

UNDERSTANDING THE QURAN

THEMES AND STYLE

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CHAPTER 5:

WAR AND PEACE IN THE QURAN

The Sources of Islamic Law

The Qur'an is the supreme authority in Islam and the primary source of Islamic Law, including the laws regulating war and peace. The second source is the 'adith, the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad's acts and deeds, which can be used to confirm, explain or elaborate Qur'anic teachings, but may not contradict the Qur'an, since they derive their authority from the Qur'an itself. Together these form the basis for all other sources of Islamic law, such as ijma' (consensus of Muslim scholars on an opinion regarding any given subject) and qiyas (reasoning by analogy). These and others are merely methods to reach decisions based on the texts or the spirit of the Qur'an and 'adith. The Qur'an and 'adith are thus the only binding sources of Islamic law. Again, nothing is acceptable if it contradicts the text or the spirit of these two sources. Any opinions arrived at by individual scholars or schools of Islamic law, are no more than opinions. The founders of these schools never laid exclusive claim to the truth, or invited people to follow them rather than any other scholars. Western writers often take the views of this or that classical or modern Muslim writer as 'the Islamic view', presumably on the basis of assumptions drawn from the Christian tradition, where the views of people like St Augustine or St Thomas Aquinas are often cited as authorities. In Islam, however, for any view of any scholar to gain credibility, it must demonstrate its textual basis in the Qur'an and authentic 'adith, and its derivation from a sound linguistic understanding of these texts.

Ijtihad – exerting one's reason to reach judgments on the basis of these two sources – is the mechanism by which Muslims find solutions for the ever-changing and evolving life around them. The 'closing of the door of ijtihad' is a myth propagated by many Western scholars, some of whom imagine

that 'the door' still remains closed and that Muslims have nothing to fall back on except the decisions of the Schools of Law and scholars of the classical period. In fact, scholars in present-day Muslim countries reach their own decisions on laws governing all sorts of new situations, using the same methodology based on the Qur'an and 'adith and the principles derived from them, without feeling necessarily bound by the conclusions of any former school of law. In the Qur'an and 'adith, the fundamental sources of Islamic teachings on war and peace are to be found.

Normal Relations

The Islamic relationship between individuals and nations is one of peace. War is a contingency that becomes necessary at certain times and under certain conditions. Muslims learn from the Qur'an that God's objective in creating the human race in different communities was that they should relate to each other peacefully (49:13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

O men! Behold, We have created you all out of a male and a female, and have made you into nations and tribes, so that you might come to know one another. Verily, the noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most deeply conscious of Him. Behold, God is all-knowing, all-aware.

The objective of forming the family unit is to foster affection and mercy, and that of creating a baby in its mother's womb is to form bonds of blood and marriage between people:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا

And He it is who out of this [very] water has created man, and has endowed him with [the consciousness of] descent and marriage-tie: for thy Sustainer is ever infinite in His power.25:54

Sowing enmity and hatred among people is the work of satan:

إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقِعَ بَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ ۚ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ

By means of intoxicants and games of chance Satan seeks only to sow enmity and hatred among you, and to turn you away from the remembrance of God and from prayer. Will you not, then, desist?' 5:91

Division into warring factions is viewed as a punishment that God brings on people who revert to polytheism after HE has delivered them from distress:

قُلْ هُوَ الْقَادِرُ عَلَى أَنْ يَبْعَثَ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابًا مِنْ فَوْقِكُمْ أَوْ مِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِكُمْ أَوْ يَلْبَسَكُمْ
شِيْعًا وَيُذِيقَ بَعْضَكُمْ بَأْسَ بَعْضٍ ۚ انْظُرْ كَيْفَ نُصَرِّفُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَفْقَهُونَ

Say: "It is He alone who has the power to let loose upon you suffering from above you or from beneath your feet, or to confound you with mutual discord and let you taste the fear of one another." Behold how many facets we give to these messages, so that they might understand the truth.

6:65

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ۚ سُبْحَانَهُ ۚ بَلْ لَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۚ كُلُّ لَّهُ
قَانِتُونَ

FIGHTING is ordained for you, even though it be hateful to you; but it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you, and it may well be that you love a thing the while it is bad for you: and God knows, whereas you do not know.2:216

War is hateful, and the changing of fear into a sense of safety is one of the rewards for those who believe and do good deeds 24:55

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ
أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۚ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

God has promised those of you who have attained to faith and do righteous deeds that, of a certainty, He will cause them to accede to power on earth, even as He caused [some of] those who lived before them to accede to it; and that, of a certainty, He will firmly establish for them the religion which He has been pleased to bestow on them; and that, of a certainty, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security [seeing that] they worship Me [alone], not ascribing divine powers to aught beside Me. But all who, after [having understood] this, choose to deny the truth - it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!).

That God has given them the sanctuary of Mecca is a blessing for which its people should be thankful 29:67

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا آمِنًا وَيَتَخَفَتِ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ ۚ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ
وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ

Are they, then, not aware that We have set up a sanctuary secure [for those who believe in Us], the while all around them men are being carried away [by fear and despair]? Will they, then, [continue to] believe in things false and vain, and thus deny God's blessings.).

Theirs shall be an abode of peace with their Sustainer; and He shall be near unto them in result of what they have been doing. (Dar as salam) – (6:127).

Justifications and Conditions for War

War may become necessary only to stop evil from triumphing in a way that would corrupt the earth 2:251

فَهَزَمُوهُمْ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَقَتَلَ دَاوُودُ جَالُوتَ وَآتَاهُ اللَّهُ الْمُلْكَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَعَلَّمَهُ مِمَّا يَشَاءُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفَسَدَتِ الْأَرْضُ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى الْعَالَمِينَ

And thereupon, by God's leave, they routed them. And David slew Goliath; and God bestowed upon him dominion, and wisdom, and imparted to him the knowledge of whatever He willed. And if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, corruption would surely overwhelm the earth: but God is limitless in His bounty unto all the worlds.). For Muslims to participate in war there

must be valid justifications, and strict conditions must be fulfilled. A thorough survey of the relevant verses of the Qur'an shows that it is consistent throughout with regard to these rulings on the justification of war, and its conduct, termination and consequences.

War in Islam as regulated by the Qur'an and 'adith has been subject to many distortions by Western scholars and even by some Muslim writers. These are due either to misconceptions about terminology or – above all – using quotations taken out of context. Nowhere in the Qur'an is changing people's religion given as a cause for waging war. The Qur'an gives a clear instruction that there is no compulsion in religion 2:256

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ ۚ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ ۚ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا ۚ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ

THERE SHALL BE no coercion in matters of faith. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error: hence, he who rejects the powers of evil and believes in God has indeed taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way: for God is all-hearing, all-knowing.).

It states that people will remain different 11:118

وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَجَعَلَ النَّاسَ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً ۚ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ مُخْتَلِفِينَ

And had thy Sustainer so willed, He could surely have made all mankind one single community: but [He willed it otherwise, and so] they continue to hold divergent views'), they will always have different religions and ways and this is an unalterable fact 5:48

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيْمِنًا عَلَيْهِ ۖ فَاحْكُم بَيْنَهُم بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ عَمَّا جَاءَكَ مِنَ الْحَقِّ ۚ لِكُلٍّ جَعَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ شُرْعَةً وَمِنْهَاجًا ۚ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ فِي مَا آتَاكُمْ ۚ فَاسْتَبِقُوا الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

And unto thee [O Prophet] have We vouchsafed this divine writ, setting forth the truth, confirming the truth of whatever there still remains of earlier revelations and determining what is true therein. Judge, then, between the followers of earlier revelation in accordance with what God has bestowed from on high, and do not follow their errant views, forsaking the truth that has come unto thee. Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life. And if God had so willed, He could surely have made you all one single community: but [He willed it otherwise] in order to test you by means of what He has vouchsafed unto you. Vie, then, with one another in doing good works! Unto God you all must return; and then He will make you truly understand all that on which you were wont to differ.).

God tells the Prophet
that most people will not believe 'even if you are eager that they should'

وَمَا أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ وَلَوْ حَرَصْتَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

Yet - however strongly thou mayest desire it -most people will not believe [in this revelation], (12:103).

All the battles that took place during the Prophet's lifetime, under the guidance of the Qur'an and the Prophet, have been surveyed and shown to have been waged only in self-defence or to pre-empt an imminent attack. For more than ten years in Mecca, Muslims were persecuted, but before permission was given to fight they were instructed to restrain themselves (4:77

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً ۚ وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَى أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ ۗ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا

ART THOU NOT aware of those who have been told, "Curb your hands, and be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues"? But as soon as fighting [in God's cause] is ordained for them, lo,

some of them stand in awe of men as one should stand in awe of God - or in even greater awe - and say, "O our Sustainer! Why hast Thou ordained fighting for us? If only Thou hadst granted us a delay for a little while!" Say: "Brief is the enjoyment of this world, whereas the life to come is the best for all who are conscious of God - since none of you shall be wronged by as much as a hair's breadth.) and endure with patience and fortitude:

Pardon and forgive until God gives his command.

2:109

وَدَّ كَثِيرٌ مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ لَوْ يَرُدُّونَكُم مِّنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِكُمْ كُفَّارًا حَسَدًا مِّنْ عِندِ أَنْفُسِهِمْ مِّنْ
بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْحَقُّ ۖ فَاعْفُوا وَاصْفَحُوا حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ
شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Out of their selfish envy, many among the followers of earlier revelation would like to bring you back to denying the truth after you have attained to faith - [even] after the truth has become clear unto them. None the less, forgive and forbear, until God shall make manifest His will: behold, God has the power to will anything.; see also 29:59 **arabic** those who are patient in adversity and in their Sustainer place their trust!; 16:42 **arabic** those who, having attained to patience in adversity, in their Sustainer place their trust!

After the Muslims were forced out of their homes and their town, and those who remained behind were subjected to even more abuse, God gave His permission to fight:

Arabic PERMISSION [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged and, verily, God has indeed the power to succour them -:those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying. "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which Gods name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And God will most certainly succour him who succours His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty, [well aware of] those who, [even] if We firmly establish them on earth, remain constant in prayer, and give in charity, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; but with God rests the final outcome of all events.

22:39-41

Here, war is seen as justifiable and necessary to defend people's right to their own beliefs, and once the believers have been given victory they should not become triumphant or arrogant or have a sense of being a superpower, because the promise of help given above and the rewards are for those who do not seek to exalt themselves on earth or spread corruption (28:83 **arabic** As for that [happy] life in the hereafter, We grant it [only] to those who do not seek to exalt themselves on earth, nor yet to spread corruption: for the future belongs to the God-conscious.).

Righteous Intention

Righteous intention is an essential condition. When fighting takes place, it should be fi sabil illah – in the way of God – as is often repeated in the Qur'an. His way is prescribed in the Qur'an as the way of truth and justice, including all the teaching it gives on the justifications and the conditions for the conduct of war and peace. The Prophet was asked about those who fight for the booty, and those who fight out of self-aggrandizement or to be seen as a hero. He said that none of these was in the way of God. The one who fights in the way of God is he who fights so that the word of God is uppermost (ʿadith: Bukhari).

This expression of the word of God being 'uppermost' was misunderstood by some to mean that Islam should gain political power over other religions. However, if we use the principle that 'different parts of the Qur'an interpret each other', 9:40

إِلَّا تَنْصُرُوهُ فَقَدْ نَصَرَهُ اللَّهُ إِذْ أَخْرَجَهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا ثَانِيَ اثْنَيْنِ إِذْ هُمَا فِي الْغَارِ إِذْ يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ لَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَنَا ۖ فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَيْهِ وَأَيَّدَهُ بِجُنُودٍ لَمْ تَرَوْهَا وَجَعَلَ كَلِمَةَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا السُّفْلَى ۗ وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

If you do not succour the Apostle, then [know that God will do so -just as] God succoured him at the time when those who were bent on denying the truth drove him away, [and he was but] one of two: when these two were [hiding] in the cave, [and] the Apostle said to his companion, "Grieve not: verily, God is with us." And thereupon God bestowed upon him from on high His (gift of) inner peace, and brought utterly low the cause of those who were bent on denying the truth, whereas the cause of God remained supreme: for God is almighty, wise.) we find that by simply concealing the Prophet in the cave from his trackers, after he had narrowly escaped an attempt to murder him, God made His word 'uppermost', and the word of the wrongdoers 'lowered'. This could not be described as gaining military victory or political power. Another term which is misunderstood and misrepresented is jihad. This does not mean 'Holy War'. 'Holy War' does not exist as a term in Arabic, and its translation into Arabic sounds quite alien. The term which is specifically used in the Qur'an for fighting is qital. Jihad can be by argumentation financial help or actual fighting 25:52

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا

hence, do not defer to [the likes and dislikes of] those who deny the truth, but strive hard against them, by means of this [divine writ], with utmost striving.). Jihad is always described in the Qur'an as fi sabil illah. On returning from a military campaign, the Prophet said to his followers: 'We have returned from the minor jihad to the major jihad – the struggle of the individual with his own self.'

Jihad as an Obligation

When there is a just cause for jihad, which must have a righteous intention, it then becomes an obligation. It becomes an obligation for defending religious freedom (22:39–41 above.), for self-defense 2:190

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

AND FIGHT in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression-for, verily, God does not love aggressors.) and defending those who are oppressed: men, women and children who cry for help 4:75

وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ الَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ الظَّالِمِ أَهْلُهَا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا وَاجْعَلْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ نَصِيرًا

And how could you refuse to fight in the cause of God and of the utterly helpless men and women and children who are crying, "O our Sustainer! Lead us forth [to freedom] out of this land whose people are oppressors, and raise for us, out of Thy grace, a protector, and raise for us, out of Thy grace, one who will bring us succour!"). It is the duty of the Muslims to help the oppressed, except against a people with whom the Muslims have a treaty 8:72

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا بِأَمْوَالِهِمْ وَأَنْفُسِهِمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آوَوْا وَنَصَرُوا أُولَئِكَ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَلَمْ يُهَاجِرُوا مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ وَلَايَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى يُهَاجِرُوا ۚ وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمْ النَّصْرُ إِلَّا عَلَى قَوْمٍ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ مِيثَاقٌ ۚ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

BEHOLD, as for those who have attained to faith, and who have forsaken the domain of evil and are striving hard, with their possessions and their lives, in God's cause, as well as those who shelter and succour [them] - these are [truly] the friends and protectors of one another. But as for those who have come to believe without having migrated [to your country] - you are in no wise responsible for their protection until such a time as they migrate [to you]. Yet, if they ask you for succour against religious persecution, it is your duty to give [them] this succour-except against a people between whom and yourselves there is a covenant: for God sees all that you do.). These are the only valid justifications for war we find in the Qur'an. Even when war becomes necessary, we find that there is no 'conscriptioin' in the Qur'an. The Prophet is instructed only to 'urge on the believers' 4:64

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ ۚ وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ إِذْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ جَاءُوكَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا اللَّهَ وَاسْتَغْفَرَ لَهُمُ الرَّسُولُ لَوَجَدُوا اللَّهَ تَوَّابًا رَحِيمًا

For We have never sent any apostle save that he should be heeded by God's leave. If, then, after having sinned against themselves, they would but come round to thee and ask God to forgive them - with the Apostle, too, praying that they be forgiven - they would assuredly find that God is an acceptor of repentance, a dispenser of grace). The Qur'an – and the 'adith at greater length – urge on the Muslim fighters (those who are defending themselves or the oppressed) in the strongest way: by showing the justice of their cause, the bad conduct of the enemy, and promising great rewards in the afterlife for those who are prepared to sacrifice their lives and property in such a good cause.

Who Is To Be Fought? Discrimination and Proportionality

In this regard we must discuss two verses in the Qur'an which are normally quoted by those most eager to criticize Qur'anic teachings on war: 2:191

وَأَقْتُلُوهُمْ حَيْثُ ثَقِفْتُمُوهُمْ وَأَخْرِجُوهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَخْرَجُوكُمْ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا تُقَاتِلُوهُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ حَتَّىٰ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِيهِ ۚ فَإِنْ قَاتَلُوكُمْ فَاقْتُلُوهُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ الْكَافِرِينَ

('And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away - for oppression is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.) and verse 9:5,

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَاحْصُرُوهُمْ وَاقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ ۚ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace. labelled the 'Sword

Verse'. Both verses have been subjected to decontextualisation, misinterpretation and misrepresentation. The first verse comes in a passage that defines clearly who is to be fought:

وَقَاتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَكُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَدُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُعْتَدِينَ

AND FIGHT in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression- for, verily, God does not love aggressors.

‘Those who fight against you’ means actual fighters – civilians are protected. The Prophet and his successors, when they sent out an army, gave clear instructions not to attack civilians – women, old people, religious people engaged in their worship – nor destroy crops or animals.

Discrimination and proportionality should be strictly observed. Only the combatants are to be fought, and no more harm should be caused to them than they have caused 2:194

الشَّهْرُ الْحَرَامُ بِالشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ وَالْحُرُمَاتِ قِصَاصٌ ۖ فَمَنْ اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ فَاعْتَدُوا عَلَيْهِ بِمِثْلِ مَا اعْتَدَى عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked: for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you - but remain conscious of God, and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him.). Thus wars and weapons of destruction that destroy civilians and their towns are ruled out by the Qur'an and the word and deed of the Prophet, these being the only binding authority in Islamic law. The prohibition is regularly reinforced by, 'Do not transgress, God does not love the transgressor'. Transgression has been interpreted by Qur'anic exegetes as meaning, 'initiation of fighting, fighting those with whom a treaty has been concluded, surprising the enemy without first inviting them to make peace, destroying crops or killing those who should be protected' (Q. 2:190).

The orders are always couched in restraining language, with much repetition of warnings, such as 'do not transgress' and 'God does not love the transgressors' and 'He loves those who are conscious of Him'. These are instructions given to people who, from the beginning, should have the intention of acting 'in the way of God'.

Linguistically we notice that the verses in this passage always restrict actions in a legalistic way, which appeals strongly to Muslims' conscience. In six verses (2:190–5 arabic AND FIGHT in God's cause against those who wage war against you, but do not commit aggression-for, verily, God does not love aggressors. And slay them wherever you may come upon them, and drive them away from wherever they drove you away - for oppression is even worse than killing. And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth. But if they desist-behold, God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace. Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong. Fight during the sacred months if you are attacked: for a violation of sanctity is [subject to the law of] just retribution. Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him

just as he has attacked you - but remain conscious of God, and know that God is with those who are conscious of Him. And spend [freely] in God's cause, and let not your own hands throw you into destruction; and persevere in doing good: behold, God loves the doers of good.) we find four prohibitions (do not), six restrictions: two

'until', two 'if', two 'who attack you', as well as such cautions as 'in the way of God', 'be conscious of God', 'God does not like aggressors', 'God is with those who are conscious of Him', 'with those who do good deeds' and 'God is Forgiving, Merciful.' It should be noted that the Qur'an, in treating the theme of war, as with many other themes, regularly gives the reasons and justifications for any action it demands.

Verse 2:191 begins:

Slay them where you find them and expel them from where they expelled you; persecution [fitna] is worse than killing.

'Slay them wherever you find them,' has been made the title of an article on war in Islam. In this article 'them' is removed from its context, where it refers back to 'those who attack you' in the preceding verse. 'Wherever you find them' is similarly misunderstood: the Muslims were anxious that if their enemies attacked them in Mecca (which is a sanctuary) and they retaliated, they would be breaking the law. Thus the Qur'an simply gave the Muslims permission to fight those enemies, whether outside or inside Mecca, and assured them that the persecution that had been committed by the unbelievers against them for believing in God was more sinful than the Muslims killing those who attacked them, wherever they were.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the whole passage (2:190-5) comes in the context of fighting those who bar Muslims from reaching the Sacred Mosque at Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. This is clear from v.189 before and verse 196 after the passage. In the same way, the verse giving the first permission to fight occurs in the Qur'an, also in the context of barring Muslims from reaching the Mosque to perform the pilgrimage (22:25-41).

2:189

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْأَهْلَةِ ۖ قُلْ هِيَ مَوَاقِيتُ لِلنَّاسِ وَالْحَجِّ ۚ وَلَيْسَ الْبِرُّ بِأَنْ تَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ
مِنْ ظُهُورِهَا وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنِ اتَّقَى ۚ وَأْتُوا الْبُيُوتَ مِنْ أَبْوَابِهَا ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تُفْلِحُونَ

THEY WILL ASK thee about the new moons. Say: "They indicate the periods for [various doings of] mankind, including the pilgrimage." However, piety does not consist in your entering houses from the rear, [as it were,] but truly pious is he who is conscious of God. Hence, enter houses through their doors, and remain conscious of God, so that you might attain to a happy state.

2:196

وَأَتِمُّوا الْحَجَّ وَالْعُمْرَةَ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ أُخْصِرْتُمْ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ وَلَا تَحْلِقُوا رُءُوسَكُمْ حَتَّىٰ يَبْلُغَ الْهَدْيُ مَحَلَّهُ ۚ فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مَّرِيضًا أَوْ بِهِ أَذًى مِنْ رَأْسِهِ فَفِدْيَةٌ مِنْ صِيَامٍ أَوْ صَدَقَةٍ أَوْ نُسُكٍ ۚ فَإِذَا أَمِنْتُمْ فَمَنْ تَمَتَّعَ بِالْعُمْرَةِ إِلَى الْحَجِّ فَمَا اسْتَيْسَرَ مِنَ الْهَدْيِ ۚ فَمَنْ لَمْ يَجِدْ فَصِيَامُ ثَلَاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي الْحَجِّ وَسَبْعَةٍ إِذَا رَجَعْتُمْ ۚ تِلْكَ عَشْرَةٌ كَامِلَةٌ ۚ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ أَهْلُهُ حَاضِرِي الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

AND PERFORM the pilgrimage and the pious visit [to Mecca] in honour of God; and if you are held back, give instead whatever offering you can easily afford. And do not shave your heads until the offering has been sacrificed; but he from among you who is ill or suffers from an ailment of the head shall redeem himself by fasting, or alms, or [any other] act of worship. And if you are hale and secure, then he who takes advantage of a pious visit before the [time of] pilgrimage shall give whatever offering he can easily afford; whereas he who cannot afford it shall fast for three days during the pilgrimage and for seven days after your return: that is, ten full [days]. All this relates to him who does not live near the Inviolable House of Worship. And remain conscious of God, and know that God is severe in retribution.

22:25-41

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَاءً الْعَاكِفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِالْحَادِ بِظُلْمٍ نُدِقُهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ آلِيمٍ وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعَمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ (٢٨) ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلْيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلْيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ

ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ حُرْمَاتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۚ وَأُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۚ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخْطَفُهُ

الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوِي بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعْظَمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنَسَكًا لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۚ فَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذَكَرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا
 رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ
 وَالْبُذُنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا
 صَوَافٍ ۚ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعَمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ۚ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا
 لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ
 لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ۚ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ
 لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ ۚ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدَافِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ
 أَذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يَقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلَمُوا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ
 الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ۚ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ
 بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَهْدَمَتْ صَوَامِعُ وَبِيَعٌ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ
 كَثِيرًا ۚ وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ
 الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا
 عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۚ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ (٤١) وَإِنْ يَكْذِبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ
 وَثَمُودٌ

BEHOLD, as for those who are bent on denying the truth and bar [others] from the path of God and from the Inviolable House of Worship which We have set up for all people alike - [both] those who dwell there and those who come from abroad - and all who seek to profane it by [deliberate] evildoing: [all] such shall We cause to taste grievous suffering in the life to come.] For, when We assigned unto Abraham the site of this Temple, [We said unto him:] "Do not ascribe divinity to aught beside Me!" and: "Purify My Temple for those who will walk around it, and those who will stand before it [in meditation], and those who will bow down and prostrate themselves [in prayer]." Hence, [O Muhammad,] proclaim thou unto all people the [duty of] pilgrimage: they will come unto thee on foot and on every [kind of] fast mount, coming from every far-away point [on earth], so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of God on the days appointed [for sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them [to this end]: eat, then, thereof, and feed the unfortunate poor. Thereafter let them bring to an end their state of self-denial, and let them fulfill the vows which they [may] have made, and let them walk [once again] around the Most Ancient Temple. All this [is ordained by God]; and if one honours God's sacred commandments, it will redound to his own good in his Sustainer's sight. And all [kinds of] cattle have been made lawful to you [for sacrifice and food], save what is mentioned to you [as forbidden]. Shun, then, [all that God has forbidden and, most of all,] the loathsome evil of idolatrous beliefs and practices; and shun every word that is untrue, [inclining] towards God, [and] turning away from all that is false, without ascribing divine qualities to aught beside Him: for he who ascribes divinity to aught but God is like one who is hurtling down from the skies - whereupon the birds carry him off, or the wind blows him away onto a far-off place. This is [to be borne in mind]. And anyone who honours the symbols set up by God [shall know that] verily, these [symbols derive their value] from the God-consciousness in the [believers'] hearts. In that [God-consciousness] you shall find benefits until a term set [by Him is fulfilled], and [you shall

know that] its goal and end is the Most Ancient Temple. And [thus it is:] unto every community [that has ever believed in Us] have We appointed [sacrifice as] an act of worship, so that they might extol the name of God over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them [to this end]. And (always bear in mind:) your God is the One and Only God: hence, surrender yourselves unto Him. And give thou the glad tiding [of God's acceptance] unto all who are humble – all whose hearts tremble with awe whenever God is mentioned, and all who patiently bear whatever ill befalls them, and all who are constant in prayer and spend on others out of what We provide for them as sustenance. And as for the sacrifice of cattle, We have ordained it for you as one of the symbols set up by God, in which there is [much] good for you. Hence, extol the name of God over them when they are lined up [for sacrifice]; and after they have fallen lifeless to the ground, eat of their flesh, and feed the poor who is contented with his lot (and does not beg), as well as him who is forced to beg. It is to this end that We have made them subservient to your needs, so that you might have cause to be grateful. [But bear in mind:] never does their flesh reach God, and neither their blood: it is only your God-consciousness that reaches Him. It is to this end that We have made them subservient to your needs, so that you might glorify God for all the guidance with which He has graced you. And give thou this glad tiding unto the doers of good: Verily, God will ward off [all evil] from those who attain to faith; [and,] verily, God does not love anyone who betrays his trust and is bereft of gratitude. PERMISSION [to fight] is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged and, verily, God has indeed the power to succour them -: those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying. "Our Sustainer is God!" For, if God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, all] monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques - in [all of] which Gods name is abundantly extolled - would surely have been destroyed [ere now]. And God will most certainly succour him who succours His cause: for, verily, God is most powerful, almighty, [well aware of] those who, [even] if We firmly establish them on earth, remain constant in prayer, and give in charity, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; but with God rests the final outcome of all events.

The Sword Verse

We must also comment on another verse much referred to but notoriously misinterpreted and taken out of context – that which became labelled as the 'Sword Verse':

فَإِذَا انْسَلَخَ الْأَشْهُرُ الْحُرُمُ فَاقْتُلُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَيْثُ وَجَدْتُمُوهُمْ وَخُذُوهُمْ وَأَحْصُرُواهُمْ
وَأَقْعُدُوا لَهُمْ كُلَّ مَرْصِدٍ ۚ فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَخَلُّوا سَبِيلَهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ
اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace.

9:5

The hostility and 'bitter enmity' of the polytheists and their fitna (persecution)

2:193

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةٌ وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ آنتَهُوا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong.; 8:39 arabic And fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone. And if they desist-behold, God sees all that they do;) of the Muslims grew so great that the unbelievers were determined to convert the Muslims back to paganism or finish them off.

يَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الشَّهْرِ الْحَرَامِ قِتَالٍ فِيهِ ۚ قُلْ قِتَالٌ فِيهِ كَبِيرٌ ۚ وَصَدٌّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَكُفْرٌ بِهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ وَإِخْرَاجُ أَهْلِهِ مِنْهُ أَكْبَرُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالْفِتْنَةُ أَكْبَرُ مِنَ الْقَتْلِ ۚ وَلَا يَزَالُونَ يَقَاتِلُونَكُمْ حَتَّى يَرُدُّوكُمْ عَنْ دِينِكُمْ إِنِ اسْتَطَاعُوا ۚ وَمَنْ يَرْتَدِدْ مِنْكُمْ عَنْ دِينِهِ فَيَمُتْ وَهُوَ كَافِرٌ فَأُولَئِكَ حَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۚ وَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ ۚ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ

They will ask thee about fighting in the sacred month. Say: "Fighting in it is an awesome thing (grave transgression); but turning men away from the path of God and denying Him, and [turning them away from] the Inviolable House of Worship and expelling its people there from - [all this] is yet more awesome (greater transgression) in the sight of God, since oppression is more awesome (greater transgression) than killing." [Your enemies] will not cease to fight against you till they have turned you away from your faith, if they can. But if any of you should turn away from his faith and die as a denier of the truth - these it is whose works will go for nought in this world and in the life to come; and these it is who are destined for the fire, therein to abide.

2:217

It was these hardened polytheists in Arabia, who would accept nothing other than the expulsion of the Muslims or their reversion to paganism, and who repeatedly broke their treaties, that the Muslims were ordered to treat in the same way – to fight them or expel them

Even with such an enemy Muslims were not simply ordered to pounce on them and reciprocate by breaking the treaty themselves; instead, an ultimatum was issued, giving the enemy notice, that after the four sacred months mentioned in 9:5 above, the Muslims would wage war on them. The main clause of the sentence 'kill the polytheists' is singled out by some Western scholars to represent the Islamic attitude to war; even some Muslims take this view and allege that this verse abrogated other verses on war.

This is pure fantasy, isolating and decontextualising a small part of a sentence. The full picture is given in 9:1–15 ARABIC DISAVOWAL by God and His Apostle [is herewith announced] unto those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God, [and] with whom you [O:

believers] have made a covenant [Announce unto them:] "Go, then, [freely] about the earth for four months -but know that you can never elude God, and that, verily, God shall bring disgrace upon all who refuse to acknowledge the truth!" And a proclamation from God and His Apostle [is herewith made] unto all mankind on this day of the Greatest Pilgrimage: "God disavows all who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him, and [so does] His Apostle. Hence, if you repent, it shall be for your own good; and if you turn away, then know that you can never elude God!" And unto those who are bent on denying the truth give thou [O Prophet] the tidings of grievous chastisement. But excepted shall be -from among those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God - [people] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant and who thereafter have in no wise failed to fulfil their obligations towards you, and neither have aided anyone against you: observe, then, your covenant with them until the end of the term agreed with them. Verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him. And so, when the sacred months are over, slay those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God wherever you may come upon them, and take them captive, and besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every conceivable place! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, let them go their way: for, behold, God is much forgiving, a dispenser of grace. And if any of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside God seeks thy protection, grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the word of God [from thee]; and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure: this, because they [may be] people who [sin only because they] do not know [the truth]. HOW COULD they who ascribe divinity to aught beside God be granted a covenant by God and His Apostle, unless it be those [of them] with whom you [O believers] have made a covenant in the vicinity of the Inviolable House of Worship? [As for the latter,] so long as they remain true to you, be true to them: for, verily, God loves those who are conscious of Him. How [else could it be]? - since, if they [who are hostile to you] were to overcome you, they would not respect any tie [with you,] nor any obligation to protect [you]. They seek to please you with their mouths, the while their hearts remain averse [to you]; and most of them are iniquitous. God's messages have they bartered away for a trifling gain, and have thus turned away from His path: evil, behold, is all that they are wont to do, respecting no tie and no protective obligation with regard to a believer; and it is they, they who transgress the bounds of what is right! Yet if they repent, and take to prayer, and render the purifying dues, they become your brethren in faith: and clearly do We spell out these messages unto people of [innate] knowledge! But if they break their solemn pledges after having concluded a covenant, and revile your religion, then fight against these archetypes of faithlessness who, behold, have no [regard for their own] pledges, so that they might desist [from aggression]. Would you, perchance, fail to fight against people who have broken their solemn pledges, and have done all that they could to drive the Apostle away, and have been first to attack you? Do you hold them in awe? Nay, it is God alone of whom you ought to stand in awe, if you are [truly] believers! Fight against them! God will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them; and He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe, and will remove the wrath that is in their hearts. And God will turn in His mercy unto whom He wills: for, God is all-knowing, wise., which gives many reasons for the order to fight such polytheists. They continuously broke their agreements and aided others against the Muslims, they started hostilities against the Muslims, barred others from becoming Muslims, expelled Muslims from the Holy Mosque and even from their own homes. At least eight times the passage mentions their misdeeds against the Muslims. Consistent with restrictions on war elsewhere in the Qur'an, the immediate context of this 'Sword Verse' exempts such polytheists as do not break their agreements and who keep the peace with the Muslims (9:7). It orders that those enemies seeking safe conduct should be protected and delivered to the place of

safety they seek (9:6). The whole of this context to v.5, with all its restrictions, is ignored by those who simply isolate one part of a sentence to build their theory of war in Islam on what is termed 'The Sword Verse' even when the word 'sword' does not occur anywhere in the Qur'an.

Cessation/ending of Hostilities

Once the hostility of the enemy ceases, the Muslims must stop fighting
2:193

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَلَا عُدْوَانَ إِلَّا عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ

Hence, fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone; but if they desist, then all hostility shall cease, save against those who [wilfully] do wrong.;
8:39

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً وَيَكُونَ الدِّينُ كُلُّهُ لِلَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ انْتَهَوْا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِمَا يَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ

And fight against them until there is no more oppression and all worship is devoted to God alone. And if they desist-behold, God sees all that they do;):
And if they incline to peace, do so and put your trust in God. Even if they intend to deceive you, remember that God is sufficient for you.
8:61-2

وَإِنْ جَنَحُوا لِلسَّلْمِ فَاجْنَحْ لَهَا وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ
وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا أَنْ يَخْدَعُوكَ فَإِنَّ حَسْبَكَ اللَّهُ ۚ هُوَ الَّذِي أُيِّدَكَ بِنَصْرِهِ وَبِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ

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! And should they seek but to deceive thee [by their show of peace] - behold, God is enough for thee! He it is who has strengthened thee with His succour, and by giving thee believing followers

When the war is over, the Qur'an and 'adith give instructions as to the treatment of prisoners of war and the new relationship with the non-Muslims. War is certainly not seen as a means in Islam of converting other people from their religions. The often-quoted division of the world into dar al-harb and dar al-Islam is seen nowhere in the Qur'an or 'adith, the only authoritative sources of Islam. The scholars who used these expressions were talking about the warring enemies in countries surrounding the Muslim lands. Even for such scholars there was not a dichotomy but a trichotomy, with a third

division, dar al-sul', the lands with which the Muslims had treaty obligations. The Qur'an and 'adith talk about the different situations that exist between a Muslim state and a neighbouring warring enemy. They mention a state of defensive war, within the prescriptions specified above, the state of peace treaty for a limited or unlimited period, the state of truce, and the state where a member of a hostile camp can come into a Muslim land for special purposes under safe conduct.

Treaties

The Prophet and his companions did make treaties, such as that of Oudaybiyya in the sixth year of the hijra and the one made by 'Umar with the people of Jerusalem. Faithfulness to a treaty is a most serious obligation which the Qur'an and 'adith incessantly emphasize:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ ۖ أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ غَيْرَ مُحِلِّي الصَّيْدِ وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ

O YOU who have attained to faith! Be true to your covenants! Lawful to you is the [flesh of every] beast that feeds on plants, save what is mentioned to you [hereinafter]: but you are not allowed to hunt while you are in the state of pilgrimage. Behold, God ordains in accordance with His will.

5:1

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ

And be true to your bond with God whenever you bind yourselves by a pledge, and do not break [your] oaths after having [freely] confirmed them and having called upon God to be witness to your good faith: behold, God knows all that you do.

16:91

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَاثًا تَتَّخِذُونَ أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ ۗ إِنَّمَا يَبُلُوكُمْ اللَّهُ بِهِ ۖ وَلِيُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ مَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

Hence, be not like her who breaks and completely untwists the yarn which she [herself] has spun and made strong-[be not like this by] using your oaths as a means of deceiving one another, simply because some of you may be more powerful than others." By all this, God but puts you to a test-and [He does it] so that on Resurrection Day He might make clear unto you all that on which you were wont to differ.

16:92

Breaking treaties puts the culprit into a state lower than animals 8:55

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Verily, the vilest creatures in the sight of God are those who are bent on denying the truth and therefore do not believe.). As stated above, even defending a Muslim minority is not allowed when there is a treaty with the camp they are in.

Prisoners of War

There is nothing in the Qur'an or 'adith to prevent Muslims from following the present international humanitarian conventions on war or prisoners of war. There is nothing in the Qur'an to say that prisoners of war must be held captive, but as this was the practice of the time and there was no international body to oversee exchanges of prisoners, the Qur'an deals with the subject. There are only two cases where it mentions their treatment:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لِمَنْ فِي أَيْدِيكُمْ مِنَ الْأَسْرَىٰ إِنَّ يَعْلَمَ اللَّهُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ خَيْرًا يُؤْتِكُمْ خَيْرًا مِّمَّا أُخِذَ مِنْكُمْ وَيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ
وَإِنْ يُرِيدُوا خِيَانَتَكَ فَقَدْ خَانُوا اللَّهَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَأَمْكَنَ مِنْهُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

[Hence,] O Prophet, say unto the captives who are in your hands: "If God finds any good in your hearts, He will give you something better than all that has been taken from you, and will forgive you your sins: for God is much-forgiving, a dispenser of grace." And should they but seek to play false with thee -well, they were false to God [Himself] ere this: but He gave [the believers] mastery over them. And God is all-knowing, wise.

8:70-1

فَإِذَا لَقِيتُمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَضَرْبَ الرِّقَابِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَثْخَنْتُمُوهُمْ فَشُدُّوا الْوَتَاقَ فَمَا مِّنَّا بَعْدَ
وَأَمَّا فِدَاءٌ حَتَّىٰ تَضَعَ الْحَرْبُ أَوْزَارَهَا ۚ ذَٰلِكَ وَلَوْ يَشَاءُ اللَّهُ لَانتَصَرَ مِنْهُمْ وَلَكِن
لِّيَبْلُو بَعْضَكُمْ بَعْضٌ ۗ وَالَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَلَن يُضِلَّ أَعْمَالَهُمْ

NOW WHEN you meet [in war] those who are bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds; but thereafter [set them free,] either by an act of grace or against ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted: thus [shall it be]. And [know that] had God so willed, He could indeed punish them [Himself]; but [He wills you to struggle] so as to test you [all] by means of one another. And as for those who are slain in God's cause, never will He let their deeds go to waste:

47:4

Grace is suggested first, before ransom. Even when some were not set

free, for one reason or another, they were, according to the Qur'an and
`adith, to be treated in a most humane way (Q.76:8-9;

وَيُطْعَمُونَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ مِسْكِينًا وَيَتِيمًا وَأَسِيرًا
إِنَّمَا نُطْعِمُكُمْ لِوَجْهِ اللَّهِ لَا نُرِيدُ مِنْكُمْ جَزَاءً وَلَا شُكُورًا

and who give food - however great be their own want of it - unto the needy, and the orphan, and
the captive, [saying, in their hearts,] "We feed you for the sake of God alone: we desire no
recompense from you, nor thanks;; 9:60;

إِنَّمَا الصَّدَقَاتُ لِلْفُقَرَاءِ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْعَامِلِينَ عَلَيْهَا وَالْمُؤَلَّفَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ
وَالْغَارِمِينَ وَفِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ ۚ فَرِيضَةٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ ۚ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ

The offerings given for the sake of God are [meant] only for the poor and the needy, and those who
are in charge thereof, and those whose hearts are to be won over, and for the freeing of human
beings from bondage, and [for] those who are over burdened with debts, and [for every struggle] in
God's cause, and [for] the wayfarer: [this is] an ordinance from God - and God is all-knowing, wise;;
2:177;

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ
الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ
وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَالسَّائِلِينَ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَالْمُوفُونَ
بِعَهْدِهِمْ إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ۚ وَالصَّابِرِينَ فِي الْبَأْسَاءِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۚ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ
صَدَقُوا ۚ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

True piety does not consist in turning your faces towards the east or the west - but truly pious is he
who believes in God, and the Last Day; and the angels, and revelation, and the prophets; and
spends his substance - however much he himself may cherish - it - upon his near of kin, and the
orphans, and the needy, and the wayfarer, and the beggars, and for the freeing of human beings
from bondage; and is constant in prayer, and renders the purifying dues; and [truly pious are] they
who keep their promises whenever they promise, and are patient in misfortune and hardship and in
time of peril: it is they that have proved themselves true, and it is they, they who are conscious of
God.).

In the Bible, where it mentions fighting, we find a different picture in the treatment

administered to conquered peoples, for example:

When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labour and shall work for you. If they refuse to make peace with you in battle, lay siege to that city. When the Lord your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the Lord your God gives you from your enemies. This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby. However, in the cities of the nations the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy them – the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites – as the Lord your God has commanded you. Otherwise they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshipping their gods, and you will sin against the Lord your God.

deuteronomy 20:10–189

Resumption of Peaceful Relations

We have already seen in the Qur'an 22:41;

الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا
عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ

[well aware of] those who, [even] if We firmly establish them on earth, remain constant in prayer, and give in charity, and enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong; but with God rests the final outcome of all events. that God promises to help those who, when He has established them in a land after war, '... establish worship and pay the poor-due and enjoin what is good and forbid iniquity'.

In this spirit, when the Muslim army was victorious over the enemy, any of the defeated people who wished to remain in the land could do so under a guarantee of protection for their life, religion and freedom, and if they wished to leave they could do so with safe conduct. If they chose to stay among the Muslims, they could become members of the Muslim community. If they wished to continue in their faith they had the right to do so and were offered security. The only obligation on them then was to pay jizya, a tax exempting the person from military service and from paying zakat, which the Muslims have to pay – a tax considerably heavier than the jizya. Neither had the option of refusing to pay, but in return the non-Muslims were given the protection of the state. Jizya was not a poll-tax, and it was not charged on the old, or poor people, women or children.

Humanitarian Intervention

Humanitarian intervention is allowed, even advocated in the Qur'an, under the category of defending the oppressed. However it must be done within the restrictions specified in the Qur'an, as we have shown above. In intervening, it is quite permissible to co-operate with non-Muslims, under the proviso:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَحِلُّوا شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ وَلَا الشَّهْرَ الْحَرَامَ وَلَا الْهَدْيَ وَلَا الْقَلَائِدَ وَلَا
أَمِينَ الْبَيْتِ الْحَرَامِ يَبْتَغُونَ فَضْلًا مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَرِضْوَانًا ۖ وَإِذَا حَلَلْتُمْ فَاصْطَادُوا ۚ وَلَا
يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاَنُ قَوْمٍ أَنْ صَدُّوكُمْ عَنِ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ أَنْ تَعْتَدُوا ۚ وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ
وَالتَّقْوَى ۚ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ ۚ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

O you who have attained to faith! Offend not against the symbols set up by God, nor against the sacred month [of pilgrimage], nor against the garlanded offerings, nor against those who flock to the Inviolable Temple, seeking favour with their Sustainer and His goodly acceptance; and [only] after your pilgrimage is over are you free to hunt. And never let your hatred of people who would bar you from the Inviolable House of Worship lead you into the sin of aggression: but rather help one another in furthering virtue and God-consciousness, and do not help one another in furthering evil and enmity; and remain conscious of God: for, behold, God is severe in retribution!

5:2

International Co-operation

In the sphere of war and peace, there is nothing in the Qur'an or 'adith which should cause Muslims to feel unable to sign and act according to the modern international conventions, and there is much in the Qur'an and 'adith from which modern international law can benefit. The Prophet Muhammad remembered an alliance he witnessed that was contracted between some chiefs of Mecca before his call to prophethood to protect the poor and weak against oppression and said:

I have witnessed in the house of Ibn Jud'an an alliance which I would not exchange for a herd of red camels, and if it were to be called for now that Islam is here, I would respond readily.

There is nothing in Islam that prevents Muslims from having peaceful, amicable and good relations with other nations when they read and hear regularly the Qur'anic injunction, referring to members of other faiths:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ
وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

As for such [of the unbelievers] as do not fight against you on account of [your] faith, and neither drive you forth from your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity: for, verily, God loves those who act equitably.
60:8

This includes participation in international peace-making and peace-keeping efforts. The rule of arbitration in violent disputes between groups of Muslims is given in the Qur'an:

وَإِنْ طَائِفَتَانِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ اقْتَتَلُوا فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا ۚ فَإِنْ بَغَتْ إِحْدَاهُمَا عَلَى الْأُخْرَىٰ فَقَاتِلُوا الَّتِي تَبْغِي حَتَّىٰ تَفِيءَ إِلَىٰ أَمْرِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ فَاءَتْ فَأَصْلَحُوا بَيْنَهُمَا بِالْعَدْلِ وَأَقْسِطُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to God's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them]: for verily, God loves those who act equitably!.
49:9

This could, in agreement with rules of Islamic jurisprudence, be applied more generally to disputes within the international community. For this reason, Muslims should, and do, participate in the arbitration of disputes by international bodies such as the United Nations. Modern international organizations and easy travel should make it easier for different people, in accordance with the teachings of the Qur'an, to 'get to know one another', 'co-operate in what is good' and live in peace. The Qur'an affirms:

لَا خَيْرَ فِي كَثِيرٍ مِنْ نَجْوَاهُمْ إِلَّا مَنْ أَمَرَ بِصَدَقَةٍ أَوْ مَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ إِصْلَاحٍ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ ابْتِغَاءَ مَرْضَاتِ اللَّهِ فَسَوْفَ نُؤْتِيهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

NO GOOD comes, as a rule, out of secret confabulations - saving such as are devoted to enjoining charity, or equitable dealings, or setting things to rights between people: and unto him who does this out of a longing for God's goodly acceptance We shall in time grant a mighty reward.
4:114