

Theology of Peace: An Analysis from Islamic Perspective

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at exploring the Islamic theology of peace. This requires investigating peaceful Nature and Will of God, His peace seeking instruction, His peace circle, Quranic perspective of violence, motives behind approving violence, divine solutions to end violence, peace in terms of goals and means; man's Inner peace and his peace seeking behaviour towards others. This study is qualitative in nature which follows a discourse analysis method to deal with the peace related narratives in Islamic orthodox sources namely the Quran and the Prophetic Narrations (sunnah). In addition, a new analytical tool called 'Islamic goal-based (maqasid) approach' will also be used to develop a new peace building framework from the Islamic perspective.

Keywords: peace in Islam; peace in Quran; Theology peace; violence.

Introduction:

Theology simply refers to discourse about God (John 2005). "The centerpiece of peace theology has been the just war theory (Rynne, 2014)". However, theology of peace has a long literary history in different world religions like Christianity and Buddhism. A theology of peace based on the gospel emphasizes action, proactive action-peace-making practices (Rynne, 2014). On developing theology of peace in Islam, Engineer asserts that Quran ordains peace as a norm. He adds that peace is a divine desire and human being was created for that purpose (Engineer 2005). However, to develop a theology of peace in Islam requires investigating several issues: peaceful nature of God (He is the peace, al-salam); peaceful will of the God (maslaha); God's peace seeking instruction from human through means and goal (how does God introduce peace in terms of means and goal); God's peace circle (haven, angles, prophet, nature); motives behind approving violence; divine solutions to end violence; how does God see the violence?

Peaceful Nature of God:

"He is God; there is no god but He. He is the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime. Glory be to God, above that they associate! (59:23)".

The All-Peaceable, according to al-Tabari, denotes that God keeps His creature safe from His oppression (al-Tabari). Qutb extends the meaning of this name further. To him, by this name Allah spreads peace, security, and tranquility in all aspects of existence, and in the heart of the believer towards his Lord. The believer feels peace next to Him. The heart regenerates from this name with peace, comfort, and reassurance. His evil is subsided, his mind is calm, and he drifts towards sympathy and peace. He adds that God's name 'al-Mumin' also means that He is the giver of security and safety. The wording of this name makes the heart feel the value of peace as it meets God in it (Qutb). Several sayings of the Prophet, explain better of this verse. He says: "O Allah, You are Peace

and from You comes peace (Muslim 1/414). In another tradition of the prophet, it was narrated that "When we prayed with the Prophet (ﷺ) we used to say: As-Salam be on Allah from His worshipers, As- Salam be on Gabriel, As-Salam be on Michael, As-Salam be on so-and-so. When the Prophet (ﷺ) finished his prayer, he faced us and said, "Allah Himself is As-Salam (Peace), (See Hadith No. 797, Vol. 1. Sahih al-Bukhari 6230). It was explained by another saying of the prophet as he says: "Peace is one of the Names of Allah which Allah has placed on the earth. Extend it among you. When a man greets people and they answer him, then he has a higher degree than them because he reminds them of peace. If no one answers him, he will be answered by one who is better and more excellent" (Al-Adab Al-Mufrad 1039).

Peaceful Will of the God:

It is generally assumed that "Maṣlaha is the ultimate goal of Islamic law and becomes its main core" (Ghofur, et al. 2017). However, the scope is not limited to the legal content of the Quran. Yet, it is concerned the entire content of the Quran. Because the Quran is a revealed prescription from God who wants to guide human being towards goodness and wellbeing. This is the core concept of maṣlaha which is defined "as goodness, benefit, human welfare and prosperity in the world and the hereafter, and the prevention of harm" (Griffith-Jones, 2013).

According to Quran, God wants to ensure people's wellbeing and welfare (maslaha) are prevailed. This is the central point of Islamic shariah. The following verses of the Quran support this argument. "*Peace!*" - such is the greeting, from a Lord All-compassionate. (36:58)." "*We did not bestow the Qur'an on thee from on high to make thee unhappy (20:2).*" "*Whereby God guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the ways of peace (5:16).*" "*Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship (2:185).*" "*Allah wants no injustice to the worlds (3: 108).*" "*And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties] (4: 28).*" "*Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful (5:6).*"

God's Peace Circle (haven, angles, nature):

God's worldly and other worldly creatures are made the peaceable agents. He named heavens as an abode of peace. It is mentioned in the Quran: "Theirs is the abode of peace with their Lord, and He is their Protector for that they were doing (6: 127)." "And God summons to the Abode of Peace, and He guides whomsoever He will to a straight path; (10:25)."

God has created the nature so that human being can feel peace and ease. This was evidenced by some verses of the Quran as following: "And out of His mercy He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and [that] perhaps you will be grateful (28: 73)." "And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought (30: 21)." "It is He who created you from one soul and created from it its mate that he might dwell in security with her (7:189)."

God Sets Peace as a Goal:

The content of the Quran can be categorized as either objectives or means. Objectives are of two types: universal and specific. Universal objectives are made of a wide verity of means-network and different types of sub-goals. Sub-goals are case specific and mutually connected in order to qualify the merit of a universal goal which could be called goal-association. Means are regulated by the goals and qualify each other to serve a goal. Therefore, status of a means is subordinate because it functions

within the scope of goal. Whereas goal is the core and possess a fundamental entity. With these norms, if we put the issue of peace in the Quran in this goal-means perspective, we may understand if the peace in Islam cardinal or nominal. Following are verses of the Quran indicate to the position of peace in Islam. The following verses champion the above-mentioned idea:

O you who believe! when you go to war in Allah's way, make investigation, and do not say to anyone who offers you peace: You are not a believer (al-Nisa- 94)

O believers, enter the peace, all of you, and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you. (2:208)

If they withdraw from you, and do not fight you, and offer you peace, then God assigns not any way to you against them. (4:90)

If they withdraw not from you, and offer you peace, and restrain their hands, take them, and slay them wherever you come on them; against them We have given you a clear authority. (4:91)

So do not faint and call for peace; you shall be the upper ones, and God is with you, and will not deprive you of your works. (35)

These verses categorically show that is peace is presented as a goal. There was no alternative of peace is suggested when it is offered. Thus, peace is made a center piece and fundamental.

Peace Venture: an Obligation of Acceptance:

The quran requires of Muslims that they should not refuse any proposal for peace. It says: *“But if they incline to peace, incline thou to it as well, and place thy trust in God: verily, He alone is all-hearing, all-knowing!”* (8:61). Ibn Ashur says that the meaning of {and if they incline to peace} is ‘if they inclined towards peace with an intent tends to it, just as a winged bird tends’ to it, respond to it’. Renouncing the covenant is a rejection of the state of peace (Ibn Ashur, 2000).

God’s Motives behind Approving Violence:

From the perspective of the world’s violence, theology refers to and reflects upon God’s relationship and transformation of that violence, and our participation in God’s transforming nonviolence. Our theology seeks to pinpoint God’s way out of violence and enter into that struggle (John 2005, p. 15). Theology of nonviolence concludes that the human practice of nonviolence is a crucial factor in God’s transformation of the world’s violence. A theology of nonviolence will question any and every theology or ideology that supports violence in any form at any level (John 2005, p. 16).

The rightness or wrongness of wars is often thought to depend very much upon the *cause* for which a war is fought (Wasserstrom, 1989). In Islam, God’s approval of violence goes to its causes. The causes of war in Islam are derived from an Islamic maxim where a just struggle is made obligatory to every course of entire life. In fact, all wars are forbidden in Islam, if they are not waged for a just cause and regulated by the Divine Law (Hamidullah, 1989). This principle is practically exercised in the wars and expeditions of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions. The causes of these wars and expeditions could primarily be understood their nature and categories. Muslim scholars categorized them into three: defensive, punitive and preventive (Hamidullah, 1989). These three categories indicate to three following causes: firstly, defense of life, property, dignity and territory; secondly, punishment for corruption, seduction from Islam to other religious traditions and internal conflict; and finally, prevention or preemption which is advance action to repel ill-intention of enemy force. Some Quranic verses regarding, could provide an accurate and solid proofs of the causes on which wars were made lawful in Islam. They are as follows:

“Permission (to fight) has been granted to those against whom war has been waged because they have been treated unjustly, and Allah is certainly able to help them.” (Al-Quran: 22: 39)

“These are the people who have been expelled unjustly from their homes only for the reason that they said, "Our Lord is Allah." Had Allah not repelled one people by means of another people, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of Allah is often mentioned, would have been demolished.” (Al-Quran: 22: 40)

These are the verses which were revealed for the first permission of war with mentioning explicitly its causes such as merciless execution of Muslims and their unjust expulsion from their birthplace Makkah to al-Madinah. According to the context, this permission was appropriate with the law of counter response among people to save collective balance, to repulse human despotism, and to strengthen the believers to be steadfast in their worship, action, and beliefs. The verses subsequently indicate to the fact that Allah assists those who ‘assist’ Him in establishing justice, stabilizing law and order and actualizing security, and who do not take war as a means for destruction, devastation, degrading the weak or satisfying whims, and in fact take it as a means of building the earth (society and civilization), establishing the law of enjoining the doing of all that is right and forbidding the doing of all that is wrong. There are some other subsequent verses assert that the scope of the wars is limited to repelling oppression, uprooting fithnah in religion and oppression (Shaltut,1983).

Conclusion

In reference to Quran, 59:23 and several narrations of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the God nature is all peaceable and peaceful. Moreover, He Himself is the source of peace and peace is one of His attributes.

It is God’s sole Will to prevail peace in human life through ensuring his wellbeing. And this God intention is the central point in Islamic discourse as it was made the general or main purpose of entire Islamic shariah.

God’s worldly and other worldly creatures are made the catalyst of peace. The heavens were named as an abode of peace. Similarly, the creations of days, nights, ecosystem, biodiversity were aimed to ensure that human being find peace.

In the Quranic content, peace was introduced as a goal (maqсад) and goals are considered fundamental. Therefore, in Islam, peace is cardinal.

It is obligatory to accept peace initiative when approached. In Islamic discourse, it is not allowed to have an alternative i.e violence and unpeace once there is a room for peace.

In Islam, God approved war, but this not meant for violence or tension. Yet, it was approved to remove obstacles to the path of peace and. Some of them are as follows: life threatening moves, property, dignity, and territory; secondly, punishment for corruption, seduction from Islam to other

religious traditions and internal conflict; and finally, prevention or preemption which is advance action to repel ill-intention of enemy force.

According to hadith, it is not permissible to offer ‘peace greeting’ upon Allah. It is because He Himself is a peace. It is His cardinal virtue. Therefore, He does not lack peace. Thus, it is meaningless to offer it to Him. This understanding refers to peace to be a supreme value that human beings are divinely instructed to achieve.

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