



Article: ISLAMIC PRINCIPLES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A CRITICAL STUDY OF THE MADINA AND HUDAIBIYA AGREEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Islam fundamentally emphasizes peace, not only for its followers but for all of humanity, positioning harmony as intrinsic to human nature and essential for societal flourishing. The pursuit of peace underpins intellectual growth, creativity, socio-cultural cohesion, economic prosperity, and political stability. Prophetic teachings, particularly those of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), underscore that unnecessary confrontation or aggression is counterproductive and contrary to Islamic principles. Instead, Islam advocates for peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and cooperation across diverse communities. This study critically examines the Islamic principles of conflict resolution by analyzing the historic Pacts of Madina and Hudaibiya, which exemplify early models of diplomacy, negotiation, and ethical governance. The Pact of Madina established a framework for political coexistence among diverse religious and tribal groups, promoting collective security, justice, and equitable rights. Similarly, the Treaty of Hudaibiya demonstrated strategic patience and negotiation as tools for achieving long-term peace, highlighting the moral and practical dimensions of nonviolent resolution. By contextualizing these agreements within contemporary international relations and conflict management discourse, this paper explores their relevance as guiding principles for modern peace-building initiatives. Through historical analysis and critical interpretation, the study argues that the values embedded in these pacts—justice, trust, dialogue, and ethical negotiation—offer valuable lessons for resolving contemporary conflicts and fostering global harmony. The research contributes to understanding Islam’s constructive role in promoting peace and presents actionable insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners engaged in conflict resolution and interfaith dialogue.

Keywords: Islam, Peace, Harmony, Conflict Resolution, Madina, Hudaibiya

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Introduction

Conflict has been a constant in human history, one that is frequently driven by political contestation, tribal division, and the competition for wealth, power and identity — not to mention religion. But alongside this history of violence flows an equally powerful human quest for peace, justice, coexistence and reconciliation. Amidst these turbulent times, Islam provides a comprehensive and principled model of conflict resolution that is based not just in political expediency or interest but divine revelation, ethical training and social accountability. The word Islam in Arabic is understood as submission to the will of God, and it has a root that suggest peace, safety, and wholeness. Such a relationship is important both in summary because it expresses a major Muslim perspective on the order of life — that peace is not just absence of war and conflict, but is also intertwined with justice, inhibition, mercy and peaceful human relations.¹ The Qur'an makes peace the normative moral aim and repeatedly summons believers toward reconciliation, fairness and restraint amid conflict and enmity. It enjoins that when two forces of believers engage with each other, endeavor must be made to reconcile them based on justice, and even if the occupants continue to cross the lines of aggression, then corrective action must still be governed by that effort toward restoring peace and balance. In the same vein, the Qur'an commands Muslims to turn toward peace when their opponent's party demonstrates interest in reconciliation and it forbids coercion on faith. It also allows only just and kind relations with people who do not pursue persecution or war. These lessons show that the Islamic response to conflict is not one of force, revenge or exclusion, but one of reconciliation, justice and moral accountability as well as respect for human dignity.² The Prophetic model further reflects this ethical orientation. The life of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) shows us that in Islam, conflict resolution isn't just a theory, but rather something that was applied in practice politically and socially. Some of the most prominent examples are Madina Agreement (or Constitution of Medina), and between Hudaibiya. The Madina Agreement, which was signed in the aftermath of Hijrah in 622 CE introduced a new socio-political framework that brought together various tribes and religious different groups through mutual obligations, collective security, and recognized mechanisms for resolution of disputes. As such, it has been perceived as one of the earliest

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accounts for a plural society to covenantally organize itself rather than by mere blood or tribal supremacy. Likewise, the Hudaibiya Agreement signed in 628 CE between the Prophet and Quraysh of Mecca stands as a brilliant example of strategic patience, negotiated settlement, and prioritizing long-term peace over short-term emotional or military gain.³

A critical examination of these two agreements is particularly pertinent in the current age, where Islam is all too often represented as a system through which conflict emerges and yet its peace-inspired legal and moral frameworks go under researched. The Madina and Hudaibiya treaties reflect the Islamic principles of conflict resolution which center on dialogue, upholding covenants (*amanah*), peacemaking justice, religious pluralism, inclusion mediation and avoidance of confrontation. And they also make it clear that in Islam peace is not a passive submission to injustice, it is an active and principled endeavor toward the preservation of human life, stability of society and well-being of all. Therein lies not only the ethical commitment demanded of Islamic peacemaking, it is also political wisdom.⁴

The Qur'anic denial of forced conversion also counters the misleading narrative that Islam encourages forceful belief. The verse "There is no compulsion in religion" remains one of the clearest textual affirmations of freedom of conscience in the Islamic tradition. The Prophet's governance in Madina also proved that religious diversity could be managed through treaty, mutual responsibility and legal protection rather than homogenization. These fundamentals render the inquiry into Islamic mechanisms of conflict resolution especially salient not just for scholars of Islam in specific but also contemporary scholars of peace studies, interfaith relations, political ethical theory and international diplomatic practice.⁵ Therefore, this article analyses the Islamic principles of conflict resolution with special reference to the Madina and Hudaibiya negotiations. This work contends that these two distinct foundational precedents may be viewed as laying out a coherent, peacebuilding model predicated on justice, negotiation, plural coexistence and moral constraint. The study argues that Islam provides a sophisticated and timeless framework for conflict resolution which remains relevant today in both Muslim and non-Muslim societies by examining their historical context, normative content and wider implication. In this backdrop, the Madina Agreement and the Hudaibiya Agreement attain eternally relevant dimension. The Constitution of Medina is recognized as an early political covenant that shaped relations

between different tribal and religious communities within a shared civic order, while the Pact of al-Hudaybiyah represents a seminal model for strategic restraint, negotiation, and peacebuilding in adversarial contexts. Together, these agreements provide an example that the Islamic mechanisms for conflict resolution are not a matter of theory; they were applied in politics in their most practical form, through covenants, negotiated settlement, mutual obligation and prioritizing long-term peace over short-term confrontation. This article therefore explores the Islamic way of conflict resolution through a critical study of Madina and Hudaibiya agreements. The two foundational precedents represented in these two events embody some of the key Islamic principles: justice, tolerance, freedom of belief, respectful diversity, peaceful dialogue and covenantal responsibility; and strategic patience. Through interpretations of their historical background and normative implications, the study aims to demonstrate that Islamic teachings provide a holistic and enduring model for conflict resolution which continues to carry resonance in today's debates on peacebuilding, interfaith relations, and plural social order.

Pact of Madina as a Foundational Model of Islamic Conflict Resolution

The Pact of Madina holds a central position in any serious study of Islamic conflict resolution because it was one of the earliest and most influential attempts to turn a divided, conflict-ridden society into an ethical political community, the historical background of the agreement is key to understanding its importance. The hijra (migration) of the Prophet Muhammad to Madina in 622 CE did not happen in isolation, but lived against the backdrop of intense persecution that had faced the early Muslim community at Makkah, which underwent sustained hostility, coercion and social exclusion. The initial Hijrah to King Negus of Abyssinia was made before—their calm and rational discussion with the Christian ruler won them protection. This episode in itself exemplifies an early Islamic tendency for negotiation, moral argument and peaceful coexistence rather than confrontation.

In Madina, the Prophet came to a society that was radically divided along tribal, political and religious lines. The city did not have a single governing authority, and the tribes of Aws and Khazraj had been mired in generations of rivalry and killings. Meanwhile, Muslims and Jews — along with other groups — shared territory without a constitutional foundation on which to manage what today we might call intergroup relations. The answer of the Prophet

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to this fractured environment was not uniformity through force, but social peace through consultation, covenant and a common political order. First, he forged ties of brotherhood between the Muhajirun and the Ansar; then, he went on to finalize a larger accord among Madina's major communal actors. This agreement, generally referred to in modern study as the Charter or Pact of Madina, is nearly unanimously acknowledged by historians and scholars today as an early constitutional document that sought to regulate inter-communal relations, provide a collective security arrangement against external threats, and create governance mechanisms for justice in an inherently plural society.⁶ The Pact of Madina gave a constructive and peace-oriented vision of political organization. Instead of protecting the fragments of its tribes, the charter aimed to unify all members of the disparate peoples in Madina into one civic constitution with mutual rights and obligations. It laid out ground rules for mutual defense, legal accountability, conflict resolution and collaboration among factions that had long been split by inherited hostility. Most importantly, the document erased not religious difference, but provided for pluralism within a unified political community. The Jews became part of the allied body in Madina and were promised protection and freedom in their religions. In this sense, the charter shows that the model of governance of the prophet was not based on forced homogenization; rather, it was justice-based, coexistence-based⁷ and negotiated solidarity. The pact provides several key principles of successful conflict resolution. To begin with, it makes the case for inclusive political community when the citizens of Madina were bound around common civic duty rather than narrow tribal exclusionism. Secondly, it mirrors religious pluralism — where they threw in the lots of different faiths of the people that were permitted to retain their religious identity with respect to participating within a common political order. Third, it institutionalized rule-based dispute resolution, supplanting arbitrary retaliation and tribal vengeance with a more orderly approach to justice. Fourth, it initiated collective security, whereby the defense of Madina was a responsibility shared by all. At last, it endorsed the necessity of some acknowledged final authority in instances when serious disagreement may arise; conflict needs to be stopped before it turns into chaos. These characteristics demonstrate that the agreement was not just a political bargain, but also a normative structure for peacebuilding in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. The Charter of Madina is particularly relevant for contemporary scholarship because it was established via consultation and social consensus rather than conquest and coercion. Its ethos

was deeply consistent with Qur'anic principles, which place human dignity, religious freedom, justice and mutual recognition across difference at their center. The charter did not reject diversity; it legalistically codified, ethically restrained and civically cooperated with such diversity. In this sense it provides a historically rooted Islamic model of pluralism, one in which peace is maintained not by wiping out communal identities, but by establishing a common moral and political framework that creates the space within which such identities can exist side by side. Consequently, modern scholars are still reading the Charter of Madina as a reference for interfaith relations, constitutional thinking and conflict transformation in polarized societies.⁸

The agreement also highlights a significant moral element of the Prophetic method. Although Muslims had experienced persecution in Makkah, the Prophet did not view political power in Madina as vehicle for revenge or domination. So instead he led the nascent community to pursue reconciliation, institutional development and social cohesion. This transition from victimhood to constructive statecraft is one of the most pronounced manifestations of Islamic conflict resolution in action. The Prophet turned a city of protracted feuding into one organized around covenant, mutual protection, and peaceful coexistence. In this sense, the Pact of Madina may be interpreted not only as history but also as a balanced Islamic model for peaceful coexistence built on justice, tolerance, fraternal co-existence and human dignity. As an example of Islamic principles of conflict resolution, the Pact of Madina illustrates how these principles are not abstract ideals alien to political life. They found their expression in a working constitutional arrangement which contained tribal rivalry, communal insecurity and religious plurality through a negotiated order. When read in conjunction with the Hudaibiya Agreement, the Charter of Madina shows that the Prophetic approach to conflict resolution always prioritized peace, consultation and lawful order for long-term social stability above knee-jerk confrontation. It thus continues to be an important precedent for the current debates on coexistence, peacebuilding, and plural governance in societies with Muslims and others.⁹

Pact of Hudaibiya as a Prophetic Model of Strategic Peacebuilding

The culture of technology integration is strongly tied to the differences in how students and teachers use technology across various institutions. One of the most significant

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examples of conflict resolution in Islamic history is represented by the Pact of Hudaibiya because it shows how sometimes restraint, negotiation and a strategic compromise can lead to results that something armed confrontation cannot. Agreed to in 6 AH / 628 CE between the Prophet Muhammad and Quraysh of Makkah, it came at a time of enormous tension when open warfare was a very real possibility. But instead of letting the crisis boil over into bloodshed, the Prophet turned a volatile confrontation into a durable truce, proving that Islamic conflict resolution is grounded not just in moral idealism but practical wisdom and long term vision. The context of the treaty is tremendously important. The Prophet and about 1400 companions marched toward Makkah to perform the lesser pilgrimage, bringing sacrificial animals as clear signs of peaceful intent. The Muslims did not move as an army bent on invasion; instead they brought only the kinds of sheathed swords normally allowed for travelers. When they received reports that the Quraysh planned to prevent them from entering Makkah, still the Prophet opted for diplomacy over armed conflict and sent emissaries explaining that the Muslims were seeking pilgrimage, not war. The longer return of 'Usman ibn 'Affān resulted in what is perhaps the most famous pledge of allegiance, that of Bay'at al-Riḍwān; a testimony to how serious the situation was. Yet even at this extremely sensitive juncture, the Prophet did not abandon the negotiating process. With 'Usm back in safety and the Quraysh ready to engage in a formal negotiation, the specter of violent confrontation was displaced by a political settlement. The terms of the agreement seemed, on the face of it, to benefit the Quraysh. The Muslims would otherwise go to Madina and not do Pilgrimage that year, the agreement was a 10-year truce amongst parties, in the following year there will be three days Temp Permit for Muslims. A controversial repatriation clause stated that any Makkan who fled to Madina without guardian approval must be returned, but a person departing the Muslims for the Quraysh would not be repatriated. Furthermore, tribes of Arabia were loosely allowed to join either side. Some Companions found these conditions painful, difficult to accept, ultimately a humiliating rather than an impressive achievement. For all his inclination to peace, however, the Prophet was less interest in submission than in broadening his horizons beyond opposition, and so accepted the terms. This is exactly the spot where the treaty comes to matter so much for study regarding Islamic conflict resolution. The Prophet showed that a just leader is not one who demands perpetual conflict, but one who can differentiate between the immediate and long-term gratification.

What some Companions initially considered a one-sided settlement turned out to be a decisive political and moral victory. The Qur'an itself referred to the treaty as a "clear victory"¹⁰ — a characterization that helped shift the Muslim community's conception of success away from narrow military triumph toward the broader strategic dimension of peace, stability and moral confidence. The details provided through Qur'anic language about the event also highlight peace and composure in the hearts of believers, giving an idea that patience and heightened controlled restraint played a central part to achieving this outcome.¹¹ The treaty produced several important gains in practical terms. First, it was an indirect admission by the Quraysh that the Muslims were a legitimate political community and an equal negotiating partner. Secondly, it acknowledged the Muslims' right of pilgrimage (ḥajj) to the Ka'bah, albeit postponed for a year. Third, the truce produced a time of security in which preaching, diplomacy and social intercourse could take place without the immediate pressure of armed hostilities. This setting of safety and peace enabled Islam to expand more quickly through persuasion, contact and contemplation than would have been possible in an era of constant warfare. Historians have long observed that the truce created a new political and social space for the Muslim community, and that its effects in the long term turned out to be far more favorable than many people expected at the point of signing. In addition, it also points towards some of the key techniques of Prophetic conflict management. One was to avoid unnecessary confrontation. Despite possessing the strength to wage war, the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) actively sought to avoid war in the hallowed ground of Makkah. A different one was forbearance in the face of provocation. The treatment of Abū Jandal, who had escaped from Makkan custody but was nevertheless returned under the logic of the agreement, demonstrates the Prophet's commitment to making good on a treaty even when emotionally costly. A third was mediation through concession, in which the Prophet accepted terms that appeared outwardly disadvantageous because they furthered the higher goal of resolving the conflict. Indeed, Islamic conflict resolution cannot afford to render peace as abstract idealism; this triad of patience, fidelity to agreement, and strategic realism demonstrates that it takes discipline, sacrifice, and prioritization of common welfare over instant reaction. Another vitally important consequence of Hudaibiya is its relationship to the general Islamic perspective on freedom of religion and coexistence. It is indeed true as the file points out that Islam calls people through persuasion, and not coercion; an essential

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principle consistent with the Qur'anic insistence that belief cannot be imposed. The spirit behind lines such as "For you is your religion, and for me is mine" indicates a structure in which the mere existence of religious difference does not automatically warrant conflict. Instead, Islam aims to awaken the conscience, win hearts and create conditions in which truth may be embraced willingly. In this respect the success of Hudaibiya reinforces a larger, Islamic principle: gratitude and civility endure longer through dialogue, treaty and mutual recognition than by compulsion or revenge.

Thus in a critical light, the Pact of Hudaibiya can be considered as a master-class of strategy statesmanship of peace building. It was not mere hostilities ended, nor just an instance of political accord. It was an act of judicious leadership in which the Prophet fashioned a potentially disastrous clash into an opportunity for acknowledgment, stability and moral enlargement. What does the agreement say about Islamic principles of conflict resolution? "The timing of this day shows that Islamic rules for demanding and resolving conflicts are not ones, as some may assume, that require an aggressive use of force; rather: A desire to settle through negotiation No disease without a cure Not to demand more than is appropriate according to the circumstances to sacrifice now in order to ensure at least a degree (sustainable one) peace sustained over the years the power of peace has proven, in long history, its ethics. For this reason, Hudaibiya is still one of the most arresting Prophetic prototypes in contemporary discussions of diplomacy, mediation, treaty-making and reconciliation in effectively bifurcated societies.

Reframing Jihad in Contemporary Discourse

One of the intractable problems in contemporary scholarship and media discourse remains that of reducing the Qur'anic notion of jihad to merely terrorism, militancy or religious extremism. This is analytically weak and textually incorrect. In classical Islamic thought, jihad signifies a broader semantic and ethical range than armed combat alone. It encompasses moral endeavor, intellectual exertion, social reform and preaching; the defense of the community; it may under limited circumstances include legal Armed struggle. The Muslim scholar John Esposito observes that the Arabic root for jihad carries the literal meaning "to struggle" or "to exert," and that historically its referent included both non-violent forms of

effort in God's way, as well as armed action under certain circumstances. He also stresses that contemporary extremist groups have coopted the term in a bid to sanction their own agendas, which violate classical Islamic legal and moral limitations. It is therefore methodologically invalid to derive the Islamic philosophy of war from the practices of violent organizations such as ISIS, al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab and similar militant movements. We cannot use their actions as first evidence of normative Islamic teaching. Real analysis has to start with the basic Islamic scriptures, primarily the Qur'an and the Sunnah, moving through the body of its jurisprudential and scholarly tradition. Similarly, scholarly work on discourse and terrorism has demonstrated that the category "Islamic terrorism" is frequently deployed loosely in political and academic debate — such that both Islam, as well as political violence itself, are understood in distorted ways. The Qur'an sets stringent moral parameters for violence and prioritizes the sanctity of human life. The Holy Qur'an¹² speaks of the taking of an innocent life in terms of a crime against all humanity, and saving a life is elevated as act equivalent to saving all humankind. Likewise, Holy Qur'an¹³ allows fighting only against those who fight and specifically forbids transgression. Permission to fight was given in the Holy Qur'an¹⁴ which says that it was granted to those who had been wronged, thus making it clear that the earliest Qur'anic authorization for armed struggle was defensive and reactive rather than expansionist. The Qur'an also instructs believers to lean toward peace if the other side does, and when treaties are made between two parties, both should be honored as long as one party does not betray it. Collectively, these verses demonstrate that the Qur'anic framework of war is moralistic and contingent, not open-ended or indiscriminate — let alone retaliatory. This scriptural framework is fully aligned with the Prophetic practice in Madina and Hudaibiya treaties. So, in Madina, the Prophet was not about coercing others into a social order but rather entering into covenant and plural coexistence as well as mutual defense and regulated justice. At Hudaibiya, he escaped a probably armed confrontation, settled for hard terms and achieved a peace that even the Qur'an called a "clear victory."¹⁵ Hearing these precedents that Islamic conflict resolution prefers building peace, making a treaty, being patient and public benefit in the long run over prompts. From that vantage, the Qur'anic philosophy of war cannot be separated from the larger Prophetic ethic of restraint, reconciliation and lawful order. Also significant is the enshrinement in Islamic law historically that its use of force was always contingent on legitimate authority and juridical regulation.

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Esposito says traditional definitions of lawful jihad set out limits regarding proportionality, protection of noncombatants and recognized political authority, which extremist groups violate when they target civilians and declare violence on their own authority. That distinction is important in modern debates. The violence of irregular militant groups must, therefore, be viewed not as the pure expression of Islam but as a politicized and selective distortion of the Islamic lexicon for illegitimate purposes. From the perspective, political significance of Madina and Hudaibiya agreement becomes more contemporary. They present an alternative Islamic grammar of conflict resolution based on justice, pluralism, dialogue, patience, covenantal ethics and a strategic de-escalation policy. Instead of mythologizing the conflict, they show that peace is far more productive for interreligious dialogue, social reform and civilizational evolution than ceaseless confrontation. The treaties thus correct both extremist misreading within Muslim societies and reductionist interpretations outside of them. Games like Jeopardy, Kahoot, and Quizlet, for instance, can make learning more entertaining and engaging.

Recommendations

First, modern Muslim scholarship must continue to distinguish carefully between the normative theory of jihad in the Qur'an and Sunnah and the violence perpetrated by contemporary extremist organizations. But this is a distinction that must be a matter of textual analysis, legal theory and Prophetic precedent — not apologetic justification alone.

Second, scholars must uncover Qur'anic ethics of war as much as the Qur'anic ethics of peace. Verses on fighting in defense are not to be understood in isolation from verses on sanctity of life, prohibition of transgression, honoring treaties and reconciliation so that the moral coherence of the framework is clearly visible.

Third, Muslim intellectuals, educators and religious institutions ought to redeem the agreements of Madina and Hudaibiya as real world models of conflict management, plural governance and diplomatic restraint. Those precedents are particularly relevant in an age shaped by sectarianism, political polarization and misrepresentation of religion.

Fourth, engagement with non-Muslim society must draw on the Qur'anic model of rukhsah,

husn al mu'amalah, and ikhtilaf as a basis for wisdom and counsel in respectful dialog. Peaceful coexistence in this way is not a painful modern concession but an Islamic imperative grounded in scripture.

Fifth, the article should insist that this right to declare armed struggle cannot be owned by simply an individual, a faction or transnational militant groups. The historical and legal tradition understood warfare as a matter of regulated public authority, not freelance religious activism. It is imperative to state this point in order to combat extremist usage of Islamic concepts.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that the Islamic principles of conflict resolution, as embodied in the Pacts of Madina and Hudaibiya, offer a coherent, ethically grounded, and historically tested framework for peacebuilding, plural coexistence, and principled diplomacy. Far from endorsing aggression, the Qur'anic and Prophetic model privileges justice, restraint, dialogue, covenantal fidelity, religious freedom, collective security, and strategic patience as the foundations of a stable social and political order. The Pact of Madina established an inclusive constitutional order for a religiously and ethnically diverse society, while the Pact of Hudaibiya revealed the transformative power of negotiation, compromise, and long-term vision over impulsive confrontation. Together, these two agreements decisively challenge reductionist portrayals of Islam as a tradition of violence and instead affirm its profound commitment to reconciliation, lawful order, and human dignity. The study further shows that the Qur'anic philosophy of war cannot be understood through the actions of extremist groups, but only through the normative sources of Islam, which strictly regulate the use of force and prioritize peace whenever possible. Therefore, the Madina and Hudaibiya models remain not merely historical precedents but enduring intellectual and moral resources for contemporary debates on conflict resolution, interfaith engagement, international relations, and global peacebuilding. In this respect, Islamic conflict-resolution theory deserves to be recognized as a vital and sophisticated contribution to the modern scholarly discourse on sustainable peace and ethical governance.

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¹²Holy Quran 5:32.

¹³Holy Quran2:190.

¹⁴Holy Quran22:39.

¹⁵Holy Quran,Sura Fatha ,ayat 1 to 5.