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# JIHAD AND PEACE: A QUR'ANIC PERSPECTIVE ON CONFLICT AND RECONCILIATION

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## ABSTRACT

*This article examines the relationship between jihad and peace in the Qur'an by arguing that the Qur'anic vision of conflict is not structured around sacralized violence, but around an ethics of moral striving, justice, restraint, and reconciliation. The study addresses a persistent scholarly and public problem: jihad is frequently reduced to warfare, while Qur'anic teachings on peacemaking, forgiveness, social repair, and conflict de-escalation receive less integrated attention. Using qualitative library research and thematic Qur'anic interpretation, the article analyzes key lexical fields—jihad, qital, salam, sulh, islah, sabr, 'adl, and rahmah—through cross-verse reading, contextual interpretation, and dialogue with classical tafsir and recent peer-reviewed scholarship. The findings show, first, that jihad in the Qur'an is broader than armed confrontation and includes intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and social striving. Second, the permission to fight is situational, defensive, and normatively constrained by proportionality, non-aggression, protection of the vulnerable, and openness to peace when hostilities cease. Third, the Qur'an embeds conflict transformation within a wider architecture of reconciliation through justice, forgiveness, mediation, covenantal fidelity, and intergroup fairness. The article proposes a Qur'anic conflict-transformation matrix in which jihad is reinterpreted as disciplined striving for the restoration of peace with justice rather than as a permanent logic of hostility. This framework contributes to contemporary debates on religious moderation, de-radicalization, interreligious dialogue, and peacebuilding by demonstrating that the Qur'anic discourse on conflict is ethically teleological: force, when exceptionally permitted, remains subordinate to the higher objective of just and sustainable peace.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The terms jihad and peace are often positioned as opposites in public discourse, especially in securitized discussions that identify Islam primarily through episodes of militancy. Yet this opposition is conceptually unstable. The semantic and ethical field of jihad in the Qur'an is wider than war, while the Qur'anic discourse on peace is wider than the mere absence of armed confrontation. Recent scholarship shows that reductive readings of jihad have been sustained both by ideologically selective appropriations and by decontextualized readings that collapse the distinction between jihad and qital, between moral striving and armed combat, and between historically contingent conflict and universal religious obligation [1], [2]. At the same time, scholars of Qur'anic ethics have increasingly shown that divine permission to fight appears in a framework of moral discipline, protection from oppression, and the search for restored social order rather than an unlimited theology of violence [3], [4].

This problem matters because scriptural misreadings do not remain in the realm of theory. They shape educational curricula, digital propaganda, interreligious suspicion, and policy responses to Muslim societies. Studies in psychology, religious studies, and discourse analysis have demonstrated that the language of jihad may function either as a source of resilience, virtue, and constructive self-discipline or, when stripped from its hermeneutic safeguards, as a symbolic resource for polarizing and extremist narratives [5], [16]. The stakes are therefore interpretive and practical at once: how the Qur'an is read influences how Muslims and non-Muslims imagine conflict, justice, coexistence, and the possibility of reconciliation.

Within Islamic intellectual history, the Qur'an speaks about struggle, persecution, covenant, patience, justice, forgiveness, mediation, and peace through a rich network of terms and situations. Some passages address the defense of persecuted communities; others emphasize restraint, faithfulness to agreements, just conduct toward those who are not hostile, and the moral superiority of repelling evil with what is better. The challenge for contemporary scholarship is not merely to repeat that Islam is a religion of peace, nor to deny that the Qur'an contains conflict-related passages. Rather, it is to explain how these passages are organized ethically, legally, and theologically. The central question of this article is therefore: how does the Qur'an conceptualize the relationship between jihad, conflict, peace, and reconciliation in a way that is normatively coherent and relevant to contemporary peacebuilding?

Several strands of recent literature help frame this question. Studies on Islamic conflict resolution underline the importance of concepts such as sulh (settlement), islah (reconciliation or social repair), tahkim (arbitration), and justice-based peacemaking [6], [10]. Research on interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding demonstrates that Islamic resources for peace are not limited to internal Muslim ethics but extend to cross-communal relations, institutions, and public engagement [7], [8]. Work on transitional justice and post-conflict reconstruction shows that Islamic legal-ethical traditions can balance justice claims with the demands of social restoration [9]. Meanwhile, Qur'anic studies focused on verses of combat have argued that these verses should be read through textual limitation, cause, context, and teleology rather than as timeless warrants for indiscriminate violence [11], [12], [14].

This article argues that the Qur'an presents peace not as an optional moral afterthought, but as the normative horizon that disciplines all legitimate forms of struggle. Jihad, in this reading, is a multilayered practice of striving in the path of God, whereas qital is an exceptional and regulated subset related to defense against aggression and the protection of religious freedom and human dignity. Reconciliation, furthermore, is not external to jihad; it is one of its highest ethical realizations when justice, patience, forgiveness, and social repair are mobilized to end cycles of hostility. To defend this thesis, the article offers a thematic and contextual reading of key Qur'anic passages alongside classical exegesis and contemporary scholarship, culminating in a Qur'anic conflict-transformation matrix that can contribute to peace studies, Islamic studies, and de-radicalization discourse.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The first major cluster of scholarship concerns the meaning of jihad and the problem of violence. Contemporary researchers have challenged the assumption that jihad is identical with holy war. Mostfa demonstrates that the concept has undergone intense polemical struggle in both academic and political discourse, where definitional battles often predetermine ethical conclusions [1]. Belhaj's work on Islamic pacifism further complicates simplistic binaries by showing that Islamic sources have generated strong nonviolent and restraint-oriented traditions, even while recognizing that Muslim thought also contains doctrines of legitimate defense [2]. Ranieri, through a close reading of the Qur'an, emphasizes that the use of force is subordinated to God-consciousness, defense of victims, and

disciplined restraint [3]. Arya similarly highlights the Qur'an's rhetorical orientation toward spiritual transformation rather than militarized triumphalism [4]. These studies collectively support a non-reductionist reading but leave space for a more integrated account connecting jihad with reconciliation as an internal part of Qur'anic ethics.

A second cluster explores jihad as ethical, spiritual, and psychological striving. Saritoprak, Exline, and Abu-Raiya bring the notion of spiritual jihad into dialogue with psychology, arguing that the language of struggle can be associated with virtue formation, perceived growth, and the management of inner conflict rather than external aggression alone [5]. This insight is important because Qur'anic conflict begins with the moral formation of agents: communities unable to discipline greed, vengeance, and injustice are unlikely to build sustainable peace. Wani's broader treatment of Islamic conflict resolution moves in a similar direction by linking peacebuilding to internal moral work, social justice, and mediating institutions [6]. Together these studies show that the conceptual field surrounding jihad extends into self-reform, ethical agency, and social healing.

A third strand focuses on reconciliation, dialogue, and public peacebuilding. Khan et al. critically appraise interreligious dialogue in Islam and argue that dialogue is not a concession to modern pluralism alone but has scriptural and historical grounding within Islamic tradition [7]. Driessen's review of interreligious dialogue and peacebuilding confirms that religious actors can function as mediators, bridge-builders, and norm entrepreneurs, especially when they mobilize theological language for conflict transformation rather than identity hardening [8]. Mojtahedi and van Wijk, working in the context of post-IS Iraq, show how Islamic law can mediate between justice and peace in transitional settings [9]. Wan Muhammad adds a comparative lens by demonstrating the overlap between Islamic forgiveness and restorative justice, even while preserving important differences in ontology and moral motivation [10]. This literature suggests that Qur'anic peace ethics must be read not only in relation to war but also in relation to institutional repair and moral restoration.

A fourth stream addresses verses of war and their interpretation. Jafar and Amrullah argue that Qur'anic verses often cited to prove Islamic violence become peaceful in implication when read through the relation of cause and effect, textual limitation, and historical context [11]. Faozan develops this point by showing that the moral messages of jihad can be mobilized against digital-era distortions that

transform religious struggle into virtual incitement [12]. Tridiatno places forgiveness at the center of Islamic peace promotion [13], while Tazul Islam uses a maqasid al-Qur'an approach to distinguish jihad from jihadism and to support de-radicalization strategies [14]. Ranjbar and Chikrizova extend the field to international relations by arguing that positive peace in an Islamic perspective includes justice, dignity, and proactive social order rather than passive nonwar [15]. These contributions illuminate important dimensions of the topic, but they are often treated in isolation: combat verses, forgiveness, maqasid, and peacebuilding institutions are not always synthesized into a single Qur'anic framework.

The contemporary digital environment has intensified the need for such synthesis. Jacoby shows how extremist actors selectively weaponize Qur'anic citation in media organs such as Dabiq and Rumiyah [16]. In contrast, recent work on digital Islam and religious moderation demonstrates that online platforms can also become sites for counter-radicalization, reinterpretation of authority, and the dissemination of nonviolent Islamic discourse [17]–[22]. Hadiyanto et al. discuss digital interpretations that foreground moderation [17], while Ilyas et al. reinterpret digital jihad as ethical responsibility in cyberspace rather than cyber-hostility [18]. Studies of social media authority, Indonesian moderation discourse, and madrasa-based tolerance similarly reveal that scriptural interpretation remains an active arena of contest over violence and peace [19]–[22].

Finally, broader peace studies scholarship helps situate the Qur'anic discussion within conflict transformation. Research on interreligious peace, postwar peace duration, artistic mediation, and dialogue competencies indicates that religion can lengthen peace, humanize adversaries, and cultivate capacities for coexistence when interpreted through inclusive ethical frameworks [23]–[26]. Within Qur'anic studies, maqasidi tafsir provides one promising framework because it asks how individual verses contribute to the higher objectives of revelation and social welfare [27]. Yet the literature still lacks a concentrated, textually grounded model that connects jihad, regulated conflict, reconciliation, forgiveness, dialogue, and justice into a single Qur'anic architecture. This article addresses that gap.

## 3 METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative library research with a thematic Qur'anic approach (tafsir mawdu'i) combined with contextual and maqasidi analysis. The primary corpus consists of Qur'anic passages

related to jihad, qital, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, justice, covenant, and relations with religious others, including but not limited to Q. 2:190–193, Q. 2:208, Q. 2:256, Q. 4:75, Q. 4:128, Q. 5:8, Q. 8:61, Q. 16:90, Q. 22:39–40, Q. 25:52, Q. 41:34, Q. 49:9–10, and Q. 60:8–9. The analysis treats the Qur'an as the principal normative text and reads these passages relationally rather than atomistically.

The interpretive procedure follows four stages. First, key lexical fields were identified: jihad, qital, salam, sulh, islah, 'adl, rahmah, sabr, and 'afw. Second, the verses containing or thematically linked to these terms were grouped according to conflict stages: pre-conflict ethics, defensive confrontation, de-escalation, reconciliation, and post-conflict repair. Third, these clusters were interpreted through selected classical exegesis especially al-Tabari and Ibn 'Ashur and through contemporary scholarship on peacebuilding, de-radicalization, and Islamic ethics [27], [34], [35]. Fourth, a synthetic matrix was developed to map the Qur'anic movement from moral striving to social peace.

Methodologically, the study does not assume that all conflict-related verses are identical in scope, audience, or legal status. It therefore distinguishes between descriptive verses, permission verses, principle verses, and reconciliation verses. This allows the analysis to avoid two common interpretive errors: first, universalizing historically conditioned conflict commands; and second, abstracting peace language from concrete structures of justice and protection. The maqasidi dimension is particularly important because it asks how the Qur'an's dispersed teachings converge toward higher ethical objectives such as preservation of life, religion, dignity, justice, and social harmony [14], [27].

*Table 1. Key Qur'anic terms and their implications for conflict transformation*

| Term | Basic Meaning | Selected Qur'anic Anchors | Implication for Conflict |
|------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Jihad | Striving/ exertion in the path of God | Q. 22:78; Q. 25:52; Q. 29:69 | Centers moral, intellectual, and social effort before any discussion of force |
| Qital | Armed fighting/ combat | Q. 2:190–193; Q. 22:39–40 | Exceptional, defensive, and normatively constrained response to aggression |
| Salam | Peace, security, wholeness | Q. 2:208; Q. 8:61 | Signals peace as a normative horizon rather than a tactical pause |
| Sulh/ Islah | Settlement / reconciliation / social repair | Q. 4:128; Q. 49:9–10 | Privileges mediation, repair, and restoration of relations |
| Afw/ Sabr | Forgiveness / patient endurance | Q. 42:40; Q. 41:34 | Transforms retaliation into moral restraint and de-escalation |
| Adl/ Rahmah | Justice / mercy | Q. 5:8; Q. 16:90 | Ensures peace is principled, not merely procedural |

The study is interpretive rather than statistical. Its contribution lies in conceptual integration: by placing combat verses, spiritual struggle, intergroup fairness, forgiveness, and reconciliation within one analytical frame, it seeks to clarify the Qur'an's normative logic for conflict transformation. This makes the method suitable not only for textual scholarship but also for applied discussions in peace education, religious moderation, and policy discourse.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Jihad as a broader Qur'anic ethics of striving

The first analytical point is lexical and conceptual: jihad is not coterminous with qital. In Qur'anic usage, jihad fundamentally denotes striving or exertion in the path of God. In Q. 25:52, the Prophet is instructed to strive against them with it, that is, with the Qur'an, through argument, proclamation, and steadfastness. This verse is especially significant because it anchors jihad in persuasive and revelatory labor rather than combat. The broader semantic field is confirmed by Q. 29:69 and Q. 22:78, where striving relates to moral perseverance, fidelity, and total devotion. Contemporary scholarship echoes this distinction by identifying spiritual, ethical, intellectual, and social forms of jihad that cannot be reduced to militarized action [1], [2], [5].

This distinction matters because when jihad is treated as a synonym for war, the Qur'an's internal hierarchy of norms is flattened. Ethical struggle against the self, against injustice, against ignorance, and against social corruption becomes invisible, while the most exceptional mode of struggle is reimagined as its essence. Afsaruddin has shown that the history of Islamic thought itself never allowed a single uncontested meaning of jihad; rather, the term moved through devotional, legal, political, and ethical registers [33]. Classical exegetes also read striving in relation to the comprehensive demands of faith. Al-Tabari and Ibn 'Ashur interpret striving passages in ways that foreground obedience, perseverance, and defense of truth without collapsing the term into permanent warfare [34], [35].

The moral consequence is substantial. If jihad is primarily understood as disciplined striving for what is right, then the struggle to prevent violence, restrain anger, build just institutions, protect the weak, and reconcile estranged communities all fall within its semantic horizon. This helps explain why spiritual

jihad and constructive civic engagement remain central to contemporary Muslim discussions of ethics, mental health, and reform [5], [17], [19]. Jihad, in other words, is a principle of mobilized responsibility; whether it takes argumentative, educational, economic, psychological, or defensive form depends on context, means, and ethical limits.

## 4.2 Peace as the normative horizon of Qur'anic conflict ethics

The Qur'an does not treat peace as a passive condition detached from justice. The lexical family of salam signifies safety, integrity, and wholeness. Q. 2:208 calls believers to enter into peace completely, suggesting that peace is not merely diplomatic convenience but a mode of faithful social existence. Q. 8:61 commands openness to peace if the opposing side inclines toward it, thereby placing de-escalation inside the legal-moral structure of conflict. Likewise, Q. 60:8 differentiates between hostile aggressors and those who do not fight Muslims, requiring kindness and justice toward the latter. Such verses undercut civilizational readings that transform difference itself into enmity.

Recent scholarship supports this reading. Belhaj's analysis of Islamic pacifism shows that restraint, forbearance, and moral witness are not marginal motifs but durable Islamic resources [2]. Ranieri demonstrates that the Qur'anic permission to use force is inseparable from a theology of restraint and victim defense [3]. Wani, Ranjbar and Chikrizova, and broader peacebuilding scholarship similarly insist that peace in Islamic perspective is positive rather than merely negative: it includes justice, trust, dignity, and the restoration of social balance [6], [15]. For this reason, the Qur'anic ethic of peace cannot be interpreted as surrender to oppression; rather, it is the higher telos that regulates resistance itself.

This reading also clarifies why the Qur'an repeatedly links justice and peace. Q. 5:8 warns believers not to let hatred of a people prevent them from acting justly. Q. 16:90 condenses the social ethic of the revelation into justice, excellence, and generosity, while condemning indecency and aggression. These verses make clear that peace without justice is unstable, but justice without restraint risks reproducing the very domination it seeks to end. In Qur'anic terms, peace is therefore principled equilibrium, not merely the silencing of conflict.

## 4.3 When the Qur'an permits fighting: defensive scope and ethical constraints

The most frequently cited passages on combat such as Q. 2:190-193 and Q. 22:39-40 must be read in context. Q. 2:190 opens not with a command to initiate violence but with the prohibition do not transgress. The permission concerns those who fight the Muslim community, and the scope is disciplined by non-aggression and cessation once hostilities cease. Q. 22:39–40 frames fighting as permission given to those who have been wronged and expelled unjustly, while also connecting defense to the protection of houses of worship more generally. This is a remarkable feature of the passage: force is permitted not for confessional domination but for safeguarding religious life from persecution.

Contemporary interpreters of combat verses have argued convincingly that these passages are often misread when severed from cause, limitation, and objective. Jafar and Amrullah show that Q. 2:190–194 and Q. 9:5–15 yield a peaceful and bounded reading when interpreted through causal relation and context [11]. Faozan likewise argues that the ethical message of jihad must be reclaimed from virtual and ideological misappropriations that celebrate hostility as religiosity [12]. Tazul Islam's maqasid-oriented approach reaches a parallel conclusion: the Qur'anic discourse on fighting is subordinate to the protection of life, religion, and social order, which makes indiscriminate violence a betrayal rather than fulfillment of Qur'anic purpose [14].

The ethical constraints may be summarized in five principles. First, just cause: fighting is linked to persecution, expulsion, or aggression, not mere difference. Second, proportionality: retaliation cannot become transgression. Third, discrimination: the broader Islamic legal-ethical tradition limits harm to noncombatants and protected institutions, a logic already seeded in Q. 22:39–40 [3], [32]. Fourth, reversibility: if the enemy desists or inclines to peace, the obligation shifts toward cessation and peacemaking. Fifth, teleology: the aim is restoration of secure and just order, not permanent antagonism. These principles reveal that qital is legally real yet normatively exceptional. It is a tool for preventing greater injustice, not the center of the Qur'anic moral universe

## 4.4 Qur'anic pathways to reconciliation: sulh, islah, and forgiveness

If combat passages receive disproportionate attention, reconciliation passages reveal the Qur'an's preferred social horizon. Q. 49:9–10 commands believers to reconcile fighting parties and restore justice if one side transgresses. Importantly, reconciliation here is not sentimental neutrality; it requires intervention against wrongdoing and then

renewed peacemaking. Q. 4:128 states succinctly that reconciliation is best, especially in contexts of social strain and relational breakdown. The Qur'anic lexicon of islah therefore refers not simply to ending an argument but to repairing damaged relations, institutions, and moral order.

Forgiveness intensifies this reconciliatory framework. Q. 42:40 acknowledges retribution as a formal right but immediately elevates pardon and reconciliation by promising divine reward to those who forgive and make peace. Q. 41:34 calls believers to repel evil with what is better, transforming enemies into intimate friends. This does not abolish justice; rather, it introduces a higher ethic that interrupts cycles of retaliation. Studies on forgiveness in Islam have shown that this ethic aligns with restorative justice and peacebuilding, because forgiveness can rehumanize adversaries and reopen moral community without erasing accountability [10], [13].]

Recent scholarship enriches this point. Aziz and Badruzaman identify conflict resolution resources in the Qur'anic interpretation of KH. Sholeh Darat, where textual understanding directs communities toward mediation and ethical repair [28]. Fais et al. likewise demonstrate that even verses associated with qital may be interpreted nonviolently when viewed through broader exegetical principles [29]. Nabi and Parray, reading the Prophetic biography through neo-traditionalist ethics, show that inclusion, patience, and covenantal coexistence are indispensable to Islamic conflict resolution [30]. Belhaj's study of Wahiduddin Khan further shows how peace ethics can emerge from a deep Qur'anic commitment to patience, persuasion, and restraint rather than retaliatory zeal [31].

From a Qur'anic perspective, then, reconciliation is not the opposite of jihad but one of its highest fulfillments. It is the disciplined striving to restore relations on the basis of truth, justice, and mercy. This understanding moves beyond a binary of militancy versus passivity. The real alternative to unrestrained violence is not weakness but morally governed peacemaking.

*Table 2. A Qur'anic conflict-transformation matrix*

| Conflict Stage | Qur'anic Anchors | Dominant Ethical Principle | Contemporary Application |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pre-conflict | Q. 16:90; Q. 5:8 | Justice and non-hostility | Peace education, anti-hate discourse, equitable institutions |
| Moral struggle | Q. 25:52; Q. 29:69 | Intellectual and spiritual jihad | Counter-extremism, ethical literacy, civic responsibility |
| Defensive resistance | Q. 2:190; Q. 22:39–40 | Protection without transgression | Civilian protection, lawful restraint, human security |
| De-escalation | Q. 8:61; Q. 60:8 | Openness to peace and fairness | Negotiation, ceasefire, confidence-building measures |
| Reconciliation | Q. 4:128; Q. 49:9–10 | Mediation and social repair | Community mediation, restorative justice, local peacebuilding |
| Post-conflict ethics | Q. 41:34; Q. 42:40 | Forgiveness with accountability | Trauma healing, reintegration, intergroup trust building |

## 4.5 Contemporary implications: de-radicalization, digital ethics, and public peacebuilding

A Qur'anic reading of jihad centered on peace with justice has direct implications for contemporary Muslim societies and for wider policy debates. First, it offers a scripturally grounded basis for de-radicalization. Extremist propaganda depends on atomized proof-texting, mythic history, and a perpetual-enemy worldview. Jacoby's study of ISIS media shows how selective quotation can detach Qur'anic language from its ethical architecture [16]. A thematic reading that distinguishes jihad from qital and emphasizes peace, restraint, and reconciliation undermines precisely this strategy. It enables religious educators and community leaders to respond not by generic denunciation alone but by presenting an internally coherent Qur'anic alternative.

Second, the framework speaks to digital religious authority. Online religious influence is increasingly decentralized, with social media personalities, short-video preachers, and networked communities reshaping access to Islamic discourse [19]. This transformation can amplify polarization, but it can also disseminate moderation. Recent studies show that digital platforms can cultivate religious moderation, tolerance, and constructive reinterpretation when scriptural discourse is communicated responsibly [17], [20]–[22]. The notion of digital jihad should therefore be reframed as disciplined effort to protect truth, civility, and human dignity in cyberspace rather than as symbolic aggression or doctrinal escalation [18].

Third, the Qur'anic model contributes to interreligious and civic peacebuilding. Dialogue in Islam is not merely instrumental diplomacy; it reflects a deeper commitment to justice, witness, and coexistence [7], [8]. Empirical studies in peace research further show that religion can strengthen peace duration, create transformative bridges, and cultivate dialogue competencies when embedded in inclusive institutions [23]–[26]. In Muslim-majority settings, this means that public theology, curriculum design, community mediation, and local wisdom

initiatives should not treat moderation as a political slogan alone, but as a hermeneutic discipline rooted in the Qur'an's ethical ordering of struggle.

Fourth, post-conflict societies need an approach that holds together justice and mercy. Transitional settings often oscillate between punitive maximalism and premature reconciliation. Islamic legal-ethical resources, as Mojtahedi and van Wijk argue, can help balance these competing demands [9]. The Qur'anic pattern supports this balance: wrongdoing must be named and restrained, yet the endpoint remains social repair, covenantal restoration, and the reopening of moral community. This is why forgiveness in the Qur'an is never mere amnesia; it is a disciplined moral act situated within truth, accountability, and the possibility of transformed relations [10], [13]

### 4.6 Interreligious coexistence, covenant, and restorative justice

The educational implications of this reading are substantial. Curricula in Qur'anic studies, Islamic education, and civic education often treat jihad either as a narrowly legal topic or as a defensive slogan against accusations about Islam. Both approaches are insufficient. What is needed is a pedagogical framework that trains students to distinguish conceptually between jihad and qital, to read conflict verses contextually, and to recognize the centrality of justice, reconciliation, and intergroup fairness in the Qur'an. Studies on religious moderation in Indonesia suggest that values of tolerance and nonviolence become effective only when they are translated into classroom practices, institutional culture, and scriptural literacy rather than left as abstract slogans [20]–[22].

Policy discourse can also benefit from a more textually grounded account of Qur'anic peace. Security-centered approaches to religion often focus on surveillance and counter-propaganda while neglecting the deeper hermeneutic battles that shape community moral imagination. Yet extremist actors succeed precisely because they offer emotionally compelling, selective readings of scripture. A peace-oriented Qur'anic framework provides scholars, religious leaders, and policymakers with a more credible alternative: it contests extremism not from outside the tradition, but from within its own authoritative language. This is particularly important in digital environments where simplified religious claims circulate faster than nuanced scholarship [16]–[19].

Finally, the article's framework has practical relevance for community mediation and public

theology. Local disputes in families, schools, mosques, campuses, and neighborhoods rarely involve classical warfare, but they do involve anger, humiliation, symbolic violence, and breakdown of trust. A Qur'anic framework that privileges islah, sabr, and adl can guide mediators and educators in moving from confrontation to repair. It can also help Muslim public discourse recover a richer language of striving, one in which the hardest jihad may be the disciplined work of preventing hatred, preserving justice, and rebuilding relationships after conflict.

## 5 NOVELTY

The novelty of this article lies in its integrated Qur'anic conflict-transformation model. Existing studies often examine jihad, combat verses, reconciliation, forgiveness, interreligious dialogue, or digital moderation separately. This article brings those strands into a single analytical framework and argues that the Qur'an structures them hierarchically: moral striving and justice-oriented peace are primary, defensive combat is conditional and secondary, and reconciliation is the preferred end-state once aggression is restrained. In this sense, the article does not merely claim that Islam values peace; it demonstrates how the Qur'an orders conflict ethically from prevention to restoration.

A second novelty lies in the proposed distinction between exceptional permission and normative horizon. Qital belongs to the first category: it is condition-bound, reversible, and governed by non-transgression. Peaceful coexistence, fairness, covenantal fidelity, and restorative reconciliation belong to the second category. This distinction clarifies why the Qur'an can contain verses of fighting without being reducible to a war text. The framework also offers a conceptual tool for contemporary deradicalization because it identifies where extremist readings reverse the hierarchy by making the exception appear normative.

A third novelty is methodological. By combining thematic tafsir, contextual analysis, maqasidi reasoning, and recent peace studies literature, the article connects classical exegesis to present-day concerns such as digital propaganda, online authority, interreligious dialogue, and post-conflict reconstruction. The resulting matrix can function as an interpretive bridge between Qur'anic scholarship and applied peacebuilding, making it useful for curriculum development, community mediation, and research on religious moderation.

### 5.1 Concluding

This study has argued that the Qur'anic

relationship between jihad and peace is not contradictory but hierarchical and teleological. Jihad denotes a broad field of striving in the path of God, encompassing spiritual discipline, moral courage, intellectual resistance, social reform, and, only under strict conditions, defensive confrontation. Qital is therefore not the essence of jihad but one exceptional modality within it. The Qur'an permits fighting to resist aggression, protect the oppressed, and preserve religious and social order, yet it simultaneously constrains that permission through non-transgression, proportionality, and readiness for peace when hostility ends.

More importantly, the Qur'an embeds conflict within an architecture of justice, mercy, mediation, and reconciliation. Terms such as salam, sulh, islah, sabr, afw, and adl demonstrate that peace is not external to Islamic ethics but one of its core normative horizons. Reconciliation is best, forgiveness can break cycles of revenge, and fairness toward non-hostile others remains obligatory. This makes the Qur'anic vision of peace active and justice-centered rather than passive or merely rhetorical.

The article's proposed conflict-transformation matrix shows how the Qur'an moves from moral formation to defensive restraint, from de-escalation to reconciliation, and from accountability to restored social trust. In contemporary contexts marked by extremism, digital distortion, polarization, and intercommunal tension, this reading offers a robust theological basis for religious moderation, peace education, and public ethics. Future studies may deepen this framework through comparative jurisprudential analysis, empirical peacebuilding case studies, and region-specific applications in Muslim minority and majority societies.

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