Islamic Perspective towards Conflict and Peace

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Abstract

This research tries to identify a theoretical framework provided by the Islamic culture in the field of conflict and peace. In other words, to determine the input of the Islamic perspective towards the issue of conflict and peace, according to the moderate concept of Islam which is considered mainstream? This study depended on the use and analysis of the authentic and authorized Islamic sources that constitute the source of epistemology for this Islamic perspective. The study is not a comparative one between the Islamic perspective, the European or Western one, or any other culture or religion. Knowing the perspective of Islam for peace and conflict opens room for benefitting from other cultures, Islam's included, as part of exchanging experiences and cultures in the field of world and human peace as well as enforcing cross-cultural dialogue and cooperation in achieving positive peace in human societies. This study has revealed the core ideas and framework of the following levels: The concepts of peace and conflict; Causes of conflicts ; Conflict Resolution ; and Conflict Prevention This study also reveals that the Islamic perspective is capable of providing a theoretical contribution in the field of conflict and peace studies, but it has not reacted significantly in science or research in field on the international level. Also, it was not given the opportunity to be practiced in the current era, especially on the state or international system levels. And perhaps the emergence of the Arab Spring phase and some Islamic movements, that could be interested in this applying this Islamic perspective, got hold of power in the Arab world, might make it possible for this perspective to be tested, and to know its problems and challenges in reality and how it can be developed to form a cultural and civilizational contribution in the field of conflict and peace studies.

Keywords: Religion, Peace & Conflict; Islam and Peace; Islam, Conflict & Conflict Resolution; Islam and Causes of Conflict; Islam and Preventing Conflict.

Prophet Muhammad said: "Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective." (Sahih Muslim, Hadith no. 6274)

Introduction

Upon the end of the Cold War and subsequent crystallization of a new world order, a chain of changes and developments has been initiated in the international arena. In light of these events and in the wake of 9/11 and its "War on Terror" aftermath with some Islamic movements reaching power through presidential and parliamentary elections in the Arab spring states, the phenomenon of Political Islam and its various movements, of all kinds and dimensions, have taken center stage. Such movements have since attracted the active attention of political powers and forums and academic arena at the national, regional, and international levels. On the other hand, various studies have been conducted that try to understand the Islamic perspective towards different issues within the human society, at the political, economic, social and other fields, some of which were scientific and objective, while others were biased for different reasons and motives that they contributed in creating negative impressions that reinforced problematic cultural miscommunication and coexistence with other cultures, and in stopping the Islamic culture from benefitting from other cultures and vice versa. Especially that most of these studies were non-Arab and suffer from the problem of dependence on and dealing with the original Islamic sources available in Arabic, and then from accurate apprehension of these sources, which demands the contribution of Arabic speaking experts and academics specializing in peace and conflict studies. In a different angle, the cultural inputs and scientific contributions of the non-western "Other" regarding the concepts of conflict in Western literature or in the West are very limited, despite the fact that the phenomenon of conflict is a human trait experienced by all cultures, societies and human civilizations. Most of the non-Western contributions in this area are about the experience and the methodology of "Gandhi" in nonviolence.

Giving the cultural inputs of other civilizations, including the "Islamic civilization", the opportunity to contribute to Western literature and thought, plays an important role in creating an opportunity to rebalance concepts of "self" and "hegemony" and the "integration" of human and international relations. The limited contributions of non-Western cultural inputs in Western literature of peace and conflict studies, mostly did not constitute philosophical pillars or methodological and theoretical frameworks for this field, but have been often mildly utilized in getting to know the nature of the tools and methods of conflict resolution of other communities, and not in framing new theories for this field.

Hence, knowledge of the nature of the Islamic perspective on peace and conflict opens the way to benefit from other cultures, including Islam's, as part of the exchange of experiences and cultures in the field of world and human peace and promoting intercultural dialogue and cooperation in achieving positive peace in human societies.

It is expected that this study will hopefully provide a real and a qualitative addition, in the light of the scarcity of Arab and foreign academic literature in this area conducted by academics in the field of political sciences and not a specialty group of religious studies.

Statement of the Problem : This research tries to detect and identify the nature of the theoretical framework offered by the Islamic culture in the field of conflict and peace, including concepts, system of values and general principles in this area. In other words, this study tries to determine the essence of the Islamic vision towards one of human life's issues; the issue and concepts of conflict and peace, but from an Arab Sunni point of view.

This study is not a comparative one between the Islamic and the European or Western perspectives or any other vision or religion such as Christianity or Judaism. Although some of the contents and elements are common between these religions, especially as they come from the same divine source, this study does not look for the similarities and differences with the other, whether other religions, ideologies or cultures, but rather for their characteristics, vision and self-perspective.

Methodology: This study is mainly based on the use and analysis of the authorized authentic Islamic sources (Quran, Sunnah and the words and deeds of the Prophet's companions, especially the Righteous Caliphs at the beginning of the Islamic period and its rule) (as they are considered the most important sources of legislation in Islam)[i] and to a lesser extent on some of what Islamic thinkers have written, especially since these Islamic sources constitute the root source of the Islamic perspective's Epistemology.

The cultural approach would be useful in this study to demonstrate the importance and necessity of the interaction of the Islamic perspective of peace and conflict with other world cultures. And as we mentioned earlier, this study will not apply the comparative approach between the Islamic, Western or any other culture's perspectives or the Christian, Jewish or any other religious perspective. This study also will not be historical based on historical or chronological narratives of the phenomenon of conflicts and disputes in the Muslim world. And it shall not resort to the legal treatment of disputes, as both methods will not accomplish or lead to finding the theoretical framework of the study.

Moreover, the process of exploration and analysis will be held by this study through research on the core ideas and general principles found in the original Islamic sources mentioned earlier. The core ideas and general principles will be determined on the following levels:

1. Concepts of Peace and Conflict
2. Causes of Conflicts
3. Conflict Resolution
4. Preventing Conflict

Finally, this study is based on the concept of moderate Islam, which is the mainstream, and not on the vision of extremist or militant Islam.

Background: Islamic Framework of life and Politics

Islam presents itself not only as a religion but also as a comprehensive phenomenon, making no distinction between sacred and secular, a system of life covering all aspects and fields; politics, economy, society, science...etc. It also covers and deals with all requirements and needs of soul and spirit, feelings and emotions, the mind and the body. It calls for adding a spiritual value to all deeds. In other words, Islam urges that each material goal or activity in life must have a moral/spiritual connection.

"But seek, with that (wealth) which Allâh has bestowed on you, the home of the Hereafter, and forget not your portion of lawful enjoyment in this world; and do good as Allâh has been good to you, and seek not mischief in the land. Verily, Allâh likes not the Mufsidûn" (those who commit great crimes and sins, oppressors, tyrants, mischief-makers, corrupters) (Al-Qasas: 77)

In addition Islam calls for medertion and balance at all levels in life; the individual and the collective, mind, spirit and body, idealism and realism. And accordingly, Islam considers that imbalance in life is a major cause of conflict as to be discussed later on.

And from an Islamic perspective, politics is considered to be part of the Islamic system; for Islam does not segregate religion from politics, it is the state as it is a religion; Muhammad was a prophet, a religious leader and at the same time a political leader and head of the Islamic state which he founded in Al-Madinah in 627 AD.

Islam proposes at the political level, a range of theoretical propositions and principles, in addition to the political experience and practices it has gone through in terms of the political system of the state, or at the level of international relations and foreign affairs. At the level of the political system, Islam emphasizes the following principles:

- Justice
- Equality
- Shura
- Public freedoms and human dignity.

All of these principles are subject to the authority of Islamic law, and not to the authority of the clergy/religious figures. And we will discuss each of these principles in our discussion of conflict Prevention from the Islamic perspective later on. As for the Islamic principles of International Relations and Foreign Affairs, Islam stresses in the original sources and the practices of Caliphs the following principles[ii]:

- Brotherhood in humanity and the unity of human origins and its connection to the fulfillment of justice, equality and freedom of mankind
- Peace, which is the base in international relations
- Cooperation and interdependence
- Islam's call for global peace, justice and mercy; the globalization of mercy.

The message of the Islamic civilization is a universal message and hence is concerned with peace and "the globalization of Mercy"

"And We have sent you not (O Muhammad) but as a mercy for the 'Âlamîn (mankind, and all that exists)" (Al-Anbiyâ': 107)

-The commitment to, the fulfillment and respect of contracts and treaties
-The principle of collective responsibility and solidarity towards the human community; commitment to international treaties and agreements, especially towards human security. is connected to another Islamic principle, that of the "collective responsibility" and "solidarity" between the units of the human community to fight corruption and aggression and to maintain peace and security, This principle of collective responsibility and solidarity is clearly explained by the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad:

"The example of the person abiding by Allah's order and restrictions in comparison to those who violate them is like the example of those persons who drew lots for their seats in a boat. Some of them got seats in the upper part, and the others in the lower. When the latter needed water, they had to go up to bring water (and that troubled the others), so they said, 'Let us make a hole in our share of the ship (and get water) saving those who are above us from troubling them.' So, if the people in the upper part left the others do what they had suggested, all the people of the ship would be destroyed, but if they prevented them, both parties would be safe."[iii]

In conclusion, "Islam is better seen as the political beliefs and conduct of Muslims." [iv]

Conflict and the Islamic Perspective

The phenomenon of conflict, in general, is an undesirable one, but it is a feature of human society and its dynamics, and sometimes is one of the requirements of its stability and development. Conflict, from the Islamic perspective, or what it calls "repellence", is often considered a necessity, a need for community-based or human reform, as change is one of its dynamics, and to protect the movement of human urbanization, as the Quran refers to it:

"Those who have been expelled from their homes unjustly only because they said: "Our Lord is Allah." For had it not been that Allâh checks one set of people by means of another, monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, wherein the Name of Allâh is mentioned much would surely have been pulled down. "(Al-Hajj: 40)

Conflict is also considered in the Islamic perspective as a part of the process of reform and change at the individual, community and state levels, within the framework of what is termed in Islam as "enjoining goodness and forbidding evil."

From an Islamic perspective, means of "repellence" is one of the components or forms of jihad that aim to protect against aggression, abolish injustice or spread the word of Islam through the protection of individuals' freedom of choice and not force them to change their priorities, as we will explain later. Generally, the phenomenon of conflict forms a painful human action in many respects, and when it follows a will, a purpose or a noble cause, it often becomes a necessity for human life in the community.

Moreover, Islam generates the culture of positive conflict by urging individuals not to take a passive attitude or action towards aggression or hostility, and sometimes urges defending one's self and resisting aggression and injustice at the level of individuals, community, state and humanity.

At the individual level, Islam called to defend one's self and wealth, as stated in the words of Prophet Muhammad: **"he who is killed defending his religion is a martyr, he who is killed defending his wealth is a martyr, he who is killed defending his life is a martyr, and he who is killed defending his family is a martyr."**

Thus, Islam invokes personal vigilance and proactive deterrence against any party that might think or be tempted to hold aggression against or attack others.

The Islamic Concept of Conflict

Islam holds a positive view of human nature, insisting that human nature "Fitrah" is good in principle.
As previously mentioned, Islam refers to conflict as "repellence", this term reflects the original state to the concept of conflict and connected to Islamic sources and origins; the term "repellence" comes from the Quranic verse which has already been referred to in Surah **(Al-Hajj: 40)**. The meaning, implications and objectives of the concept of repellence as listed in Islamic books of Quranic commentary, refer to several concepts, including, that this repellence is meant to "organize matters and laws" [v], as well as establishing a system of life and the implementing laws and legislation.

The concept of "repellence", as an alternative to the concept of conflict in Islam, is a positive human action and a necessity in the case of defending one's self and in the case of reform, development and urbanization in the human community, and includes a variety of tools and techniques, some of which depend on force and violence, and some are peaceful. Resorting to "repellence" by using force or violence as tools is an exceptional case, as in the case of imposing order by force and armed resistance or war, which in the Islamic concept is an exception to the key rule of peace in relations with others[vi]. And even in the event when this exception of the use of force is applied, da'wah, notification and warning is an essential prior step before resorting to the use of any tool of power.

On the other hand, enjoining virtue and forbidding evil, which many Quranic verses and hadiths have called for, as stated in the verse:

"And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful." (Surat Al-Imran, verse 104)

The overall shape of repellence is that which aims to achieve reform and urbanization. This general shape contains a variety of tools and methods, including those peaceful non-violent ways for repellence and change that are accepted today like the use of peaceful resistance, or peaceful jihad against injustice for the sake of reform and change, such as civil disobedience, political opposition and jihad through speech and public opinion against a dictator and others.[vii]

In general, there are commonly-used terms within the Quranic and prophetic sources such as war, fighting and repellence. The means of change or repellence whether violent or peaceful, according to certain conditions or controls, are part of the components of the state of "Jihad" for defense and protection, repelling aggression and injustice or for the spread of Islam and introducing its message.

Jihad Concept

The term "Jihad" has been associated, for many people especially in western media and political discourse, with terrorism and extremism as well as other negative impressions and mental images. Nevertheless, it is not within the subject of this study to determine the reasons behind this. However, what we are interested in learning here is the definition of Jihad and its relationship with conflict, repellence and peace.

The term 'Jihad', often superficially translated as "Holy War", literally means "striving /exerting efforts" to achieve positive change at any level. And there are two major forms for Jihad:

1 - **Lesser Jihad**: a preoccupation with the military campaign of Muslim leaders for peace and order or for a just cause; military action for spreading Islam or defending it.

Lesser Jihad Goals are:

- The Spreading of Islam
 Historically: forwarding the message of Islam to non-Muslims and providing them with a chance to know Islam while not forcing anybody to change his / her religion; protecting the freedom of choosing one's religion and system of life.

 - Defending Islam

Including the traditional notion of defense referred to in contemporary international conventions and laws, as well as in the Charter of the United Nations particularly, as the right of peoples and nations of self-defense and resisting aggression or occupation.

2 - **Greater Jihad**: has always been the deeply personal, internal struggle to purify the spirit and behave in a manner that reflects divine qualities - spiritual struggle against the evil in one's self.

Islam, Violence & War

Before entering into the subject matter of this study, we refer here to the framework of the relationship and the Islamic perspective on the phenomenon of violence and war; the Islamic texts suggest that the framework of this relationship is based on two elements, namely:

1- Protecting and Nurturing Human Life

Islam has keenly expressed that one of its most important goals and objectives is protecting and nurturing human life regardless of religion, gender or nationality. As indicated in the Quran;

"If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind." *(Al-Mâ'idah: 32)*

Islam also identifies the essence and components of man and his life that must be protected and nurtured within the "five goals" referred to in the following figure:

Islam provides a strong regulation and punishment to protect the core human life (Five Maqased)

Stability & Life of Peace

Islam confirms that protecting these five objectives related to the essence of human life will lead to stability and human security and will achieve what is called Positive Peace.

2 – Repelling and Resisting Injustice, Corruption and Aggression

Islam rejects the presence of all sources of conflict and threat to security and peace, and on top of them are injustice, corruption and aggression, especially on vulnerable and weak human beings. Islam does not only reject these sources of conflict, but dictates on its Muslim followers to resist and fight them and that it is considered a duty on them and they will be held accountable if they defaulted in the performance of this duty.

"And what is wrong with you that you fight not in the Cause of Allâh, and for those weak, ill-treated and oppressed among men, women, and children, whose cry is:" Our Lord! Rescue us from this town whose people are oppressors." (An-Nisâ ': 75)

Islam does not reject the use of force, fighting and war, as sometimes it is required in exceptional cases;

"Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities" (*Al Baqara:* 190)

Although the use of force, fighting and war are exceptional cases, they must be subject to the following conditions:

1. The cause must be just and legitimate
2. The existence of goodwill behind the fighting; there should not be any politically motivated and unethical intentions to exploit the situation no matter how just or legitimate the cause is.
3. Exhausting all options and peaceful means to address the issue of conflict, and thus the option of using force and fighting becomes a necessity and is the last resort.

The fighting and war should be subject to the set of values and ethical rules set by Islam, which the Prophet and the first caliph of Islam Abu Bakr pointed out 1,400 years ago, long time before the emergence of international human law. These values and rules deal with human life and dignity, protecting the environment, human economic life and other issues and matters of life. The Prophet and the Caliphs after him confirmed these values; for example, the first caliph in Islam, Abu Bakr, ordered the leader of the Islamic Army - Osama bin Zaid - when sent to war saying:

"Do not betray nor commit treachery, nor disfigure/mutilate a small child nor an old man nor a woman, do not pull out a palm tree, nor slay a sheep, a cow, a camel, unless for food, and when you pass by folks who committed themselves to silos (i.e. houses of worship) let them be to what they committed themselves to."[viii]

3 – Use of a Moderate approach: (merging between idealism and realism)

Moderation is an Islamic approach based on resisting injustice and aggression, as well as achieving reform in accordance with the principles of righteousness, justice and common good. However, this approach does not reject the use of force, physical and moral (civil and military), but in accordance with the guidelines of morality, justice and necessity, as it does not deal with absolute idealism or selfish excessive reality and self-interest, free from controls and moral values, it is founded on the principle of integration between idealism and realism and the use of this approach in the field of conflict and peace studies still needs further studies and research efforts to identify its concepts, mechanisms, methods, applications and results.[ix]

The concept of peace in Islam:

The theme of peace in Islam forms a central subject and goal and a supreme value targeted by Islamic thought and activism. And as an expression of the utmost importance for peace in Islam; the All-Peaceful is one of the names of Almighty God, the greeting of people in Paradise as well as the greeting of Muslims. Peace is also repeatedly mentioned in the Quran; more than 50 times. The term "peace" SALAAM in Islam is not derived from the name of a prophet or a person, but is derived from the same roots of the word ISLAM. And that is what reflects the depth, importance and roots of Peace in Islam. One researcher points out that the core of the Islamic vision for the world is that the message of Islam be universal, just as compassion is universal, and that "peace" is a structural compound at the heart of the global construction sought by Islam and not something exceptional. The idea of peace is structural and authentic in the Islamic vision at all levels; whether the individual, family and community, and society and state, leading to the global level in an integrated coordinated manner among these levels.[x] When talking about the nature and concept of peace in Islam, peace means protecting and activating the five Islamic purposes of (Maintaining religion, one's self/body, mind, money, and honor) as mentioned earlier, especially at the level of the individual. The general Islamic purpose becomes whole at the community or state level, and the community or the global system; as the overall purpose is **"to urbanize earth, keeping the system of coexistence on it and its continuous prosperity by the goodness and righteousness of those entrusted on it and them fulfilling their duties by justice and integrity."[xi]**

One of today's main Muslim scholars expresses this sense about the overall purpose saying it is "fulfilling the interests of the people, establishing justice amongst them and freeing them from injustice and harm."[xii]

We can say that the Islamic concept is to achieve a state of balance and harmony between mind, body and soul to reach the peaceful self referred to in the Quran.
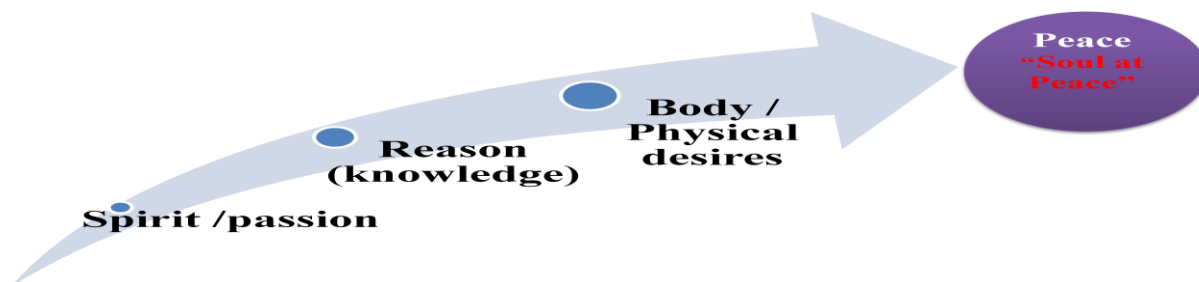
The concept of peace in Islam also covers society and state levels

Also, Peace was interpreted, not only as the absence of oppression and instability, but also as the presence of justice and an environment that promotes self-actualization or / and ensures that people (human beings) would be able to pursue a "good life" (***hayah tayyiba***).[xiii] In Islam, achieving peace at the community, state or international community levels emphasizes the establishment of an interconnected system with the level of the individual that is integrated and balanced between knowledge / logic, moral values and ethics and human needs. For peace in Islam does not stop at providing or satisfying human needs, but also links them to a system of moral values that are related to the achievement of peace, such as cooperation, tolerance, altruism, love, and others, as well as awareness, science and good thinking and perception. Therefore, peace in Islam is to create a relationship of harmony with balance and integration between human needs, values and awareness to create a relationship of charity, positive interaction and peace between man and God (on the grounds that God is a source of goodness and purity in religions including Islam), man and his fellow man (both in local and human community), as well as man and himself, so as to achieve tranquility and happiness on the one hand and goodness and urbanism of mankind and human society on the other. In general, the "Islamic perspective on peace emphasizes divine purpose, human solidarity and social justice."[xiv]

The Islamic Perspective and the Causes of Conflict

The complexity, diversity and overlapping of the causes of conflict prompted scholars to create theories that provide general rules for the interpretation of conflicts or wars. These theories have varied, differed and overlapped with each other extensively to the extent that some researchers indicate that every scholar in the field of peace and war has a different framework for understanding the causes of organized violence.[xv] And we will try here to identify the nature of the Islamic perspective in explaining the causes of conflict.

Causes of Conflict

The Islamic perspective in defining conflict is based on the foundation and the source of conflict (whether at the individual, community or international levels) and is an occurrence or existence of a flaw or failure in relationships and harmony and an imbalance between the three components of an individual's or a human being's life (the physical, mental and spiritual and moral aspects), both at the level of individuals or (elite), or human community (community, peoples and countries) and thus it leads to a disruption or a conflict in the public system in terms of relations and interactions of its parts, goals and motives, or values and vision - at the level of the individual, the family, society and state and the international community.

In other words, this flaw in harmony and balance leads to / results from deviations in the system of values, ethics and motives (spiritual and moral), and the concepts, visions, behavior and practices towards others (individuals or nations and communities) that lead to a conflict. For example, the flaw in the relations of harmony and balance mentioned above in the individual (decision-maker, or elite), leads to the dominance and control of desires and negative motivations such as authoritarian lust for power, greed and control over others or their resources. It might also lead the individual to become keen to the misuse of mental and cognitive production without ethical controls to harness science and knowledge and devote it to apply hostile power against humanity, or to serve the authoritarian lust for power in a way that may entail the use of technologically advanced armed forces as means of aggression, tyranny and injustice.

Also, In light of the equation of harmony and balance, the Islamic perspective finds and confirms that the positive change, reform and peace in communities and states, is the result of change and reform of man himself or as a community, and the Quran refers to that "Verily! Allâh will not change the (good) condition of a people as long as they do not change their state (of goodness) themselves." (Ar-Ra'd: 11)

In other words, this ayah shows that the transformation of man's positive reality and environment or the life of peace experienced by individuals and community, to a state of conflict, violence and disorder is the result of a defect in the human's equation, and thus is a cause of conflict. In contrast, the change of the negative reality or conflict in human life to a life of peace, security and reform of this reality and finding a resolution for the conflict is also a result of man changing himself, his way of life and community, but on the basis of harmony and balance, as pointed out earlier.

This point can be summed up by saying that the flaw in the system of harmony and balance generates a behavior or pattern of conflict that is not cooperative with the other. alternatively, there is a reformist pattern, behavior or reaction, a "repelling" one in order to achieve reform, construction and other positive things, and that sustaining, protecting and nurturing this state of harmony and balance means that the sources of conflict are eliminated and peace with the other is maintained, and that generates partnerships and conflict transformation.

In a different angle, it may be useful to note here that the Islamic perspective understands the impact and the role of the circumstances and the surrounding environment on human behavior and his motives towards conflict, but does not accept them as a justification for violence and aggression against the rights and interests of others, and therefore, dictates to resist and punish those who practice injustice and aggression against the resources and rights of others even if they were led to the use of this aggression and injustice due to harsh circumstances.

Islam and Conflict Resolution: A General Framework

It is well-known that the issue of conflict resolution and conflict elimination is a central issue in peace and conflict studies, and it constitutes one of its most important fields and objectives. It also interests all cultures and religions, but there may be a discrepancy or difference in vision and starting points to some cultures and religions from each other towards conflict resolution. What concerns us here is the Islamic perspective in conflict resolution. The core of the Islamic perspective to resolve a conflict is on the basis that any conflict resolution must be based on justice and its purpose, then acceptance and satisfaction between the parties concerned. For the Islamic interest is not only to find a resolution but rather to achieve a just solution, and so it is not based on hegemony as proposed by a lot of Western literature in this field, but rather is based on righteousness and giving all parties what is rightfully theirs, i.e. justice. This was what the first Caliph in Islam Abu Bakr expressed in his first speech when he was chosen caliph (head of state): **"The weak amongst you is strong in my eyes until I have given him back what is rightfully his, and the strong amongst you is weak in my eyes until I have taken what is not rightfully his."[xvi]** Conflict resolution based on power relations is based on the principle of "bargaining" and not necessarily on the basis of justice. This difference is reflected in the role and results of mediation to resolve conflicts whereas in the Islamic perspective justice is the most important outcome of mediation, and justice is the overall goal. However, compromise is seen as a way of prolonging the conflict. A mediator seeks compromise because of the power relations between the parties concerned. But what a mediator really should strive to achieve is a just solution, not a compromise. The reason to apply a rights-perspective instead of a compromise-perspective is that power relations will most certainly change in the future. The weaker party will continue to try to change its weak position, while the stronger party will do everything it can to keep the upper hand. Hence, conflict will continue if we don't go for justice.[xvii]

Generally, the Islamic perspective in conflict resolution on the basis of finding a just solution makes the issue here not about how to change power relations between the conflicting parties, but how to give each party its rights.

This Islamic perspective makes a fundamental change in the role of a mediator in conflict resolution that has to do two things:

• To find out what and where the truth and the rights of the parties are.

• To work to achieve a just settlement in addition to the principle of acceptance and satisfaction. Establishing justice in resolving the conflict is not optional in the Islamic perspective but rather a duty or a mandatory target, as the Islamic perspective rejects any settlement based on injustice to any of the parties in conflict. Even if the parties accept such a resolution, the mediator who does not seek to achieve justice is a partner in oppression and its consequences.

On the other hand, the methods and accepted means of conflict resolution in contemporary international law used by states and international organizations, like political and diplomatic means (such as negotiations, mediation, well-intended efforts and others), judicial and legal means (such as arbitration) or means of coercion and force (such as diplomatic and political sanctions or the use of armed force and military intervention). The Islamic perspective intersects with these methods practiced by contemporary international organizations sanctioned by international legitimacy. As a lot of these methods have been applied in Islamic history and experience; Islam acknowledges, accepts and supports the exercise of these means for conflict resolution in principle, but may differ in practice according to the nature of the issue of conflict, the nature of motivations and rationale behind the use of some of these means, and the order of their priorities.[xviii] The Islamic perspective considers peaceful means such as dialogue and negotiations as some of the most important methods of conflict resolution, as indicated by the Quranic ayah:

"Repel (the evil) with one which is better (i.e. Allâh orders the faithful believers to be patient at the time of anger, and to excuse those who treat them badly) then verily he, between whom and you there was enmity, (will become) as though he was a close friend." (Fussilat: 34)

And the Quranic ayah:

"Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islâm) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better" (AL- Nahl: 125)

On the other hand, the Islamic perspective accepts the use of armed force when it is needed, in cooperation with the international community to fight crimes against humanity, aggression and genocide, if these crimes are not to be prevented and stopped except by force. The Islamic perspective sees its involvement with the international community in carrying out those means as part of its international and collective responsibility to achieve international peace and security, in preventing international conflicts and wars, occupation and aggression and protecting the components of human life and the natural environment.[xix] And perhaps it is useful here to focus on one of the means used, that of the comprehensive economic blockade.[xx] The experience of the Islamic civilization does not refer to accepting the practice or the adoption of this medium, for it is a means of mass punishment to people, in order to punish their political system or the ruling political elite, which the entire people of the country suffer from, unless the people were accomplices in crime or aggression it is being punished for, for this means contradicts with the Islamic vision, in:

1. No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another; these people often are subject to the tyranny of these political systems and are suppressed; and thus do not have any will to choose.
2. It is inconsistent with the achievement of one of the five goals and essentials in Islamic law for humans that has been referred to earlier, and especially that it upholds a threat to human life, that of the non-fighting civilian; elders, women and children, and thus is a threat to the sources of human life and society, and is unacceptable in the case of war in Islam, let alone the no-war conditions.

Fourth: Framework and Principles of the Islamic Perspective in the Prevention of Conflicts

The Islamic system of civilization is based on a set of principles and values that effectively contribute to the prevention of conflicts. It is an early mental and applicable state that was put forward by Islamic culture in the field of conflict prevention and achieving peace and security. And the framework of the Islamic perspective in the field of conflict prevention is based on a set of principles that are on the individual, community, state and the international community levels[xxi]:

1. Emphasizing Unity and Solidarity:

Unity and solidarity are at the community level as well as between different nations and peoples. A number of Quranic ayah and prophetic hadiths emphasize this issue, such as the ayah:

"And obey Allâh and His Messenger, and do not dispute (with one another) lest you lose courage and your strength departs, and be patient. Surely, Allâh is with those who are *As-Sâbirûn* (the patient)." (Al-Anfal: 46)

2. Achieving Justice

The Islamic perspective seeks to establish relations based on justice and not force, and that the value and goal of achieving justice is a core value in the Islamic system in various spheres of life. The following ayahs refer to this value:

"And that when you judge between men (people), you judge with justice." (Al-Nisa': 5)

"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allâh, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin" (Al Nisa': 135)

This value is a source to achieve peace and security. And many ayahs and hadiths have confirmed the rejection of injustice, and the Quran refers to the word Justice and its derivatives more than 100 times, and "warns of injustice" more than 200 times. History tells the story of the messenger of the Persian king Khosrov, when he came looking for the second Muslim caliph Omar bin Al-Khattab (the head of state of a superpower then) found him asleep under a tree, without guards and not in a mansion, so he said **"You ruled and you were just, so you were safe and therefore slept."** This phrase summarizes the relationship of justice to security and peace and its connection to the prevention of conflicts.

3. Seeking to Apply the System of Moral Values and Ethics

This plays a key role in the Islamic way of life and human upbringing, with the relentless pursuit of its practice and application in human society in general, and the Islamic society in particular, whether in peace or war. The Messenger of Allah peace be upon him has emphasized the moral dimension, as he said: **"I was sent but to fulfill morals."xxii**

And some of the Islamic moral values highlighted by the Islamic system that are associated with the prevention of conflicts and achieving peace are:

1. Emphasis on the values of mercy, forgiveness and tolerance
2. Self-control
3. Being nice to others -"Religion (Islam) is how you treat people"- and respect for others Fulfillment of covenants and the commitment to contracts and agreements Philanthropy, altruism and helping others (individuals, groups or states)
4. Being patient when hurt
5. Ihsan (doing what is beautiful in a perfect manner).

As well as other Islamic values that Islam is keen on in bringing up people and communities, and promoting as a culture and practice among Muslims and non-Muslims.

4. Respecting and Protecting Human Life, Dignity and Rights

Islam emphasizes the need to protect human life and dignity and to maintain them regardless of color, religion, race or gender, as human life is a sacred issue in Islam, and the right of life is not to be overlooked unless this human being himself overlooks it for others and commits injustice and aggression against other humans God Almighty, says:

"If anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder, or (and) to spread mischief in the land - it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind" (Al-Maedah: 32).

Islam also emphasizes human dignity and freedom:

"Verily we have honoured the children of Adam" (Al-Isra:70)

And the famous saying of the second Caliph in Islam Omar bin Al-Khattab about human freedom as he criticized the practices of the son of a Muslim ruler when he has unjustly slapped a Copt in Egypt **"When have you enslaved people while they were born free"** and ordered that the Copt slaps him back. And this saying 1400 years ago can be seen as the draft of the very first universal declaration of human rights, and it stresses the need to respect and protect human rights, such as the right to life, liberty, knowledge, decent living and others. Therefore, the violation of these rights is an essential source of conflict, and in contrast, the preservation and protection of these rights is an essential element to prevent conflicts.

5. Human Unity and Equality

In Islam all human beings are equal in terms of origin, i.e. unity of humanity, as the Quran refers to it, **"O people, I have created you from a male and a female." (Surah Al-Hujurat, 13)** It also confirms that the value of equality, non-discrimination and prejudice, regardless of color, religion, race or gender, is central to the value of human life and human society.

Prophet Mohammed says **"He is not one of us who calls for tribalism and not one of us who fights for tribalism and not one of us who dies for tribalism."[xxiii]**

Thus the Islamic perspective refuses and resists racial, ethnic, religious or any other form of discrimination, both within the Muslim community or in human societies at large. Islam is very keen to emphasize these values along with equality, as they constitute a pillar of justice in life; Prophet Muhammad said: "All people are equal, as equal as the teeth of a comb. There is no claim of merit of an Arab over a non-Arab, or of white over a black person, or of a male over a female. Only God-fearing people merit a preference with God."[xxiv]

And discrimination on the basis of piety is not a human criterion, rather a Godly one that rests in His hands, He who knows the unseen world and the Creator of human beings. Consequently, equality is a human standard applied by humans with humans, and that is as far as equality goes for Man. There is no doubt that the preservation of the unity of humanity, the abolition of racism and accounting for equality between people and in human society contribute significantly to the elimination of one of the sources and causes of human conflict on one hand, and creating a protective environment without conflict on the other hand, whether at the level of individuals, groups or state level.

6. Rationality

Islam cares for reason and rationality, and what is related to them from interests in science and knowledge and many Quranic ayah emphasize that; for example:

"Verily, in this are signs for a people who think deeply." (Az-Zumar: 42)
"Are those who know equal to those who know not?" (Az-Zumar: 9)
"Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (ie Islâm) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better." (AL-Nahl: 125).

These ayahs refer to rationality as a source of wise conscious behavior on one hand, and a source for the use of dialogue and logic in dealing with others, as well as the interest in science and knowledge and the development of mind. These three elements (wisdom, dialogue and knowledge) are essential elements used and advocated by Islam to avoid conflicts, whether between communities or states, or between groups or individuals in a single state. For Islam calls for the use of rationality and its elements to prevent misperception and misunderstanding of others, this constitutes the basic foundation in preventing conflict between parties. The use of rational or conscious behavior prevents irrational reactions that are the main source of conflict and its development. Rationality, also leads to the use of persuasion and dialogue strategies to solve any problems that may be a source of conflict.

7. Pluralism and Diversity

Islam emphasizes the feature of pluralism and diversity in life, and that it is the creation of God for human beings and life, as indicated in the Quran, God Almighty says: **"And if your Lord had so willed, He could surely have made mankind one Ummah [nation or community (following one religion i.e. Islâm)] but they will not cease to disagree." (Hud: 118)**

The Quran also indicates

"O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know one another." (Al-Hujurat-49- : 13)

God did not create one people or one tribe, but rather a variety of peoples and human entities, He also created pluralism in the human community, and made "acquaintance" and communication purposes of its presence. Acquaintance usually leads to understanding the other, it also eliminates "poor perception and understanding of the other," and thus pluralism and diversity are characteristics of a rich human life, and are a necessity in human life at the same time. Islam's call for pluralism and diversity in human society is associated with its call to mutual acceptance and recognition of the other on the one hand, and equality between people, regardless of their color, Origin, race and religion, and nurturing the relations of tolerance among the components of human community in general, especially the Islamic community, on the other. Hence, there is no doubt that "acquaintance", "acceptance", "recognition of the other", "equality" and tolerance are essential components in the system of conflict prevention.

8. Cooperation

Islam calls for cooperation, not only as a necessity or need in human society, but as part of the task of urbanization in human societies, and therefore, emphasizes positive cooperation in life and in the diverse human society. What is needed is cooperation in doing good and not cooperation in evil and aggression. God says:

"Help you one another in *Al-Birr* and *At-Taqwâ* (virtue, righteousness and piety); but do not help one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allâh. Verily, Allâh is Severe in punishment" (Al-Maeda: 2)

Therefore the cooperative approach in Islam is a way of life, and Muslims are required to be active givers and "positive" in human societies. This means it is necessary to exercise cooperative behavior and style in life, which means an early application of forms of conflict prevention, or conflict behavior, whether between individuals, groups or states, especially with the seven principles mentioned, that constitute a framework or environment needed to achieve cooperation.

Generally, the principle of "pluralism and diversity" and the principle of "cooperation" constitute together in the Islamic perspective a methodological framework in the relations between nations, civilizations and cultures. In this sense, the Islamic perspective acknowledges the nature of pluralism and diversity in societies, civilizations and cultures, and invites them to communicate and become acquainted with each other in order to achieve positive "cooperation" and goodness to establish human societies and make way for their development. And in this way of life it is an alternative to the theory of the "clash of civilizations" and the principle of domination of one culture over the others.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we might say that "Islam has something of unique value to contribute to International Peace and human dignity. Many non-Muslims have articulated scenarios in which Islamic participation in the contemporary world order represents a grave security threat ... In a world where the boundaries between cultures, religions and civilizations have collapsed, there is a profound need for a cross cultural and multi religious approach to the challenges of peace, peacemaking, coexistence and reconciliation. Enhanced Islamic - Western dialogue on such topics can provide a compelling example of intercultural communication. Such dialogue can also provide the means to address mutual problems within a new, collaborative context of relatedness and joint engagement."[xxv] On the other hand, this Islamic perspective provided a theoretical contribution, but this perspective did not react significantly in terms of scientific research in the field of peace and conflict studies at the international level for several reasons, most importantly, the limitations of the efforts of Arab and Muslim researchers in this field. Also, this Islamic perspective did not get the chance to be applied in the current era, especially at the state or international level, and perhaps the emergence of the Arab Spring phase and the arrival of some Islamic movements, which might be interested in this Islamic perspective, to power and decision-making in the Arab world, may open the way to test these propositions or this Islamic perspective, and to know its problems and challenges on the ground, and then the possibility of developing it to form a contribution to cultural and civilization studies in the field of conflict and peace.

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- The *Qur'an* is the central religious text of Islam, which Muslims consider the verbatim word of God and the final divine revelation.
- The term *hadith* refers to reports of statements or actions of Muhammad, or of his tacit approval or criticism of something said or done in his presence.
- The Righteous Caliphs (*Rashidun Caliphs*) is a term used in Sunni Islam to refer to the first four caliphs   (political leader known as a *caliph* (meaning literally a *successor*, i.e. a successor to Islamic prophet Muhammad),who established the Rashidun Caliphate: *Abu Bakr*, *Umar*, *Uthman* and *Al*i.

[iiii] For more details about the political system in Islam, refer to:

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  For more details about these principles and international relationships in Islam, refer to:
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- Ibrahim Al-Bayyoumi Ghanem, The General Principles of the Islamic Theory in International Relations,   Al-Ijtihad Magazine, 52nd and 53rd issues, 2001 – 2002, pages: 187 – 215. (In Arabic)
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- Muhammad Abu Zahra, International Relations in Islam, Cairo: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Arabi, 1995. (In Arabic)

[iii] Sahih al- Bukhari -*Hadith* No. 2493

[iv] James P. Piscatori, **Islam in the Political Process**, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p:14

[v] Shihab Ad-Deen Mahmoud Al-Alousi, The Spirit of Meanings in Interpreting the Holy Quran, Beirut: 2000.

[vi] For more details on the origin of international relations peace or war, refer to:
- Abu Baker Ismail Miqa, Op.cit.
- Ibrahim Al-Bayyoumi Ghanem, Op.cit, p: 187 – 215.

[vii] Mohammed Abu Nimer, **Nonviolence & Peace Building in Islam**: **Theory & Practice,** University Press of Florida, 2003.

[viii] Imam Malik Book: Vol. 3, p:29

[ix] Mohammed Abu Nimer, Op.cit , p: 15 - 123.

[x] Ibrahim Al-Bayyoumi Ghanem, Op.cit, p: 187 – 215, 169 - 197

[xi] Ala' Al-Fasi, **Maqased Al-Sharee'a wa Makarimiha**, Beirut, Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, 1993, p:45. (in Arabic)

[xii] Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, Awamwl Al-Si'ah wal MuroonahFil Sharee'a Al-Islamiyyah, Dar Al-Sahwa Publishers, Cairo, 1985, p: 75. (In Arabic)

[xiii] Abdul Aziz Said & Nathan C. Funk, & Ayse S. Kafayifci, (2002). **Islamic Approaches to Conflict Resolution & Peace**, Abu Dhabi, the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, p6.

[xiv] Ibid , p28.

[xv] Barash, David P. & Webel, Charles P.: 2009**, Peace and Conflict Studies**, Sage, 2 nd edition, p 293.

[xvi] Seerat Ibn Hiham: vol. 4, p:240

[xvii] Sami, Al- Khazendar, Mediation Outcomes, Developing Criteria: Practitioner and Researcher**,** presentation at **Meeting the New Challenges to International Mediation**, report from an international symposium at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden, 14-16/6/2010.

[xviii] Sami, Al- Khazendar, **International Organizations and the Civilized approach: An Islamic Perspective**, Qatar; al Ummah serial book, 2012, no 147. (in Arabic)

[xix] For more details refer to Sami Al Khazendar, Ibid, p: 120 - 121

[xx] Ibid, p: 117 - 119

[xxi] For more details on conflict prevention, refer to:
Muhammad Abu Nimer, Ibid.

[xxii] Sahih Bukhari in "Al-Adab Al-Mufrad" (No. 273)

[xxiii] Sunan Abu Dawud, (Hadith no. 5121)

[xxiv] AbulFath Al- Karajki, Ma'dan Al-Jawaher, p:21

[xxv] Abdul Aziz Said & Nathan C. Funk, & Ayse S. Kafayifci, **Op.cit**, p29.