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

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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. Disagreement among scholars over how to explain the Qur'an's approach to the aforementioned issue highlights the need to develop a comprehensive framework for the process of implementing peace based on the Qur'anic teachings articulated in various verses. This study aims to examine the potential of the Qur'anic principle of peace to regulate conflicts between communities in a just manner. Its central research question is: 'What normative basis does the Qur'anic principle of peace, derived from selected verses concerning peace and armed conflict, provide for proportionate action, taking into account the differences in the legal status and conduct of the opposing party?' The present study employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical method and relies on library-based data collection. The relevant verses are examined within their textual contexts and in comparison with other verses addressing the same subject. The findings are organized around four main themes: "Ethical prevention and the desirability of reconciliation; constraints on confrontation and the possibility of terminating hostilities; distinctions among non-belligerents, parties bound by treaties, and asylum seekers; and the limits of interpreting and generalizing verses concerning armed conflict." The results indicated 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.

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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:

- How do ethical prevention and the restoration of relationships contribute to resolving conflicts among communities?
- Under what conditions may confrontation between different communities take place, and when may hostilities be brought to an end?
- How do differences in the legal status and conduct of the opposing party affect the adoption of proportionate responses?
- What limitations do contentious verses concerning armed conflict impose on the generalizability of the proposed framework?

1. 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 criterion for selecting the verses is their indication of one of the following areas: "The prevention of conflict, the regulation of responses in situations of confrontation, and the restoration of relations to a state of peace." Within each category, the addressee and subject of the ruling, the legal status or conduct of the opposing party, the prescribed course of action, and its constraints are examined.

A contextual reading refers to taking into account the preceding and following verses and the subject of the address, while a network-based reading involves comparing verses addressing the same subject while preserving distinctions among their respective addressees and circumstances. First, the meaning of each verse is examined within its own context; subsequently, its relationship with other relevant verses is assessed.

Contentious cases, particularly *al-Tawbah*:5 and 29, and *Muḥammad*:35, define the limits of generalizing the findings. Verses concerning family relations and internal conflicts are also used solely for normative comparison, and their rulings are not extended to relations among communities without independent supporting evidence.

2. Research Background

Within the exegetical tradition, one of the central issues of discussion concerns the validity and continued applicability of rulings that restrict armed combat and verses addressing the acceptance of peace. In his commentary on *al-Baqarah*:190, *Ṭabarī* reports differing opinions regarding the abrogation of the verse and, in favoring the view that it has not been abrogated, emphasizes the need for valid evidence to establish abrogation. The significance of this discussion lies in the fact that the relationship between this verse and other verses concerning armed combat cannot be considered resolved merely by invoking a claim of abrogation (Ṭabarī, n.d., commentary on al-Baqarah:190). In his commentary on the same verse, *Qurṭubī*

also discusses elderly individuals incapable of participating in warfare, explaining the prohibition against killing them on the grounds that they neither participate in combat nor assist the enemy. In his commentary on *al-Anfāl*:61, he likewise reports differing views regarding whether the ruling permitting the acceptance of peace has been abrogated or remains in force (Qurṭubī, n.d., commentary on al-Baqarah:190 and al-Anfāl:61). These accounts demonstrate the historical background of discussions concerning the prohibition of transgression and the validity of reconciliation.

In the jurisprudential literature, the cessation of hostilities has also been formulated through legal institutions such as "*Hudnah*" (a truce). In "*al-Mughnī*," *Ibn Qudāmah* defines "*Hudnah*" as an agreement to suspend armed combat for a specified period. Citing Qur'an 8:61, he links its permissibility to the interests of Muslims and emphasizes the obligation to honor the agreement (Ibn Qudāmah, n.d.: Book of Jihad, discussions on "*Hudnah*"). From this perspective, peace and the cessation of hostilities are matters subject to legal regulation and mutual obligations.

Contemporary studies on peace in the Qur'an can be classified into three main strands: "Conceptual studies; research examining the relationship between peace and armed combat; and works addressing conflict resolution and peace-building in Islamic thought. In the first strand, Eftekhari and Mohammadi Sirat (2013 AD/1392 SH), in their study entitled "Peace and *Silm* in the Holy Qur'an," examine these two concepts and their semantic dimensions. Similarly, Ganji et al., (2022 AD/1401 SH), in their article entitled "The Semantics of the Word *Ṣulḥ* in the Holy Qur'an Based on Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Relations," investigate the concept of peace within the network of semantic relationships among Qur'anic vocabulary. These studies are significant because they provide a conceptual foundation for understanding peace and its relationship with the restoration of harmonious relations. Nevertheless, a focus on lexical analysis alone is insufficient to explain the position of peace as a guiding principle in resolving disputes.

Among contemporary Arabic-language studies, *al-Zaʿāqī* (2018), in the article "Peace in the Qur'an: Its Forms, Connotations, and Dimensions," examines the forms and meanings of "*Salam*" in the Qur'an through an analytical and inferential approach, explaining its theological, psychological, behavioral, and social dimensions. This study is closely related to the present research because it moves beyond the conception of peace as merely the absence of war. Nevertheless, the present study distinguishes the broad semantic scope of "*Salam*" from the question of explaining the principle of peace and the rules governing its application in resolving disputes.

The second strand focuses on the relationship between verses concerning peace and armed combat, as well as the exegetical issues affecting their interpretation. Pichan and Nilsaz (2024 AD/1403 SH), in their study of how the authors of Shiʿi narrative commentaries address the issue of the abrogation of verses concerning peace by verses concerning armed combat, examine one of the decisive issues in understanding the validity and scope of peace-related verses. The significance of these studies lies in clarifying the exegetical obstacles and assumptions underlying this debate. Nevertheless, their subject matter is primarily concerned with the relationship between these two categories of verses. The present study differs from

that of Pichan and Nilsaz in its focus on formulating an integrated set of Qur'anic foundations and mechanisms for resolving disputes.

The third strand includes works such as Afsaruddin's (2022) study of jihad and Abū Nimir's (2003) book on nonviolence and peace-building in Islam. These works are significant, respectively, for understanding the semantic diversity of jihad and examining the potential of the Islamic tradition for conflict resolution. However, in terms of subject matter and methodology, they do not belong to the same category of exclusively Qur'an-based studies.

Accordingly, building on previous studies, the present research seeks to provide a systematic explanation of the principle of peace in the Qur'an and its role in resolving disputes. Its distinctive contribution lies in its attempt to integrate the conceptual analysis of peace with its normative foundations, rules governing responses to disputes, mechanisms for restoring relations, and the limits of applying this principle within a unified framework. In this regard, the primacy of peace is understood neither as synonymous with absolute pacifism nor as a rejection of legitimate self-defense. Rather, it concerns the guiding position of peace in regulating relations and resolving disputes, a position that must be explained in light of the relevant body of Qur'anic verses and its relationship with justice, the prohibition of transgression, and resistance to aggression.

An overview of the selected studies indicates that discussions of war and peace in Islam extend from examining the limits of armed combat and the validity of reconciliation to the history of the concept of jihad, the ethics of warfare, and the peace-building efforts of the Muslim community. Within this broader field, the specific concern of the present study is how Qur'anic evidence can be integrated into a coherent interpretation: 'What is the relationship between verses concerning armed combat and those addressing peace, the prohibition of transgression, and the fulfillment of covenants?' 'Can peace be regarded, on the basis of these verses collectively, as an organizing principle of Qur'anic interpretation?' Rather than presupposing this principle or inferring it solely from the existence of restrictions on warfare, the present study evaluates the possibility and scope of its validity through an analysis of the inter-textual relationships among the verses and an examination of the role of textual context and claims of abrogation. Accordingly, the article focuses on distinguishing among three levels, restricting armed combat, permitting the cessation of hostilities, and accepting the principle of peace, and explaining the logical relationship between them.

3. Research Novelty

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, 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, covenants, the prohibition of aggression, and defensive warfare has not been explained as a coherent system. Third, the potential of this system for resolving disputes among communities has rarely been examined within a structured, step-by-step, and practically applicable framework. The present study seeks to address these gaps, to some

extent, through an analysis of Qur'anic discourse and consideration of the objectives of Islamic law.

The novelty of this study in relation to previous literature lies in its integrated approach. While some previous studies have addressed the rulings on jihad and the limits of armed combat in Islam, others have examined the relationship between Islam and violence or the possibility of peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims. Still others have analyzed verses concerning peace and reconciliation from ethical and exegetical perspectives. Most of these studies, however, have focused on a particular dimension of the issue. In contrast, the present study revisits verses concerning peace, reconciliation, justice, covenants, and armed combat as an interconnected network within a framework concerned with resolving disputes among communities. It examines the principle of peace as an organizing rule within the network of Qur'anic verses and provides an integrated and systematic explanation of its relationship with dispute-resolution mechanisms at the individual, intra-religious, and inter-communal levels.

4. Conceptual Analysis

4.1. The Concept 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 *ṣalaḥa* and *ṣalāḥ* as opposites of corruption (Ibn Manẓūr, n.d.: 2, 516; Farāhīdī, 1989 AD/1410 AH: 3, 117; Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 1, 489). 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.: 2, 517; Qarashī, 1951 AD/1371 AH: 4, 145). *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, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 1, 489). 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.

In some Qur'anic contexts, "*Ṣulḥ*" refers to the resolution of specific disputes, such as family or commercial conflicts. However, exegetes generally examine the meaning of peace through the context of the relevant verses and their explanations of the term "*Iṣlāḥ.*" The overall conclusion drawn from the exegetical interpretations of *al-Ḥujurāt*:9 is that peace entails ending hostilities while removing the grounds for transgression and establishing a relationship based on fairness.

In "*al-Mīzān*," Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* links "*Iṣlāḥ*" in this context to restoring peaceful relations between two groups and emphasizes the responsibility of the community of believers to strive to resolve disputes. In his interpretation, the verse does not merely call for the cessation of hostilities. Once the transgressing group has returned to compliance, reconciliation must be established between the two parties, subject to the condition of justice (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 2014 AD/1393 SH: 18, 315).

In interpreting the Qur'anic injunction, "Make peace between them with justice," *Qurṭubī* emphasizes the qualification of justice. In explaining the implications of reconciliation, he states that the parties should not be compelled to demand blood money or compensation for

lives and property lost during the conflict when such losses resulted from actions based on a particular interpretation. Such demands could make reconciliation more difficult and distance the parties from restoring their solidarity (Qurṭubī, ibid: 16, 320). Thus, for *Qurṭubī*, equitable reconciliation does not merely involve declaring a ceasefire; the manner in which the consequences of the conflict are addressed must also be such that it does not obstruct the restoration of relations.

Accordingly, based on the exegetical sources, peace may be technically defined as a legitimate and measured process of ending conflict and restoring relations between the parties involved, accompanied by the cessation of transgression, observance of justice, and the provision of conditions conducive to a return to peaceful coexistence. This formulation is not a verbatim definition offered by any single exegete; rather, it is an analytical synthesis of the implications of the aforementioned exegetical interpretations.

4.2. The Concept of *Silm*

The root (*s-l-m)* also encompasses a semantic field closely associated with well-being, security, and freedom from harm. *Rāghib Iṣfahānī* establishes a conceptual connection among the meanings of "*Silm*, *Salam*, and *Ṣulḥ*," associating them with protection from afflictions and corruption (Rāghib Iṣfahānī, 1983 AD/1404 AH: 421).

The term *Silm* is the word closest in meaning to the concept of peace. In linguistic jurisprudence, it denotes submission, obedience, peace, peaceful coexistence, and non-interference with security, freedom, political, economic, and cultural independence, and similar matters. Its Qur'anic usage likewise corresponds to its established lexical meaning (Javadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 10, 269). The term *Silm* encompasses all spheres of life, including relations between human beings and God (Eftekhari & Mohammadi Sirat, 2013 AD/1392 SH: 60-61, 75-76). Accommodation based on *Silm* differs from peace understood in terms of rights, as it does not permit pragmatic considerations that undermine rights (Alviri, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 325). Peace (*Ṣulḥ*) is generally discussed following conflict, disagreement, or warfare, whereas *Silm* is neither contingent upon nor subsequent to war (Alviri, 2004 AD/1383 SH: 326). The application of *Silm* to Islam, *Wilayah*, and similar concepts represents an identification of specific instances rather than a conceptual interpretation. Moreover, its opposition to war in expressions such as "At peace with those who are at peace with you and at war with those who wage war against you" indicates the prevalence of meanings such as accommodation, peaceful coexistence, harmony, and unity in its usage (Jawadi Amoli, 2010 AD/1389 SH: 10, 265).

4.3. The Concepts of *Hudnah* and *Muhādanah*

In jurisprudential and historical usage, *Hudnah* and *Muhādanah* refer to a ceasefire or a temporary agreement to suspend hostilities between opposing parties. In other words, the parties agree to suspend warfare and hostilities for a specified period.

Hudnah refers to a ceasefire or a period during which warfare is suspended, whereas *Muhādanah* denotes the conclusion of a ceasefire agreement and the mutual consent of the parties to its terms.

These two terms are generally used to describe the suspension of warfare after hostilities have

begun. Therefore, they are not synonymous with the broader concept of *Silm*. *Silm* can signify peace and peaceful coexistence even in the absence of any preceding armed conflict.

4.4. Equitable Dispute Resolution

Equitable dispute resolution is a process through which disagreements are managed or brought to an end by peaceful means, without disregarding the rights of the parties or determining the outcome through coercion or an unequal balance of power. In this definition, justice encompasses both fairness in the dispute-resolution process and consideration of the substance and consequences of the outcome. Within the framework of *al-Ḥujurāt*:9, the cessation of transgression and the requirement of justice in reconciliation constitute two inseparable components of this definition.

4.5. Communities

In this study, the term communities refer to social or political groups and entities that interact or experience disagreements at either the intra-societal or inter-societal level. These may include ethnic and religious groups, political communities, and states.

5. Research Findings

5.1. Prevention of Disputes and Reconciliation Before the Outbreak of Hostilities

In a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution, the initial priority is to make every effort to advance matters in such a way as to prevent confrontation. The Qur'anic approach follows the same direction. In verses such as "Whoever pardons and seeks reconciliation" (al-Shūrā:40) and "Good and evil are not equal," (Fuṣṣilat:34) the Qur'an emphasizes, by focusing on restraining the psychological and social drivers of enmity, the need to avoid the outbreak of conflict.

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-Ḥujurāt* concerning the avoidance of suspicion, ridicule, spying, and backbiting, provides a more comprehensive picture. In his commentary on verse 96 of Surah *al-Mu'minūn*, Allamah *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* states: "Repay the evil you see from them with good." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973: 15, 92) *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, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 17, 78).

Furthermore, peace in the Qur'an does not merely mean the temporary cessation of hostilities; rather, it has a positive normative status. This understanding can be derived from a number of verses in which peace and reconciliation are presented not as emergency solutions, but as good and desirable courses of action. *al-Nisā'*:128 uses the expression "*Wa al-Ṣulḥu Khayr*." (And reconciliation is better) Although this verse was revealed in the context of marital discord, it may be taken as evidence of the general desirability of reconciliation. Similarly, several other verses present reconciliation and the restoration of harmonious relations as desirable actions endorsed by God, including "Make peace between them," (al-

Ḥujurāt:9) "*Aṣliḥū Dhāta Baynikum*" (Set right your relations with one another) (al-Anfāl:1), and "*Iṣlāḥin bayna al-Nās*" (Reconciliation among people) (al-Nisā':114).

al-Ḥujurāt:9 is recognized in both Shiʿi and Sunni exegesis as one of the most important verses concerning the resolution of social disputes. *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* understands the structure of the verse as comprising three stages: "First, reconciliation; second, fighting against the transgressing group if it persists in its aggression; and finally, renewed reconciliation on the basis of justice once that group has returned to compliance." (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973: 18, 315)

Ṭabrisī likewise emphasizes this sequence and defines "*Baghy*" as one group's transgression against another (Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 9, 200).

Qurṭubī, in his commentary on this verse, discusses at length the jurisprudential rulings concerning those who engage in rebellion. At the same time, however, he explicitly states that the ultimate objective is to bring them back to the truth and achieve equitable reconciliation between the two parties (Qurṭubī, 1985: 16, 322). *Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī* also emphasizes that the repetition of the phrase "Make Peace" at both the beginning and the end of the verse indicates that reconciliation takes precedence over coercive confrontation and must be resumed after it (Rāzī, 1999 AD/1420 AH: 28, 106). These exegetical findings support the present study's inference that reconciliation should be pursued before confrontation begins.

In the Qur'anic framework, peace is not merely a means of deterrence; rather, it constitutes a civilizational obligation to rebuild relationships that have been damaged. The particular use of the term "Reconciliation" indicates that the Qur'an does not define peace solely in terms of bringing a dispute to an end. Instead, it regards peace as a process of repairing disrupted relations in a manner that leads to the rectification of affairs and prevents further confrontation in the future. Accordingly, Qur'anic peace is more than simply the "Absence of War"; it is a process of restoring relationships to a just and sustainable state so as to prevent the outbreak of hostilities once again.

The primary Qur'anic evidence for this approach is found at the beginning of *al-Ḥujurāt*:9. The verse opens with an injunction to seek reconciliation: "Make Peace between Them." It then permits limited and temporary confrontation with the transgressing group if transgression is identified. Finally, once the transgressing party or parties have desisted, the verse again emphasizes: "Make peace between them with justice and act equitably." This sequence makes clear that the ultimate objective is not to suppress one party, but to restore both parties to a just order and rebuild their relationship. For this reason, once the transgression has ended, the injunction to reconcile is reiterated, this time explicitly qualified by justice and equity. Within the Qur'anic framework, peace cannot be considered complete if it is not founded on the genuine removal of injustice and the restoration of relations. In this verse, the Qur'an presents a model of restorative and justice-based peace that establishes a connection among the cessation of violence, the restraint of the aggressor, and the equitable reconstruction of relations.

Given that this model is articulated in the context of a dispute between believers, it also has the potential to provide normative guidance for contemporary societies. It demonstrates that the Qur'an proposes a clear, practical, and step-by-step solution: reconciliation, the restraint of injustice and those who perpetrate it, and then the equitable restoration of relations

in order to prevent future hostilities.

5.2. The Manner of Confrontation and the Conditions for the Termination of Hostilities

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*:190 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 verses under discussion, armed combat is restricted by the qualification *"Alladhīna Yuqātilūnakum"* (those who fight you), constrained by the injunction *"Walā Taʿtadū"* (do not transgress), and brought to an end by the condition *"Fain Intahaw"* (if they cease). Here, the Qur'an presents a framework of regulated, defensive and responsive, and terminable warfare. Accordingly, armed combat in the Qur'an should be understood as part of a broader system for controlling conflict.

In his interpretation of this verse, *Ṭabāṭabā'ī*, taking into consideration the context of verses 190-193, 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, 1973: 2, 59). *Ṭūsī* likewise understands this verse as prohibiting both initiating aggression and transgression in the manner in which warfare is conducted (Ṭūsī, n.d.: 2, 143).

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, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 3, 289). *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, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 2, 347) Thus, even within the classical exegetical tradition, fighting in the Qur'an is not absolute or unconstrained.

Furthermore, in Surah *al-Ḥajj*:39-40, permission to engage in armed combat is granted to those who have been wronged, driven from their homes, and subjected to threats against their places of worship. In these verses, the Qur'an recognizes armed combat as legitimate even when undertaken to protect monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques from destruction. From this perspective, warfare in the Qur'an may be understood not as serving the elimination of religious diversity, but rather as protecting the possibility of religious life and preventing its violent destruction. This represents one of the Qur'an's less frequently explored potentials for developing a theory of 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, 1973: 14, 384). 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.

Thus, the verses examined provide evidence of a connection between armed combat and resistance to injustice and aggression.

The Qur'an identifies the grounds that render warfare legitimate and also specifies the conditions for its termination. In verse 61 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 61 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, 1973: 9, 117).

Likewise, in verse 90 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.: 7, 230)

These verses demonstrate that withdrawal from hostilities and the adjustment of legal rulings in response to changing circumstances have an important role in regulating relations. Nevertheless, *al-Anfāl*:61 must be examined alongside *Muḥammad*:35, which prohibits showing weakness and calling for peace under the circumstances described in that verse.

One of the central issues in understanding the verses concerning armed combat is the interpretation of the concept of trial. In *al-Baqarah*:191-193 and 8:39, the termination of armed combat is linked to the removal of trial. However, determining the meaning of trial and identifying what exactly must cease directly affect the conclusions drawn from these verses. In the interpretive approach adopted in this article, the connection between these verses and the expulsion and confrontation described in their context lends support to interpreting trial as religious persecution and oppression. Nevertheless, this interpretation should not be presented as the only accepted meaning in the exegetical tradition without examining the range of scholarly opinions. Interpretations that associate trial with polytheism pose a challenge to this argument and examining them is essential to any comprehensive claim concerning the ultimate objective of armed combat.

The expression "If they cease, then there shall be no hostility except against the wrongdoers" (al-Baqarah:193) indicates the role of the cessation of the circumstances to which the ruling applies in limiting armed combat. However, determining precisely what the term cessation refers to depends on the interpretation of the verse in its textual context.

Accordingly, the present study emphasizes the possibility of formulating a framework of regulated and terminable armed combat, without inferring from this expression alone that the sole objective of all Qur'anic verses concerning armed combat is the removal of religious persecution. Verses rejecting religious compulsion, including *al-Baqarah*:256 and *Yūnus*:99, are important to this comparison; however, they do not replace the need to resolve the exegetical disagreement concerning the meaning of trial.

5.3. The Legal Status and Conduct of the Opposing Party

In regulating relations with others, the Qur'an does not follow a purely identity-based logic. Although some verses concerning armed combat may, at first glance, give the impression that the distinction governing relations is based solely on the categories of faith and disbelief, a consideration of the verses as a whole, particularly their textual contexts, makes clear that the conduct of the opposing party plays a decisive role in the verses under discussion. Mere differences in religious belief are not sufficient grounds for treating different groups as though they were subject to identical rulings.

Verse 8 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, 1973: 19, 233). *Ṭabrisī* likewise explicitly states that the verse regards kindness and fairness toward non-combatants as permissible and even desirable (Ṭabrisī, 1993 AD/1372 SH: 9, 408).

Among Sunni exegetes, *Ṭabarī* regards this verse as indicating the permissibility of kindness and justice toward those who have not fought the Muslims (Ṭabarī, 1991 AD/1412 AH: 22, 571), while *Qurṭubī* considers it evidence for the permissibility of maintaining ties, showing benevolence, and acting justly toward non-combatants (Qurṭubī, 1985 AD/1364 SH: 18, 58).

By contrast, verse 9 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 90 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.

This verse demonstrates the role of withdrawal from hostilities in changing the ruling governing relations; however, this conclusion does not imply that all religious affiliations cease to play a role in other rulings. *Ṭabāṭabā'ī* interprets the verse as indicating that the legitimacy of warfare ceases when the opposing party withdraws from hostilities and refrains

from confrontation (Ṭabāṭabā'ī, 1973: 5, 31). 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:8). At another is the faithful treaty partner, whose covenant must be respected until the end of its term (al-Tawbah:4, 7). 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:6) In contrast to these groups are covenant-breakers, initiators of war, those who expel others, and instigators of trial, who become the subjects of fighting.

Thus, the structure of Qur'anic rulings is based on the behavioral classification of the other party, rather than treating all such parties uniformly under the category of disbelievers or polytheists. Accordingly, any interpretation that places all non-Muslims under a single ruling is inconsistent with the internal network of Qur'anic verses. These findings demonstrate the importance of the opposing party's legal status and conduct, alongside the other categories relevant to the rulings in question.

The Qur'an formulates peace through specific legal structures. Fulfillment of covenants is emphasized in numerous verses, including "Fulfill the contracts," (al-Mā'idah:1) "And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have pledged," (al-Naḥl:91) and "So complete their treaty with them." (al-Tawbah:4) 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:58) 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, 1973: 12, 334).

In verse 58 of Surah *al-Anfāl*, the Qur'an does not accept even a covert violation of a covenant when treachery is feared. In addition, verse 6 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.

5.4. The Limits of Interpreting and Generalizing Verses Concerning Armed Combat

One of the major challenges in discussions of Qur'anic peace concerns how to approach verses that, at first glance, appear to be particularly forceful and absolute, such as: "Then kill

the polytheists wherever you find them." If considered without reference to the preceding and following verses, this verse might be interpreted as a general ruling applicable across all times and circumstances. However, determining the scope of its ruling requires examining its relationship with the provisions concerning covenants and guarantees of protection within the same textual context. Before this verse, the Qur'an explicitly exempts those who have honored their treaties from its scope: "So fulfill their treaty with them until the end of its term." (al-Tawbah:4) After it, the Qur'an also recognizes the right of even a polytheist seeking protection to receive a guarantee of security and be escorted to a place of safety: "And if any of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection ... and then convey him to his place of safety." (al-Tawbah:6)

The exemption of treaty-observing parties in *al-Tawbah*:4 and the provision granting protection in *al-Tawbah*:6 demonstrate that the groups mentioned are not subject to identical rulings, despite sharing the designation of polytheists. This distinction provides direct evidence for the present article's emphasis on the importance of legal status. However, it does not, by itself, establish that all those addressed in verse 5 had previously violated their covenants. Such a conclusion must be supported by examining the verse within a broader network of concepts and textual evidence.

In *al-Tawbah*:13, the violation of oaths, the intention to expel the Prophet, and initiating hostilities are identified as grounds for calling the believers to fight. The connection between these circumstances and the opening verses of the surah is important for a context-sensitive interpretation. Two considerations, however, clarify the limits of this conclusion. First, the continuation of *al-Tawbah*:5 stipulates repentance, the performance of prayer, and the payment of *Zakāt;* these conditions cannot be excluded from an analysis of the scope of the ruling. Second, *al-Tawbah*:29 addresses fighting a group among the People of the Book and the payment of *Jizyah*. Reducing this ruling to defensive action against an ongoing act of aggression cannot be established from the apparent wording of the verse alone. Accordingly, the context-sensitive framework proposed here does not claim to resolve all interpretive issues concerning the verses on armed combat or to demonstrate that all such rulings are exclusively defensive in nature. Further research is required. Likewise, the claim that all verses concerning peace have been abrogated requires the precise identification of the relevant verses, proof of an irreconcilable contradiction between them, and examination of the evidence concerning their chronological order.

Conclusion

Formulating a framework for the Qur'anic principle of peace requires examining the relevant verses concerning peace (*Ṣulḥ*), *Silm*, reconciliation (*Iṣlāḥ*), armed combat (*Qitāl*), covenants (*ʿAhd*), and guarantees of protection (*Amān*), with a view to presenting the network of Qur'anic teachings on conflict resolution. The overall findings indicate that, in the verses examined, peace is not an isolated concept or one that is merely synonymous with the cessation of warfare. Rather, it acquires its meaning through its connection with a range of ethical, legal, and social obligations. Within this framework, the prevention of hostility, the restoration of relations, the observance of justice, the restriction of confrontation, fidelity to

commitments, and attention to the textual contexts and social circumstances of the verses at the time of revelation constitute interconnected elements of a system for regulating disputes. Accordingly, an absolute dichotomy between peace and armed combat is insufficient to explain this body of teachings. In the cases examined, resistance to aggression may serve to remove obstacles to reconciliation, without thereby legitimizing unlimited violence or the continuation of hostilities independently of the circumstances to which the ruling applies.

The Qur'anic regulation of disputes begins before the outbreak of hostilities. The emphasis on repelling evil with good, granting forgiveness in conjunction with reconciliation, and restraining hostile conduct demonstrates the importance of addressing the factors that give rise to conflict within this framework. At the same time, the implementation of reconciliation encompasses both individual and collective recommendations. The sequence of reconciliation, confronting transgression, and renewed reconciliation on the basis of justice in *al-Ḥujurāt*:9 demonstrates that, within the context of this verse, coercive action is a conditional intermediate stage rather than the ultimate objective of responding to a dispute. This finding indicates that the desired form of peace requires not only the cessation of hostilities but also the restoration of damaged relations and the removal of injustice.

Furthermore, an examination of the qualifications governing confrontation and the termination of hostilities demonstrates that the Qur'anic verses impose restrictions both on resorting to armed combat and on the manner and continuation of such action; the connection between permission to fight and experiences of injustice and expulsion, the prohibition of transgression, and the consideration given to withdrawal from hostilities and the offer of peace support the formulation of a model of confrontation that is constrained, purposeful, and terminable. The implication is that the legitimacy of armed combat or confrontation cannot be assessed independently of the circumstances that gave rise to it and subsequent changes in those circumstances. Nevertheless, acceptance of peace must not itself become an unconditional ruling that disregards the relevant circumstances. Moreover, the relationship between *al-Anfāl*:61 and *Muḥammad*:35 highlights the necessity of taking the conditions and context of each address into account.

The decisive role of the opposing party's legal status and conduct in regulating relations is also of considerable importance. The distinctions among non-belligerents, treaty-observing parties, asylum seekers, parties that have violated their covenants and aggressors demonstrate that sharing the same religious designation is insufficient grounds for subjecting these groups to identical rulings. The legitimacy of benevolence and justice toward non-belligerents, the obligation to honor agreements with treaty-observing parties, and the provision of protection to those seeking asylum define distinct forms of non-hostile relations. Accordingly, peace within the framework examined here rests not merely on ethical goodwill but also on legally binding commitments and arrangements. Covenants, guarantees of protection, and the prohibition of treachery provide the means to regulate relations and make them more predictable. They also demonstrate that even a transition from a state of treaty-based relations to one of hostilities cannot take place without prescribed rules and constraints.

Furthermore, an analysis of the limits of interpretation and generalization demonstrates that a network-based reading of the verses prevents both the unrestricted application of

rulings concerning armed combat and the unwarranted generalization of propositions concerning peace. The provisions concerning treaty-observing parties and asylum seekers within the opening context of Surah *al-Tawbah* place limitations on any interpretation that treats all polytheists as a single undifferentiated group. Moreover, the conditions stipulated in the continuation of this passage, together with the ruling on armed combat and *Jizyah* in *al-Tawbah*:29, are issues that cannot be disregarded when developing a comprehensive theoretical framework of peace and armed combat. Accordingly, the contribution of the present study is to propose a framework for a more coherent understanding of the selected verses. Broader research is required to resolve all interpretive disagreements or to establish that all rulings concerning armed combat are defensive in nature.

Overall, within the limits of the findings of this study, the "Principle of Peace" constitutes a network of practical arrangements encompassing prevention, prior reconciliation, the equitable reconstruction of relations in the regulation of disputes, a preference for bringing hostilities to an end, and the establishment of sustainable peace. This framework rejects both the passive acceptance of injustice and the unlimited continuation of violence. Its explanatory value lies in presenting peace not merely as an ethical recommendation or a condition that follows warfare, but as an integral part of the process of regulating disputes, from restraining the circumstances that give rise to hostility to restoring relations on a just basis, within a coherent and unified framework.

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