

## PEACE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC CONTEXT AND SOLUTION OF CURRENT POLITICAL TURMOIL IN PAKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

*Anything that compromises the sanctity of Islam, Muslim Ummah, and/or Muslim states leads to national and/or international conflict. Islam being the Deen of Peace offers numerous ways to address and resolve such conflicts in the best manner, depending upon the nature of the conflict. Through Siyasat al-Quwwah, Islam defines power politics and teaches to practice peace using coercive authority. For this, Islam explicates the foundations and objectives of political powers. Through Islah and Tajdid, Islam defines the authority of law and conventions. For this, Islamic jurists have explained the jurisdiction of Islam in every modern need. Moreover, Islam has served as an ethical tradition to run successful international relations, since the caliphate era. These ethics, if practiced in real essence, would help Pakistan to counter the ongoing political turmoil, nationally and globally. In the contemporary scenario, referring to the political instability among the leading political parties of Pakistan, Sulh as a mode of peace must be adopted by the leading groups to resolve the current conflicts. Also, Tahkim or arbitration should be practiced by politicians to resolve political disagreements. In the context of Islam in the Arabs era, the practices of Reconciliation can be the guiding path for rejuvenating the political and consequential economic stability in Pakistan. This article is a humble attempt to explore the Islamic concept of peace and conflict resolution followed by an analysis of current political instability in Pakistan. The solutions to counter these conflicts and bring about a peaceful society have been devised using Quran, Sunnah, and other religious and academic sources.*

**Keywords:** *Peace, Conflict Resolution, Quran and Sunnah, Arbitration and reconciliation, political turmoil in Pakistan*

### **Outline and Anticipated Achievements of the Study**

Islam is the religion of peace. Islamic scholars agree that Islam's foundational beliefs and principles have always encouraged coexistence and mutual respect. The noble Qur'an and the example set by the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) provide ample evidence for this (Al-Quran, 16:125).

INVITE 'ALL' TO THE WAY OF YOUR LORD WITH WISDOM AND KIND ADVICE, AND ONLY DEBATE WITH THEM IN THE BEST MANNER. SURELY YOUR LORD 'ALONE' KNOWS BEST WHO HAS STRAYED FROM HIS WAY AND WHOM IS 'RIGHTLY' GUIDED.

— DR. MUSTAFA KHATTAB, THE CLEAR QURAN

If Muslims can understand themselves and take part in the transformation of their attitude, activities, and society in democratic and peaceful ways, then not only will the rest of the world be able to better understand Islam, but so will they. Therefore, the study highlights the significance of peace and nonviolence in Islamic teachings by discussing the fundamental Islamic ideas relating to nonviolent ways to conflict resolution in modern contexts. *Siyasat al Quwwah, Islah, Tajdid, Sulh, and Tahkim* are some of the peace-making and conflict-resolution methods that will be presented in \*sequential order.



### Gateway to devise a Solution

Fundamental exploration of peace and conflict resolution in the Islamic context is the first step to achieving the objective of drawing solutions for solving the current political turmoil in Pakistan. Islamic teaching on Peace and conflict resolution has been explored using Quran and Sunnah as the primary sources, along with other secondary academic resources including books, Journal articles. To unveil Pakistan's contemporary political unrest and resultant economic meltdown, authentic news reports from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), DAWN, The Express Tribune, Pakistan Observer, Al-Jazeera, and CNN are consulted.

*This article is an Expository and analytical attempt to explore the grave concepts of methods of conflict resolution and analysis of these methods in the current political scenario of Pakistan.*

### Insights of Peace and Conflict Resolution from an Islamic Context

#### Peace through Siyasat-al-Quwwah

Muslims have been entrusted with certain powers by God, which they are obligated to utilize by the boundaries prescribed by divine legislation (Al-Quran, 3:26).

SAY, 'O PROPHET, 'O ALLAH! LORD OVER ALL AUTHORITIES! YOU GIVE AUTHORITY TO WHOMEVER YOU PLEASE AND REMOVE IT FROM WHOM YOU PLEASE; YOU HONOR WHOMEVER YOU PLEASE AND DISGRACE WHOM YOU PLEASE—ALL GOOD IS IN YOUR HANDS. SURELY YOU 'ALONE' ARE MOST CAPABLE OF EVERYTHING.

— DR. MUSTAFA KHATTAB, THE CLEAR QURAN

According to this verse, the ultimate authority lies with God, and therefore, Muslims are obliged to obey those in positions of power, provided that they do not command actions that are considered sinful. Also, stated in a hadith:

OBEDIENCE IS THE DUTY OF THE MUSLIM MAN, WHETHER HE LIKES IT OR NOT, AS LONG AS HE IS NOT ORDERED TO SIN.

— SAHIH MUSLIM; KITAB-AL-IMARA; BOOK:20

#### Peace through *Islah* and *Tajdid*

The term "*Islah*" denotes the act of averting destruction or reinstating and mending something that has undergone collapse or damage (Yuningsih, 2019). The term "*Islah*" refers to the endeavor of restoring the state of Muslims that has deviated from the teachings of al-Qur'an and Prophetic Sunnah (Haddad & Haddad, 2020). This is achieved by calling upon Muslims to revert to the standards of the early generations of Islam, under the guidance and leadership of Rasulullah SAW. The concept of *Islah* entails not altering religious doctrines to conform to contemporary circumstances but rather necessitates that individuals adapt themselves to Islamic teachings (Fajar, 2021). The concept of political reform, known as *Islah as-siyasah*, involves the implementation of administrative laws that prioritize justice, fairness, trustworthiness, and the fulfillment of promises. It also emphasizes the importance of avoiding favoritism and promoting love among individuals. This approach is characterized by a commitment to upholding the similarities of all humans and avoiding practices such as oppression, betrayal, lies, and deceptions (Ikmal & Basri, 2022).

*Tajdid* refers to the endeavor of enhancing the comprehension of Islam among Muslims and the wider populace, rather than rectifying the tenets of Islam per se. Islam is mastered by Allah SWT (Latief & Nashir, 2020). Any alterations carried out by human beings will merely diminish the state of flawlessness, rather than enhance it. Islam does not require ongoing enhancements as if it undergoes evolutionary changes over time. Attaining an in-depth comprehension of Islam is contingent upon human transformation, rather than any alteration within the religion itself (al-Tajdid, 2020). The rationale behind the imperative to undertake *Tajdid*, or renewal, of the Islamic faith is elucidated by an authoritative hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah R.A.:

"VERILY, YOUR LORD HAS ENJOINED, 'I SHALL SEND DOWN RAIN UPON THOSE WHO ARE OBEDIENT TO ME, AND I SHALL GRANT THEM SUNSHINE; BUT THOSE WHO ARE DISOBEDIENT TO ME, I SHALL AFFLICT THEM WITH A PAINFUL PUNISHMENT.'"

AND CERTAINLY, I WON'T FRIGHTEN THEM WITH CLAPS OF THUNDER AND FLASHES OF LIGHTNING. THE NOBLEST DEED PERFORMED BY ALLAH'S SLAVES IS, IN FACT, A NICE THOUGHT TOWARDS ALLAH SWT, SAID RASULULLAH SAW.

RASULULLAH SAW SAID, "RENEW YOUR FAITH." INQUIRING OF RASULULLAH SAW, AN INDIVIDUAL POSED THE QUESTION,

"WHAT IS HOW WE MAY REINVIGORATE OUR FAITH?" THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PEACE BE UPON HIM) RESPONDED BY SUGGESTING THE FREQUENT RECITATION OF THE PHRASE "LA ILAHAILLALLAH."



— SAHIH MUSLIM; KITAB-AL-IMAN; BOOK 1

Adherents of Islam need to understand that the decline of a society does not necessarily equate to the decline of their religion. Nonetheless, a decline is indicative of the life trajectories of individuals that were fashioned by Allah SWT to serve as His Khalifah and advance the prosperity of this world. It suggests that humanity has strayed from its fundamental foundation and veered away from the primary objective of its creation, which is to engage in the worship of Allah SWT (Parry, 2020). As a result, the Muslim community was not only confronted with the collapse of civilization but also with a humanitarian crisis that arose from the underlying causes of this collapse. The decline of Islamic civilization has resulted in the emergence of various *Islah* and *Tajdid* figures who aim to purify the understanding and practice of Islam as a universal religion and to restore the former glory of Islamic civilization (Kamali, 2018). This aligns with the commandment of Allah SWT (Al-Quran, 3:104).

LET THERE BE A GROUP AMONG YOU WHO CALL 'OTHERS' TO GOODNESS, ENCOURAGE WHAT IS GOOD, AND FORBID WHAT IS EVIL—IT IS THEY WHO WILL BE SUCCESSFUL.

— DR. MUSTAFA KHATTAB, THE CLEAR QURAN

### Peace through *Sulh* and *Tahkim*

Islam advocates for the cultivation of peaceful and harmonious relationships, both within individual interactions and among communities. It is expected of adherents of the Islamic faith to resolve their conflicts and disputes through peaceful means, employing a conciliatory approach (Wahed, 2015). The term "*Sulh*" is derived from the Arabic language and denotes the act of adhering to peaceful behavior or striving towards the attainment of peace (Bhatti, 2019). As per the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, it is incumbent upon Muslims to resolve their conflicts and differences through peaceful means (Al-Quran 4:14).

THERE IS NO GOOD IN MOST OF THEIR SECRET TALKS—EXCEPT THOSE ENCOURAGING CHARITY, KINDNESS, OR RECONCILIATION BETWEEN PEOPLE. AND WHOEVER DOES THIS SEEKING ALLAH'S PLEASURE, WE WILL GRANT THEM A GREAT REWARD.

— DR. MUSTAFA KHATTAB, THE CLEAR QURAN

The Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W) also espoused the concept of "*Sulh*" and actively promoted its use as a means of resolving disputes among individuals. According to Al-Bukhari's record, it was reported that The SAWW stated,

"ONE WHO UTILIZES POSITIVE INFORMATION OR SPEECH TO ESTABLISH PEACE (SULH) IS NOT ENGAGING IN DECEITFUL BEHAVIOR."

— SAHIH AL-BUKHARI, HADITH NO. 2692

The Hadith related to reconciliation within the Islamic community emphasizes its impacts, as reported by the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W). The Hadith upholds the values of peace-making and dialogue and highlights merit that surpasses the virtues of fasting, charity, and prayers. The conciliation of individuals is a crucial aspect to consider. Hence, the aforementioned verse and tradition emphasize the importance of nonviolent interventions in resolving conflicts and the necessity of engaging in dialogue or other measures to achieve peace within the Muslim community (Hassim, Ab Wahab, Aziz, Ramli, & Ahmad, 2019).

Arbitration (*Tahkim*) has been a customary practice in Arabia for numerous centuries. During the pre-Islamic era in Arabia, inter-tribal conflicts were resolved through the involvement of an impartial mediator who was regarded as a reliable and esteemed figure (Kamali, 2016). The Islamic tradition has acknowledged and validated this particular method of resolving conflicts. Anecdotes exist which recount instances where Prophet Mohammad was requested to serve as an arbitrator owing to his exceptional personal attributes, both before and following his prophethood (Hassan, 2020) (Al-Quran, 5:49).

AND JUDGE BETWEEN THEM 'O PROPHET' BY WHAT ALLAH HAS REVEALED, AND DO NOT FOLLOW THEIR DESIRES. AND BEWARE, SO THEY DO NOT LURE YOU AWAY FROM SOME OF WHAT ALLAH HAS REVEALED TO YOU. IF THEY TURN AWAY 'FROM ALLAH'S JUDGMENT', THEN KNOW THAT IT IS ALLAH'S WILL TO REPAY THEM FOR SOME OF THEIR SINS AND THAT MANY PEOPLE ARE INDEED REBELLIOUS.

— DR. MUSTAFA KHATTAB, THE CLEAR QURAN



### **Preface to the Problem under Discussion**

Pakistan is still dealing with many internal and external sources of strife. The chances for stability and social cohesiveness in Pakistan have worsened as fanaticism and intolerance have intensified, fueled by a narrow conception of Pakistan's national identity. State individuals have been pushed toward resorting to violence as a means of conflict resolution since official institutions have proven unable to do it consistently. After the elections in 2013, the country saw smooth political transitions. Even though elections are expected to be held in 2023, the country continues to struggle with a weak economy and growing partisanship at home. Meanwhile, in 2022, disastrous flooding across Pakistan caused billions in damage, put a burden on the country's agriculture and health sectors, and exposed Pakistan's fragility to catastrophic climate change and alarming flaws in governance and financial stability (Amirali, 2023, Al-Jazeera; Sajjad, 2023, Wilsoncenter).

### **Current Political Turmoil in Pakistan**

Pakistan has been in political and economic turmoil since 2022 (Crescent and Dove: Peace and Conflict Resolution in Islam, USIP). This political upheaval has also damaged the state's international prestige. In April 2022, the opposition parties in the National Assembly deposed Imran Khan, the former Prime Minister and Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Imran Khan's ouster enraged PTI supporters. After his fall, Imran Khan called for early general elections, which escalated after the PTI abolished Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provincial assemblies. On April 3, 2022, Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri disbanded the National Assembly and declined to take a VONC against Imran Khan, citing Article 5 of the Pakistani Constitution. After the VONC won, nationwide protesters moved to Islamabad. Pakistani cities marched with huge party flags and political chants on April 10, 2022. The Haqeeqi-Azadi Movement resulted. The march sought to overthrow the Sharif administration, dissolve the National Assembly, and hold general elections. The new Pakistani government arrested several potential marchers. The Islamabad Police were given many containers and public assemblies were banned to block demonstrators from entering the capital and accessing the Srinagar Highway and Red Zone. A big Capital Territory Police contingent used tear gas shells to block demonstrators from entering D-Chowk in Islamabad ("2022-2023 Pakistan political unrest - Wikipedia," 2022).

An attempt to assassinate Imran Khan aggravated matters. He survived November 3, 2022, rally shooting near Gujranwala (Desk, 2022).

Another turmoil accounts for the delayed elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan moved the Punjab elections from 30 April 2023 to 8 October 2023 due to security and economic concerns (Chaudhry, 2022, ECP de-seats 25 dissident PTI MPAs for defection-DAWN). The nation's poll panel's decision to postpone assembly elections in two provinces was ruled illegal by the Supreme Court on April 4, 2023. Punjab, the most populous province, was ordered to hold elections on May 14 by the supreme court ("Elahi wins, but Hamza gets the prize | The Express Tribune," 2022).

Khan's arrest caused more upheaval. On May 9, Imran Khan was arrested for Al-Qadir trust corruption. Protests occurred across Pakistan. Social media was heavily restricted on that day ("Imran Khan: Mass protests across Pakistan after ex-PM arrest," 2023, May 9). On May 11, the Supreme Court of Pakistan ordered the Pakistani government to free Imran Khan after declaring his apprehension illegal. However, several PTI party leaders remain in custody. The protests have caused violence, political turmoil, and institutional collapse fears. This could threaten the nation's stability and democracy (Bhatti, 2023, May 11-SC terms Imran's arrest 'unlawful', directs him to appear before IHC tomorrow-DAWN).

The Pakistani Army declared May 9 a day of mourning, emphasizing that Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaaf's drive for power achieved what India had failed to do in 75 years. The Army headquarters attack, looting of the corps commander's home in Lahore, destruction of military displays and monuments, and stone-throwing at military convoys caused immense suffering for the soldiers. Protests were unprecedented, yet they didn't change much. Pakistan has never seen such incidents (Desk, 2023, May 22-Black day vandalism of 9 May Unparalleled in the country's history | By M Fazal Elahi - Pakistan Observer).



### **Political Turmoil leading to Economic Mayhem**

After Imran Khan's imprisonment, Pakistan's attempts to get an IMF bailout are expected to be hampered by political turbulence. This could deepen the nation's economic crisis. The 220-million-person South Asian nation has seen development stagnate and inflation rise over the past year. Due to a depreciating rupee and declining foreign currency reserves, Pakistan has had trouble importing food and other essentials. Distribution centers have had fatal stampedes. Pakistan's debt default has raised concerns for months. Foreign creditors, particularly China, may help the government in the short run. However, a default may grow if an IMF agreement is not reached quickly (Horowitz, 2023, May 12-Pakistan's political crisis will deepen its economic misery | CNN Business). Foreign cash shortages are slowing economic growth and preventing imports. Scarcity drives food costs up exponentially. In April, the annual inflation rate rose to 36.4%, with urban food prices rising roughly 47% and rural prices rising over 52%. Pakistan's economic crisis correlates with its political turmoil. A "balance of payments" dilemma is responsible for a country's falling living standards after last year's devastating flooding. The World Bank warned last month that the situation might reverse two decades of poverty gains and lower the incomes of impoverished households. Pakistan's debt sustainability has been questioned. Protests could worsen the situation. Mobile internet connections have been blocked to quell the unrest. GSMA, a mobile network operator consortium, has called this move harmful to the public and businesses. Protests and political turmoil are worsening the economy (Horowitz, 2023, May 12-Pakistan's political crisis will deepen its economic misery | CNN Business).

### **Resolution of Political Conflicts and Rising Peace through Islam- the Way Forward**

The utilization of the Islamic framework of peace and conflict resolution may offer significant insights into addressing the political unrest in Pakistan. The Islamic faith prioritizes the values of stability, righteousness, and the endeavor to establish harmony in the community. The application of Islamic principles has the potential to facilitate the resolution of political conflicts.

- The Islamic faith promotes the utilization of negotiations and discussions as a viable approach to conflict resolution. Amid political upheaval, the facilitation of open and inclusive discourse among diverse political factions, key figures, and interested parties can serve to identify shared perspectives and foster agreement on critical matters.
- The Islamic faith places significant emphasis on the tenets of fairness and equal treatment. The application of these tenets to the system of government can facilitate the redressal of grievances and ensure equitable portrayal and engagement of all members of the populace. The promotion of equity in electoral procedures, law enforcement mechanisms, and decision-making processes has the potential to bolster political stability.
- The principle of non-violence is highly emphasized in Islam, promoting the use of peaceful methods for resolving conflicts. The promotion of non-violent activism, discouragement of violent behavior, and encouragement of peaceful protests can effectively avert the worsening of conflicts and pave the way for more constructive resolutions.
- The Islamic faith accords significant value to equality for all people and safeguarding fundamental rights, thereby emphasizing respect for human rights. The promotion and maintenance of human rights principles have the potential to cultivate a society that is more inclusive and tolerant, thereby mitigating political tensions and divisions.
- Islam promotes peaceful conflict resolution via the application of wisdom, reason, and logic. Advocating for political leaders to base their decisions on rational reasoning, impartial evaluation, and a thorough comprehension of the pertinent matters can result in more efficacious and enduring resolutions.
- The significance of mediation, as well as arbitration in conflict resolution, is underscored in Islamic teachings. The establishment of impartial and esteemed entities or persons to arbitrate political conflicts can facilitate discourse, bridge divides, and identify mutually acceptable resolutions.
- The Islamic faith places significant emphasis on the principles of transparency and accountability within the realm of governance. Enhancing transparency in political procedures, guaranteeing





responsibility for actions and verdicts, and countering corruption can facilitate the establishment of confidence among the populace and tackle the fundamental reasons behind political unrest.

- It is imperative to acknowledge that the efficacious execution of these principles necessitates a holistic strategy encompassing governmental determination, societal consciousness, and robust establishments. Furthermore, it is imperative to exercise caution when interpreting and implementing Islamic doctrines, as there may be discrepancies in the understanding and utilization of these teachings among different individuals and factions. Therefore, it is essential to consider a range of viewpoints and perspectives.

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Muslims want to live in a Shariah-compliant Islamic state. Muslims must follow the laws of every country where they live or are protected. A peaceful community requires fairness and loyalty to one's country. However, society must foster happiness-seeking. The Muslim community empowers individuals to take responsibility and transcends race and nation. The question at stake in Islam is how much and how religion should impact socio-economic and political life, not whether it should. The global resurgence of Islam emphasizes the political consequences of religious beliefs rather than the ideas themselves. This resurgence asserts that Islamic principles should affect Muslim communities' self-conception rather than converting non-Muslims or reforming practices. The revival movement promotes the Quran and Hadith as the foundations of Islam and claims they can lead Muslim politics and society. It does not reinterpret core texts. The resurgence focuses on how Muslims might oppose the state's invasive and repressive influence. Islam's 20th-century revival has been seen worldwide. An Islamic rebellion might challenge a secular administration in an "Islamic" state. A state may use Islam to justify and reinforce its rule. In such a situation, the state's authority and power depend on Islamic identity. Islam justifies many political choices. Social context strongly impacts Islamic politics. Various Islamic traditions and writings have been used to address political issues. Like all major religions, Islam is based on the Holy Quran and the Prophet's Sunnah. Modern Muslim needs might form a social code. These criteria include the will to challenge or support specific governing frameworks, mobilize subordinated communities for political engagement, and implement socio-political change.

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