In contrast, the exception in verse ٤ demonstrates that those who remained faithful to their covenants are excluded from this ruling (*Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, ١٩٧٣, ٩: ١٥١). *Ṭabrisī* likewise regards verse ٥ as concerning covenant-breaking polytheists and emphasizes the exclusion of faithful treaty partners (*Ṭabrisī*, ١٩٩٣ AD/١٣٧٢ SH: ٥, ١٠).

Ṭabarī interprets the verse as referring to a group of Arab polytheists who, following the declaration of disavowal, were given a period of respite and, if they persisted in hostility, became subject to fighting (*Ṭabarī*, ١٩٩١ AD/١٤١٢ AH: ١١, ٣٤٢). *Qurṭubī* likewise explicitly states that the verse must be reconciled with the exception in verse ٤ and the ruling concerning protection in verse ٦ (*Qurṭubī*, ١٩٨٥ AD/١٣٦٤ SH: ٨, ٧١). Moreover, verse ١٣ of Surah *al-Tawbah* itself explains the reason for fighting: violation of oaths, the intention to expel the Messenger, and initiating hostilities. From an exegetical perspective, therefore, verse ٥ cannot be regarded as evidence for unrestricted war against all polytheists at all times. If this verse is detached from its intra-surah and inter-surah network, it becomes

susceptible to violence-oriented readings; however, when read within the context of the opening verses of Surah *al-Tawbah* and in connection with the verses concerning covenants and protection, its apparent generality is substantially qualified.

Ibn ‘Āshūr analyzes the verses of Surah *al-Tawbah* within the framework of the final regulation of political relations with covenant-breaking groups, and his interpretation is significant for demonstrating the historical-political nature of the subject matter of the ruling (Ibn ‘Āshūr, ١٩٩٩ AD/١٤٢٠ AH: ١٠, ٢١).

Furthermore, verse ١٣ of Surah *al-Tawbah* functions as an intra-textual interpretation of verse ٩, as it identifies the causes of fighting as "Breaking their oaths," "Intending to expel the Messenger," and "Initiating hostilities against you the first time." Accordingly, the primary subject of these verses is not polytheism as such, but rather polytheism accompanied by combat, covenant-breaking, and the initiation of hostilities.

In interpreting verses concerning peace and war, historical context and the Qur’an’s internal interconnections are not secondary considerations; rather, they constitute part of the verse’s very meaning. Any theory that regards the Verse of the Sword as abrogating all verses concerning peace would necessarily have to disregard these explicit qualifications.

٣,١٠. Peace in the Qur’an Has a Legal Dimension: Covenants, Protection, and Transparency in Terminating Relations

The Qur’an formulates peace through specific legal structures. Fulfillment of covenants is emphasized in numerous verses, including "Fulfill the contracts," (al-Mā'idah:١) "And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have pledged," (al-Nahl:٩١) and "So complete their treaty with them." (al-Tawbah:٤) Taken together,

these verses demonstrate that, in the Qur'an, peace rests upon the legal validity of commitments rather than merely upon ethical goodwill.

Furthermore, even in the event of fear of treachery, the Qur'an does not permit a surprise breach of covenant. Rather, it states: "Then cast it back to them openly and fairly." (al-Anfāl:٥٨) That is, if there is a fear of treachery, the covenant must be terminated openly and transparently. This point is significant from the perspective of international law and political ethics, as it demonstrates that the transition from peace to hostility must likewise be transparent, declared, and free from treachery.

In his commentary on "And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have pledged," *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* regards fulfillment of covenants as a general and foundational principle governing relations (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, ١٩٧٣: ١٢, ٣٣٤).

In verse ٥٨ of Surah *al-Anfāl*, the Qur'an does not accept even a covert violation of a covenant when treachery is feared. In addition, verse ٦ of Surah *al-Tawbah*, concerning a person seeking protection, adds another layer to this structure: even a polytheist enemy who seeks protection must be granted security and escorted to a place of safety. Consequently, Qur'anic peace does not appear merely in the form of "Refraining from war"; rather, it is embodied in three fundamental institutions: covenant, protection, and the prohibition of treachery. This triad represents an important dimension of the Qur'an's capacity to regulate disputes among communities.

٤. Discussion and Analysis

The significance of this finding lies in the fact that many prevalent readings place Qur'anic verses into two separate and sometimes apparently conflicting categories: on the one hand, "Verses of peace, forgiveness, and tolerance," and on the other, "Verses of fighting, severity, and confrontation." However, a contextual and network-based analysis of the verses demonstrates that, when properly understood,

these two categories are neither contradictory nor mutually exclusive; rather, each addresses a particular situation within human and social relations.

Accordingly, the more precise question is what type of action the Qur'an regards as just and legitimate in each situation of conflict. From this perspective, Qur'anic verses should be understood within a broader system, a system that may be termed a "Situation-oriented system for regulating disputes." Within this system, the subject of a ruling is not merely the opposing party's religious identity, but a combination of behavioral and legal factors. The relevant questions include: 'Is the opposing party a combatant or a non-combatant?' 'Has it entered into a covenant and remained faithful to it, or has it violated the covenant?' 'Is it seeking protection, or is it an aggressor?' 'Has it ceased hostilities, or does it continue to insist on *Fitnah*, expulsion, and aggression?' In an internal conflict, is it the party committing *rebel*, or is it the party subjected to aggression? The Qur'an provides different responses to each of these situations.

This point can serve as a starting point for a fresh reconsideration of the relationship between the Qur'an and peace. The Qur'an neither regards violence as a permanent principle governing relations with the other nor understands peace as submission to aggression and injustice. The Qur'anic logic is that of just peace, a peace given meaning through fulfillment of covenants, prohibition of treachery, justice, removal of *Fitnah*, and containment of rebel.

Thus, the transition from peace to a structured and multilayered order can be discerned through a multidimensional analysis of the relevant verses. In the Qur'an, peace is not merely a recommendation that some may follow while others may disregard; rather, it is a directive for preventing, managing, and terminating hostilities. Ultimately, it aims at repairing the social harm caused by conflict and establishing justice among the peoples of different communities.

Today, under current global and regional conditions and amid the proliferation of diverse analyses and viewpoints, some argue for the necessity of war, its continuation, and the refusal to halt it until *Fitnah* has been completely removed. Others, by contrast, maintain that war should be brought to an end and that negotiation and political solutions should be made the primary focus. What emerges from the analysis of the foregoing verses in this study is neither perpetual war nor passive peace. Rather, the Qur'an offers a step-by-step approach that, if implemented correctly while observing its sequence, interrelations, and priorities, can lead to the establishment of justice.

Accordingly, the Qur'anic logic is the logic of the just regulation of disputes. Within this logic, the initial principle governing relations with non-combatants is righteousness, justice, gracious dialogue, and the possibility of coexistence; in relations with treaty partners, fulfillment of covenants and respect for commitments prevail; in relation to those seeking protection, security and safe passage are guaranteed; in relation to rebels and aggressors, firm but limited containment is prescribed; and wherever a return to peace is possible, the Qur'an emphasizes the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of just relations.

Conclusion

In addressing disputes among individuals, groups, and communities, the Holy Qur'an endorses neither logic of absolute submission nor one of perpetual confrontation. The Qur'anic logic is that of the just regulation of disputes. Within this logic, the initial principle governing relations with non-combatants is righteousness, justice, gracious dialogue, and the possibility of coexistence; in relations with treaty partners, fulfillment of covenants and respect for commitments prevail; in relation to those seeking protection, security and safe passage are provided; and in relation to rebels and aggressors, firm but limited

containment is prescribed. Wherever a return to peace is possible, the Qur'an emphasizes the cessation of hostilities and the restoration of just relations.

From this perspective, the fundamental innovation of the Qur'an in the domain of dispute resolution lies not merely in calling for peace, but in transforming peace into a multilayered normative order in which justice constitutes the condition for the validity of peace; the covenant provides its legal infrastructure; protection serves as the human channel for exiting hostility; confronting the aggressor functions as an instrument for safeguarding peace; and *Iṣlāḥ* provides the mechanism for restoration after conflict.

Accordingly, the Qur'an elevates peace beyond the level of an individual ethical recommendation. It presents it as a comprehensive model for conflict management, the limitation of violence, the protection of justice, and the reconstruction of human relations.

The ultimate conclusion is that the Qur'an offers a model of peace that may be termed "Justice-oriented and restorative peace." Within this model, the ultimate objective is not the elimination of the opposing party, but the removal of conditions incompatible with peace, the cessation of aggression, the restoration of justice, and the reconstruction of social relations. From this perspective, legitimate fighting in the Qur'an does not constitute a violation of the principle of peace; rather, in specific circumstances, it serves as an instrument for defending just peace against structures of injustice and *Fitnah*.

Therefore, the Qur'an's capacity to resolve disputes among communities lies in the fact that it elevates peace beyond the level of an individual ethical recommendation and transforms it into a normative system for conflict management, a system that begins with ethical prevention, continues through reconciliation and dialogue, proceeds to the just containment of violence in response to aggression, and ultimately culminates in the restoration of relations through justice and equity.

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