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RHETORICAL FOUNDATIONS OF QUR'ANIC WAR ETHICS: AN INTEGRATING SEMITIC RHETORIC AND CLASSICAL BALAGHAH IN SURAH AL-BAQARAH VERSE 190–193

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Abstract

The ethics of warfare in the Qur'an remains a profoundly relevant subject amid contemporary conflicts that often disregard justice and humanity. Scholarly discussions on Qur'anic war ethics have generally emphasized aspects of jihad jurisprudence or thematic exegesis, while its rhetorical dimension as a reinforcement of ethical messages has been relatively overlooked. This study addresses that gap by analyzing surah al-Baqarah verse 190–193 through an integrated framework of Semitic Rhetoric and Arabic Rhetoric (Balaghah). The findings reveal a symmetrical structure that embodies core principles of Qur'anic war ethics: (1) warfare is strictly regulated as defensive, prohibiting unprovoked aggression; (2) proportionality and ethical restraint govern combat; (3) sacred spaces and times are respected; and (4) conflict ceases once hostility ends. This analysis shows that the rhetorical devices in Qur'anic verses addressing the ethics of warfare significantly enhance their clarity and moral persuasiveness. Consequently, the normative, rhetorical, and aesthetic dimensions of Qur'anic war ethics underscore their enduring relevance in confronting contemporary injustices. Furthermore, these ethical principles hold significant pedagogical potential, providing a framework for cultivating moral awareness, enhancing critical thinking, and promoting practices of peaceful conflict resolution anchored in justice and compassion.

Keywords: *Balaghah, Ethics of War, Qur'an, Semitic Rhetorical Analysis.*

Abstrak

Etika peperangan dalam Al-Qur'an tetap menjadi topik yang sangat relevan di tengah konflik kontemporer yang sering mengabaikan keadilan dan kemanusiaan. Diskusi akademik mengenai etika peperangan dalam Al-Qur'an umumnya menekankan aspek fikih jihad atau eksposisi tematik, sementara dimensi retorisnya sebagai penguatan pesan etis relatif kurang diperhatikan. Studi ini mengisi kekosongan tersebut dengan menganalisis surah al-Baqarah ayat 190–193 melalui kerangka terpadu Retorika Semit dan Retorika Arab *(Balaghah)*. Temuan menunjukkan adanya struktur simetris yang mencerminkan prinsip-prinsip inti etika peperangan dalam Al-Qur'an: (1) peperangan diatur

secara ketat sebagai tindakan defensif, melarang agresi tanpa alasan; (2) proporsionalitas dan pengendalian etis mengatur pertempuran; (3) ruang dan waktu suci dihormati; dan (4) konflik berhenti begitu permusuhan berakhir. Dengan demikian, dimensi normatif, retoris, dan estetis dari etika peperangan dalam Al-Qur'an menegaskan relevansinya yang berkelanjutan dalam menghadapi ketidakadilan kontemporer. Selain itu, prinsip-prinsip etis ini memiliki potensi pedagogis yang signifikan, menyediakan kerangka untuk mengembangkan kesadaran moral, meningkatkan keterampilan berpikir kritis, dan mendorong praktik resolusi konflik yang damai yang berlandaskan keadilan dan kasih sayang.

Kata Kunci: *Balaghah,* Etika Perang, Qur'an, *Semitic Rhetorical Analysis.*

Introduction

War and conflict remain among the most critical moral challenges confronting contemporary humanity.[1] Within the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an is often invoked to address what constitutes ethical warfare—its causes, limits, and demands. Verses such as QS. al-Baqarah [2]:190–193 are frequently cited for their prescriptions regarding combat, the prohibition of excess, and the obligation to cease hostilities when conditions for peace are met.[2] Yet while exegeses (tafsir) and jurisprudential legal theory (fiqh) have extensively treated norms of war in Islam,[3] less attention has been given to how rhetorical structure and literary devices function in the Qur'an to reinforce, nuance, and persuade concerning those norms. The central scholarly problem lies in the tendency to treat the ethical content of Qur'anic war verses primarily as normative legal instruction, while largely neglecting their rhetorical and aesthetic dimensions, which are integral to the ethical force and persuasive power of the text.

[1] Riza Karabag, 'Ethics of War and Peace: An Approach in the Matter of Religious Texts, International Law and Non-Governmental Organizations', *Mutefekkir,* 10(20), 2023: 483–84, doi:10.30523/mutefekkir.1405315.

[2] Muhammad Rusdi et al., 'Islam and the Ethics of War: Deconstructing Jihad through the Principle of Humanism in Theological Discourses', *Pharos Journal of Theology,* 105(5), 2024: 1, doi:10.46222/pharosjot.105.57.

[3] Muḥammad ibn Garir ibn Yazid al-Tabari, *Al-Tabari's 'Book of Jihad': A Translation from the Original Arabic*, trans. Yasir Ibrahim (Lewinston (N. Y.): E. Mellen Press, 2007); Al-Qurṭubi, *Al-Jami' Li Aḥkam al-Qur'An* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964).

Existing scholarship on Qur'anic war ethics has largely concentrated on *fiqh*-oriented exegesis that derives legal rulings from war-related verses,[4] as well as on thematic interpretations that situate *jihad* within comparative ethics and international law. Firestone traces the historical and theological origins of jihad, highlighting its varied meanings in early Islamic texts and situating it within broader Near Eastern contexts.[5] Khadduri then provides a legal-historical account of war and peace in Islamic jurisprudence, outlining classical rules, state practices, and the development of thought on offensive and defensive conduct.[6] In a more philosophical vein, Kelsay engages just-war theory and Muslim ethical debates, offering interpretive frameworks that seek to harmonize traditional sources with modern moral concerns.[7] From within the Islamic scholarly tradition, Wahbah al-Zuhayli provides a comprehensive juristic treatment of warfare in Islam, examining Qur'anic foundations and classical legal principles governing armed conflict, including restrictions on aggression, protection of non-combatants, and the ethical regulation of hostilities.[8] These contributions have been valuable in clarifying the legal, theological, and moral dimensions of warfare in Islam. Nevertheless, such approaches often privilege the normative dimension of the text, thereby overlooking its rhetorical and aesthetic aspects. By focusing primarily on juridical instruction, much of this literature risks reducing the Qur'anic discourse on warfare to prescriptive norms and underemphasizing the literary strategies through which its ethical imperatives are framed and communicated.

In a complementary direction, scholarship on Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) has demonstrated the literary coherence (*nazm*) of the Qur'an. Cuypers shows how Semitic rhetorical principles uncover the intricate structures and symmetrical patterns of Qur'anic

[4] Al-Qurṭubi, Al-Jami' Li Aḥkam al-Qur'An (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964); Wahbah Al-Zuḥayli, *Athar Al-Harb Fi al-Fiqh al-Islami*, 2nd edn (Damascus: al-Maktabah al-Ḥadithah, 1965).

[5] Reuven Firestone, *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Clark, N.J. : The Lawbook Exchange, 2006), http://archive.org/details/warpeaceinlawofi0000khad; John Kelsay, *Arguing the Just War in Islam* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), doi:10.2307/j.ctvjz81s7.

[6] Majid Khadduri, War and Peace in the Law of Islam (Clark, N.J. : The Lawbook Exchange, 2006).

[7] John Kelsay, Arguing the Just War in Islam (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2009), doi:10.2307/j.ctvjz81s7.

[8] Wahbah Al-Zuḥayli, Athar Al-Harb Fi al-Fiqh al-Islami, 2nd edn (Damascus: al-Maktabah al-Ḥadithah, 1965).

passages, challenging long-standing claims of textual disjointedness.[9] Building on this foundation, Asnawi highlighted the Semitic structures of QS. al-Qiyamah that reinforce eschatological motifs,[10] while Asnawi, Aziz, and Haris extended Cuypers' rhetorical analysis to QS. al-Ma'idah, demonstrating how rhetorical structuring elucidates thematic unity and coherence in the Qur'an.[11]

Parallel to this, studies of Balaghah have illuminated the Qur'an's aesthetic and persuasive dimensions. Classical rhetorical theory, particularly the work of ʿAbd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, laid the foundations for understanding Qur'anic eloquence through the concept of nazm, which emphasizes the relational arrangement of words and meanings as the source of rhetorical power and semantic coherence.[12] Building on this classical framework, contemporary studies have examined specific rhetorical devices in the Qur'an. Tabassum analyzes *iltifat* in QS. al-Baqarah,[13] Al-Smadi investigates rhetorical questions and their translation challenges,[14] and Patterson traces the appropriation of Qur'anic metaphors in jihadist magazines, illustrating how sacred rhetoric is recontextualized for ideological ends.[15] Hussein examines the use of *tashbih* in classical Arabic texts and its resonance in the Qur'an,[16] while Stepanova and Hachim explore the rendering of Qur'anic rhetorical devices into English and Russian with attention to their social implications.[17] Taken

[9] Michel Cuypers, 'Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies,* 13(1), 2011: 1–24, doi:10.3366/jqs.2011.0003.

[10] Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, 'Penerapan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) Pada Surah Al-Qiyamah', *Mutawatir,* 8(1) 2018: 143–69, doi:10.15642/mutawatir.2018.8.1.143-169.

[11] Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, Husein Aziz, and Achmad Murtafi Haris, 'Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Ma'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)', *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis,* 23(1), 2022: 49–68, doi:10.14421/qh.2022.2301-03.

[12] ʿAbd al-Qahir al-Jurjani, *Dalaʾil Al-Iʿjaz Fi ʿIlm al-Maʿani* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-Madani, 1992).

[13] N. Tabassum, 'Rhetorical Devices in the Holy Qur'an: Grammatical Shift and Communicated Subject Matters in Surah Al-Baqarah', *Hamdard Islamicus,* 44(2), 2021: 101–20.

[14] Hadeel M. Al-Smadi, 'Challenges in Translating Rhetorical Questions in the Holy Qur'an: A Comparative Study', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies,* 12(3), 2022: 583–90, doi:10.17507/tpls.1203.19.

[15] Katie J. Patterson, 'Under the Shadow of Swords: The Rhetoric of Jihad A Corpus-Based Critical Analysis of Religious Metaphors in Jihadist Magazines', *Pragmatics and Society,* 13(3), 2022: 477–500, doi:10.1075/ps.21017.pat.

[16] Ali Ahmad Hussein, 'Poetry and the Qurʾan: The Use of Tashbih Particles in Classical Arabic Texts', *Religions,* 14(10), 2023: 1326, doi:10.3390/rel14101326.

[17] Valentina V. Stepanova and Mohammed Ahmed Hachim, 'Rhetorical Devices of the Qur'an and Their Translation into English and Russian: Patterns of Social Behavior in the Focus Creators', *SKASE Journal of Translation and Interpretation,* 18(1), 2025: 2–19, doi:10.33542/JTI2025-1-01.

together, these works establish that rhetorical structure and literary artistry are integral to Qur'anic meaning and ethical force.

Despite extensive legal and thematic analyses, and despite advances in rhetorical studies of the Qur'an, no study has yet offered an integrated rhetorical analysis of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193 that combines the structural insights of SRA with the stylistic depth of Balaghah. What remains underdeveloped is a holistic analysis of the entire passage (2: 190–193) that integrates SRA (examining symmetry, balance, and opposition across members, segments, pieces, and parts) with a focused analysis of the Balaghah devices that structure the passage, such as *jinas, isti'arah, majaz mursal, tibaq, iltifat,* and *mushakalah*. By combining SRA's macro-structural analysis of coherence with Balaghah's micro-stylistic attention to aesthetic devices, this study offers a holistic rhetorical-ethical reading that neither approach could achieve in isolation.

So, this study is guided by three main research questions. First, what is the internal rhetorical structure of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193) when analyzed through the framework of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), particularly in terms of members, segments, pieces, and parts and their patterns of balance and opposition? Second, which classical Arabic rhetorical devices (balaghah) appear in these verses, and how do they contribute to the aesthetic and persuasive expression of Qurʾanic war ethics? Third, how does the integration of SRA and balaghah provide a deeper understanding of the ethical principles of warfare in the Qurʾan?

The purpose of this study is to address the identified gap by offering a combined rhetorical-ethical reading of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193. It treats the passage as a unified rhetorical whole, mapping its structural symmetry through Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) and identifying and explicating its Balaghah devices. SRA is particularly suitable for analyzing legal passages such as war verses because Qur'anic normative instructions are often articulated within carefully structured textual units rather than as isolated legal statements. By examining the relations between members, segments, pieces, and parts, SRA reveals patterns of symmetrical, contrast, and progression that organize the ethical message of the passage. In the case of war verses, such structural relations help clarify how

commands, restrictions, and conditions interact, for example, how injunctions to fight are framed by prohibitions against aggression and by directives to cease hostilities when the adversary withdraws. This structural perspective helps avoid atomistic readings that isolate individual commands and instead situates them within the broader rhetorical framework that regulates their meaning and ethical scope. Through this approach, the study shows that the Qur'anic articulation of war ethics is not merely normative and legal but also rhetorical and aesthetic, with persuasive force grounded in both structure and style. Furthermore, it shows how this rhetorical dimension can enrich contemporary discourse on warfare ethics, particularly in contexts where modern practices diverge from the ethical principles articulated in the Qur'an. By integrating SRA and Balaghah, this study contributes to Qur'anic studies, advances scholarship on Islamic war ethics, and provides new interpretive tools for contemporary debates on justice and peace.

Methods

The methodology of this study employs a qualitative textual analysis that integrates Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) and Arabic rhetoric (*Balaghah*) as complementary approaches to the interpretation of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193. Qualitative textual analysis, as Creswell emphasize, is well-suited for the study of religious texts, since it prioritizes meaning, thematic coherence, and rhetorical strategies over quantification.[18] Within this framework, the study applies SRA as articulated by Cuypers, who demonstrated how Qur'anic passages exhibit literary coherence through hierarchical structures of members, segments, pieces, and parts, which are further organized into three principal rhetorical constructions: parallel, concentric, and mirror structures.[19] Structural mapping at these levels enables the discovery of symmetrical and antithetical arrangements. By drawing on these foundations, the study treats the verses as a unified

[18] John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4th edn (Los Angeles, Calif.: SAGE, 2014), 4.

[19] Michel Cuypers, *A Qur'anic Apocalypse: A Reading of the Thirty-Three Last Surahs of the Qur'an*, trans. Jerry Ryan (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2018), xxvii–xxix.

rhetorical whole, continuing the line of inquiry advanced by scholars who emphasize Qur'anic nazm and rhetorical unity.

In parallel, the study engages Arabic rhetoric (balaghah) to uncover the micro-stylistic devices that enhance the ethical and persuasive force of the passage. The identification and classification of rhetorical devices follow the classical balaghah tradition, particularly as articulated in works such as al-Sakkaki's Miftaḥ al-'Ulum and al-Qazwini's al-Idaḥ fi 'Ulum al-Balaghah, which provide the standard taxonomy of figures such as jinas (paronomasia), istiʿarah (metaphor), majaz mursal (metonymy), iltifat (grammatical shift), and ṭibaq (antithesis). While the classification of these devices follows the classical framework, their rhetorical and communicative functions are interpreted with reference to modern studies of Arabic rhetoric, including works such as Hussein Abdul-Raof's Arabic Rhetoric: A Pragmatic Analysis. Through this combined approach, the study treats balaghah devices not merely as ornamental features but as stylistic strategies that intensify meaning, sharpen ethical contrasts, and enhance the persuasive impact of the Qurʾanic discourse. This approach resonates with Kennedy's conception of rhetoric as a universal form of communicative energy, mental and emotional force transmitted from speaker or writer to audience, underscoring that stylistic devices directly serve persuasive and ethical purposes.[20] By embedding these stylistic insights within the macro-structural framework uncovered by SRA, the study demonstrates the interplay of structure and style in shaping Qur'anic war ethics.

Discussion

1. A Rhetorical Study of QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193 from Semitic Rhetoric and Arabic Balaghah Perspectives

Verses 190–193 of QS. al-Baqarah constitute a cohesive passage that rhetorically demonstrates a balanced structure, characteristic of Semitic literary style. This passage is organized into three principal parts, each composed of interrelated pieces, segments, and

[20] George Alexander Kennedy, *Comparative Rhetoric: An Historical and Cross-Cultural Introduction* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998).

members. Part I encompasses verse 190 through the initial portion of verse 191 (191a), Part II centers on Piece C (verse 191b), and Part III includes verses 191c, 192, and 193.

Table 1. The Structure of Part I, Piece A and B.

Verse	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Segment	Piece	Part
QS. al-Baqarah: 190	*Wa qatilu* (Fight)	*fi sabilillahi* (in Allah's cause)	*alladzina yuqatilunakum* (against those who fight you)	1	A (parallel structure: AB/A'B')	Part I (Parallel Structure: AB/A′B′, with Segment 1 corresponding to Segment 3, and Segment 2 corresponding to Segment 4).
	wa la ta'tadu (but do not overstep the limits)	*innallaha* (Indeed, Allah)	*la yuhibbul-mu'tadin*. (Allah does not love those who overstep the limits.)	2		
Verse	**Member 1**	**Member 2**	**Member 3**	**Segment**	**Piece**	
QS. al-Baqarah: 191a	*Waqtuluhum* (And kill them)	*haytsu tsaqiftumuhum* (wherever you encounter them)	-	3	B (parallel structure, AB/A'B')	
	wa akhrijuhum (and drive them out)	*min haytsu akhrajukum* (from where they drove you out.)	-	4		

Part I (verses 190–191a) consists of two pieces that together establish the Qur'anic ethic of defensive warfare. Piece A (2: 190) commands believers to fight those who initiate aggression while prohibiting any transgression of moral limits, and Piece B (2: 191a) instructs them to confront the disbelievers wherever they are found and to expel them from the places they had expelled the Muslims. Both pieces emphasize proportionality, legitimizing combat only as a defensive response bounded by ethical restraint. From the perspective of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA), verse 2: 190 exhibits a parallel structure in which commands and prohibitions correspond symmetrically *"fight in the way of Allah"*

contrasts with *"do not overstep the limits."* Each member mirrors its counterpart: human action (*fi sabilillah*) is grounded in divine authority (*innallaha*), and ethical reciprocity links *"those who fight you"* with *"Allah does not love transgressors."* Collectively, this balanced composition articulates a coherent moral framework in which warfare is sanctioned only under divine guidance, governed by justice, and restrained by mercy.

This parallelism functions rhetorically to establish a balance within the legal framework: it affirms the legitimacy of warfare while simultaneously imposing ethical constraints. By juxtaposing the command to fight with the prohibition against transgression, the text positions jihad not as a vehicle for aggressive expansion but as a defensible and morally sanctioned act.[21] Furthermore, this parallel structure integrates a spiritual dimension, emphasized through the phrase fi sabilillah, with a theological emphasis underscored by inna Allah, thereby framing warfare in Islam as not merely a political or strategic instrument but as an ethically guided act of worship.[22] Classical exegetes such as al-Qurṭubi interpret this verse as the first Qur'anic command concerning warfare, yet one that is immediately conditioned by moral restraint: "Fight those who fight you, and do not transgress—meaning, fight only those in a state of hostility against you, and do not kill women, children, or monks".[23] His commentary underscores that the Qur'anic expression qatilu implies mutuality and defense rather than aggression, and that divine disapproval—"Allah does not love those who overstep the limits"—anchors the legal command within an ethical and theological boundary. Thus, read through the lens of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis, QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190 articulates a foundational ethical framework for warfare that balances juridical legitimacy with moral limitation, a principle that subsequently underpins the Qur'anic discourse on the ethics of armed conflict.

The expression *la ta'tadu* (do not overstep the limits) is paired with *al-mu'tadin* (those who overstep the limits) through *jinas al-ishtiqaq* (derivative paronomasia) in Arabic Rhetoric (*Balaghah)*. This morphological and phonetic parallelism links the prohibition

[21] Yahya Sabbaghchi, 'Starting a War: Advised or Forbidden? An Islamic Viewpoint', in *The Changing Places and Faces of War*, ed. Sarah A. Wagner and Peter Mario Kreuter (Brill, 2019), 137–54, doi:10.1163/9781848882966_008.

[22] Muhammad Rusdi et al., *'Islam and the Ethics of War'*, 1.

[23] Al-Qurṭubi, *Al-Jami' Li Aḥkam al-Qur'An*, vol. 2 (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), 348.

with its moral referent, creating both rhythmic and semantic harmony. Such a feature enhances the persuasive force of the injunction by simultaneously articulating the command and exemplifying its ethical boundary. The verse also employs *raddu al-'ajz 'ala al-sadr* (the return of the ending to the beginning), with the terminal phrase *al-mu'tadin* mirroring the opening *ta'tadu*, producing a circular rhetorical structure.[24]

The same verse further exemplifies metaphorical expression through *fi sabilillah* (in the way of Allah), demonstrating *isti'arah tasrihiyyah* (explicit metaphor). The term *al-sabil* (the way) functions metaphorically to signify the cause or religion of Allah, transforming an abstract theological concept into a tangible path or journey. This imagery evokes purposeful movement and moral direction, sacralizing the act of struggle (*qital*) while situating it within a spiritual trajectory toward divine obedience and justice. Thus, the verse integrates ethical, theological, and motivational dimensions, emphasizing that warfare within Islamic principles is both morally bounded and spiritually oriented.

In Piece B, the text divides into two imperative segments. Segment 3, *"waqtuluhum haythu thaqiftumuhum"* (kill them wherever you encounter them), delivers a direct command affirming the legitimacy of warfare against aggressors. Segment 4, *"wa akhrijuhum min haythu akhrajukum"* (and drive them out from where they drove you out), mirrors this structure but emphasizes expulsion as just reciprocity. Both segments are syntactically and semantically parallel, illustrating a key rhetorical principle—the correspondence between two commanded actions. The first validates combat, the second legitimizes expulsion, and together they form a cohesive legal and moral framework grounded in proportional retaliation against aggression.

Ibn Ashur provides a nuanced interpretation of the imperative *"waqtuluhum haythu thaqiftumuhum"*, clarifying that the verse does not sanction unrestricted killing but applies specifically within the context of active hostility. He explicitly states: *"fa al-ma'na: waqtuluhum haythu thaqiftumuhum in qatalukum"*—"the meaning is: kill them wherever you encounter them, if they fight you."[25] This qualification is pivotal, as it anchors the

[24] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 3rd edn, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dar al-Nibras, 2023), 96.
[25] Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Taḥrir Wa al-Tanwir*, vol. 2 (Tunis: al-Dar al-Tunisiyyah li al-Nashr, 1984), 201.

command within the defensive ethics of warfare rather than aggression. By emphasizing *"in qatalukum"*, Ibn Ashur restricts the Qur'anic authorization of combat to circumstances of provoked conflict, thereby aligning the legal directive with moral restraint. His interpretation thus reinforces the Qur'an's overarching principle that warfare is legitimate only as a response to aggression, reflecting the balance between divine command and ethical limitation that underpins the entire passage.

Further, verse 2:191 features *jinas muharraf* (imperfect paronomasia) between *akh'rijuhum* (expel them) and *akh'rajukum* (they expelled you), establishing a phonetic and conceptual symmetry that reinforces the contrast between oppressors' actions and the divine command. Complementing this, the verse employs *majaz mursal* (metonymy) in the phrase "near the Sacred Mosque," where the location refers to the broader Sacred Precinct (*al-haram*), emphasizing both linguistic conciseness and the ethical sanctity of the site. Antithetical parallelism (*tibaq al-salb*) further structures the verse in the juxtaposition of "do not fight them" with "they fight you," highlighting that combat is permitted only as a defensive measure. Finally, the temporal shift (*iltifat al-zaman*) in "But if they fight you, then kill them" presents the event in past tense, implying near certainty of aggression and preparing believers both morally and strategically for the necessity of defensive action.[26]

From the perspective of Qur'anic ethics, this parallelism is also significant in that it demonstrates Islam's view of balance between different forms of defensive action. The text does not treat one as more lenient or severe than the other but rather equalizes them as integral components of a legitimate self-defense strategy. Accordingly, the SRA reveals that Piece B constitutes a set of parallel imperatives that consolidate the normative foundation of *jihad*, articulating two equally valid legal injunctions while simultaneously preparing the rhetorical ground for subsequent normative elaborations in the following segments of the passage.

[26] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 1: 97.

Table 2. The Structure of Part II, Piece C.

Verse	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Segment	Piece	Part
QS. al-Baqarah: 191b	*wal-fitnatu* (for persecution is)	*asyaddu min al-qatl* (more serious than killing)	-	5	C	Part II

Part II centers on Piece C (QS 2: 191b), which consists of a single segment: *"wal-fitnatu ashaddu mina al-qatl"* (for persecution is more serious than killing). This serves as the pivot or axis of the entire passage. Its central placement emphasizes the core value underpinning all preceding and subsequent commands—namely, that religious oppression and expulsion from faith are more grievous than physical death.

Ibn ʿAshur elucidated that *al-fitnah* was considered more severe than killing because "its harm is recurrent, unlike the pain of killing," and he further explained that it also referred to *"al-fitnah al-muta waqqa'ah,"* the anticipated persecution, such as the threat that the polytheists might prevent Muslims from entering the Sacred House or betray them upon their arrival in Mecca. He added that this statement served to declare the Muslims' justification for fighting and to instill righteous indignation in their hearts so that they would remain prepared to defend themselves. Moreover, Ibn 'Ashur concluded that *al-fitnah* in this verse did not exclusively denote expulsion from one's homeland, for "*al-tadhyil yajibu an yakuna a'amma mina al-kalam al-mudhil*"—the concluding clause must have a broader meaning than the specific statement it follows.[27] Hence, this verse provided not merely a legal rationale but a profound theological foundation: warfare in this context was justified as a defensive response to sustained or anticipated persecution that threatened the very freedom of faith.

[27] Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Taḥrir Wa al-Tanwir*, 2: 202.

In Arabic Rhetoric, *wal-fitnatu ashaddu mina al-qatl* "and fitnah is worse than killing" illustrates the principles of completion and precaution (*al-takmil wa al-ihtiras*)[28] or employs *fann al-tadzyil*, emphasizing the severity of persecution relative to physical killing. Here, *fitnah* encompasses acts such as associating partners with Allah in the Sacred Precinct or the social and psychological harms inflicted upon believers, including exile or oppression. This micro-stylistic choice highlights that persecution exerts a more profound and enduring impact than death, affecting both the soul and the moral order of the community. Additionally, the verse functions as *badal* (substitution), clarifying the command "And expel them" and situating the injunction within its proper ethical and legal context. The same verse employs simile (*tamthil*) in a proverbial form, connecting the Qur'anic instruction to familiar experiential knowledge, thereby enhancing its rhetorical resonance and clarity for the audience.

Table 3. The Structure of Part III, Piece D and E.

Verse	Member 1	Member 2	Member 3	Segment	Piece	Part
QS. al-Baqarah: 191c	*Wa la tuqatiluhum* (Do not fight them)	*'inda al-Masjidil-Haram* (at the Sacred Mosque/Masjidilharam)	*hatta yuqatilukum fih* (unless they f ight you there)	6	D (parallel structure)	Part III (Concentric Mirror Structure: AB/C/B′A′, with Segment 6 corresponding to Segment 10, Segment 7 corresponding to Segment 9, and Segment 8 positioned as the central pivot of the text).
	Fa in qatalukum (If they do fight you)	*Faqtuluhum* (kill them)	*kadzalika jaza'ul-kafirin*. (this is what such disbelievers deserve)	7		
Verse	**Member 1**	**Member 2**	**Member 3**	**Segment**	**Piece**	
QS. al-Baqarah: 192	*Fa in intahaw* (but if they stop)	*fa innallaha* (then Allah)	*ghafurun rahim* (Allah is most	8	E (concentric	

[28] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 1: 96.

			forgiving and merciful)		structure)	
QS. al-Baqarah: 193	*Wa qatiluhum* (Fight them)	*hatta la takuna fitnatun* (until there is no more persecution)	*wa yakuna ad-dinu lillah* (and worship is devoted to God)	9		
	Fa in intahaw (If they cease hostilities)	*fa la 'udwana* (be no [further] hostility)	*illa 'ala azh-zhalimin* (except towards aggressors)	10		

Part III covers verses 2: 191c–193, comprising Piece D and Piece E. Piece D includes two segments: the first states that if the enemy ceases hostility, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful; the second sets forgiveness as the moral limit of conflict. Piece E (2: 193) consists of three segments: a command to fight until persecution ends, an affirmation that religion belongs to Allah alone, and a reminder that fighting must stop once the enemy desists—ending with the principle that enmity applies only to wrongdoers. Structurally, Part III follows the pattern AB/C/B′A′, where Segments 6 and 10, 7 and 9 correspond, and Segment 8 forms the central pivot.

The first segment conveys a clear prohibition: believers may not fight near the Sacred Mosque unless attacked. It upholds the sanctity of the sacred site and limits warfare to defensive purposes, reflecting the Arab recognition of its inviolability. Al-Razi explains that the command *"wa-la tuqatiluhum 'inda al-Masjid al-Haram hatta yuqatilukum fihi"* clarifies that this condition—refraining from combat unless provoked—remains binding in this sacred area, though it once applied more broadly to all combat, including that during

the sacred months.[29] His commentary thus highlights the enduring ethical constraint that war, even when sanctioned, must not transgress the sanctity of divinely protected spaces.

The second segment states the consequence of the exception: if Muslims are attacked within the Sacred Mosque, they are justified in self-defense. The command "then fight them" authorizes a proportionate response, affirming that retaliation is just recompense for those who initiated hostilities. Ibn Kathir interprets *"la tuqatiluhum 'inda al-Masjid al-Haram illa an yabda'ukum bi-l-qital fihi"* as establishing the moral principle of defensive warfare—permitting believers to fight aggressors within the sacred precinct *daf'an lis-siyal* (to repel assault) only after being attacked. He connects this ruling to the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, when the Prophet's Companions pledged to defend themselves after Quraysh and their allies prepared for war until God restrained further fighting.[30] Structurally, these two segments run in parallel: the first establishes a prohibitive norm along with its condition for exception, while the second explicates the practical and historical manifestation of that exception, thus reinforcing the Qur'an's balance between sanctity and the right to defense.

Piece E (2:192–193) displays a concentric structure under SRA, balancing the restriction of warfare with its higher moral aim—the establishment of justice and the removal of oppression. The passage begins with a normative statement that fighting must cease once the enemy withdraws. The phrase *"fa in intahaw fa innallaha ghafurun rahim"* highlights Allah's mercy and forgiveness, showing that warfare in Islam is not for expansion but is regulated by divine compassion. Al-Tabari explains that this clause conveys God's pardon toward those who end hostilities and repent, granting them forgiveness and rewards equal to those of the obedient, as they return from disobedience to divine love.[31] This interpretation situates divine mercy as the ultimate horizon of Qur'anic legislation on warfare, emphasizing that the goal of jihad is the restoration of moral order through repentance and divine reconciliation rather than perpetual conflict.

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[29] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatih Al-Ghayb*, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dar Ihya' al-Turath al-'Arabiy, 2000), 210.

[30] Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Qur'an al-'Azim*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1998), 338.

[31] Ibn Jarir al-Tabari, *Jami' al-Bayan 'An Ta'wil Ay al-Qur'an*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dar al-Hijr, 2001), 298–99.

In Arabic Rhetoric, the attributes of God are intensified through *sighat mubalaghah* (intensive morphological forms) in *ghafur* (All-Forgiving) and *rahim* (Most Merciful), following the patterns *fa'ul* and *fa'il*. These forms stress the constancy, completeness, and enduring nature of divine mercy and forgiveness, reinforcing the theological significance of God's attributes while rhetorically providing reassurance amidst conflict.[32]

The central section of the verse defines the moral purpose of warfare: *"wa qatiluhum hatta la takuna fitnatun wa yakuna ad-dinu lillah."* The Qur'an thus affirms that war should never serve political or material aims but must pursue the eradication of *fitnah*—persecution and the suppression of religious freedom. Al-Razi interprets *fitnah* here as *shirk* (polytheism) and *kufr* (disbelief), explaining that the polytheists persecuted the Prophet's Companions in Mecca, forcing some to flee to Abyssinia, and continued their oppression after the migration to Medina to coerce believers back into disbelief. This context clarifies that the command aims to prevent religious coercion and safeguard believers' freedom of faith.[33] In Arabic Rhetoric, the verse exemplifies *tibaq al-salb*, juxtaposing the negation of fitnah with the affirmative establishment of religion for Allah. This rhetorical contrast links the cessation of persecution with the realization of divine authority, demonstrating that social justice and religious order are inseparably intertwined.[34] Thus, Qur'anic warfare carries an ethical horizon in which jihad aims to protect fundamental human rights and uphold freedom of belief under the sovereignty of God. This section forms the concentric center of the rhetorical structure, serving as the thematic apex that links the opening and closing elements.

The closing segment reaffirms the Qur'anic ethic of restraint in warfare: *"fa in intahaw fa la 'udwana illa 'ala az-zalimin."* The repeated conditional clause "if they cease" mirrors the opening, emphasizing that war must end once hostility ceases. Aggression is justified only against wrongdoers, while any continuation beyond that is prohibited. Ibn

[32] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 1: 97.
[33] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *Mafatiḥ Al-Ghayb*, 5: 291.
[34] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 1: 97.

'Ashur explains that *"fa la 'udwana illa 'ala az-zalimin"* serves as an implied response to the condition—if the enemy refrains from fighting, believers must not act on suspicion or initiate conflict, since aggression is lawful only toward oppressors. He adds that *'udwan* may mean "attack" or "injustice," and its pairing with *az-zalimin* reflects a rhetorical device of *mushakalah taqdiriyyah* (implied stylistic parallelism).[35] It seems that Ibn 'Ashur sought to emphasize that the Qur'an articulates warfare within both moral and linguistic harmony—affirming that combat is legitimate only as a just response to oppression, never as an act of unprovoked aggression.

In this way, the concentric structure of the verse presents a balanced integration of mercy, justice, and the limitation of violence, portraying the Qur'anic ethics of war not as a legitimation of violence, but as a moral regulation designed to mitigate the destructive consequences of conflict and to guide humanity toward peace as its ultimate goal.

The verse also employs *majaz mursal* in the expression *fa-la 'udwana illa 'ala az-zalimin* ("there can be no [further] hostility except toward aggressors"), wherein *al-'udwan* (hostility) is used to denote *makafat al-zalimin* (retribution against wrongdoers). In other words, Muhammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi explains, the cause is mentioned in place of the effect, emphasizing that combat is sanctioned only as a response to aggression. As the expression conveys that *al-'udwan* signifies the just recompense for oppression, not unprovoked violence.[36] Similarly, Wahbah al-Zuhayli observed that the term *al-'udwan* is employed here express *al-mushakalah*, that is, a stylistic correspondence in wording despite divergence in meaning: "the requital for aggression is termed aggression." Thus, what is done to the wrongdoers is linguistically called *'udwan* only because it mirrors their initial hostility, even though, in essence, it is an act of just retribution.[37] Through this layered rhetorical usage—combining *majaz mursal* and *mushakalah*—the verse encapsulates the

[35] Ibn 'Ashur, *Al-Taḥrir Wa al-Tanwir*, 2: 209.

[36] Muḥammad 'Afifuddin Dimyaṭi, *Al-Shamil Fi Balaghati al-Qur'an*, 1: 97.

[37] Wahbah Al-Zuḥayli, *Al-Tafsir al-Munir Fi al-'Aqidah Wa al-Shari'ah Wa al-Manhaj*, vol. 2 (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1991), 175.

Qur'an's moral precision, portraying legitimate warfare not as aggression but as the measured and divinely sanctioned response to injustice.

Collectively, these verses illustrate a highly nuanced application of micro-stylistic devices—including paronomasia, antithetical parallelism, temporal shifts, and metaphorical forms—integrated with ethical and theological guidance. The Qur'anic text thus achieves a sophisticated balance between linguistic artistry, moral instruction, and strategic directive, ensuring that the injunctions on warfare are communicated with clarity, persuasiveness, and ethical precision.

The rhetorical configuration of QS al-Baqarah (2): 190–193 exemplifies the distinctive ring composition characteristic of Semitic Rhetoric. This passage comprises three interdependent parts— an initial parallelism (Part I: piece A–B), a single central pivot (Part II: piece C), and a final concentric pattern (Part III: piece D–E)—arranged concentrically around a central axis that functions as the semantic pivot of the entire unit. Through this symmetrical organization, the passage manifests the essential features of Semitic rhetorical design: an opening parallelism, a singular central focus, and a concluding correspondence that reaffirms and completes the initial theme.

Table 4. The structure of passage

Part	Piece	Verse
I	A	*Wa **qatilu** fi **sabilillahi** alladhina yuqatilunakum wa la ta'tadu; inna Allaha la yuhibbu al-mu'tadin.*[190] **Fight** in **God's** cause against those who fight you, but do not overstep the limits: God does not love those who overstep the limits.
	B	*Waqtuluhum haythu thaqiftumuhum wa akhrijuhum min haythu akhrajukum*; [191a] Kill them wherever you encounter them, and drive them out from where they drove you out,
II	C	*wal-fitnatu ashaddu mina al-qatl*; [191b] for persecution is more serious than killing.
III	B'	*wa la tuqatiluhum 'inda al-Masjidil-Haram hatta yuqatilukum fih; fa in qatalukum faqtuluhum; kadhalika jaza'u al-kafirin*. [191c] Do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque unless they fight you there. If they do fight you, kill them— this is what such disbelievers deserve–
	A'	*Fa in intahaw fa inna Allaha ghafurun rahim.* [192] *Wa **qatiluhum** hatta la takuna fitnatun wa yakuna ad-dinu **lillah**; fa in intahaw fa la 'udwana*

		illa 'ala az-zalimin. [193] but if they stop, then God is most forgiving and merciful. **Fight** them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted to **God**. If they cease hostilities, there can be no [further] hostility, except towards aggressors.[38]

Part I conveys the fundamental principle of warfare: believers are commanded to fight only those who initiate hostilities and are strictly prohibited from transgressing limits. This normative injunction forms the opening frame of the rhetorical structure, which later finds its counterpart in Part III. In this closing section, the command to fight is reiterated but with greater specificity—war is to be waged only to remove *fitnah* (religious persecution) and must cease immediately once the enemy desists, except against those who persist in injustice. Thus, Part I and Part III constitute the outer pair (A–A′), jointly conveying the core message that warfare in Islam is bounded and defensive in nature.

Furthermore, the second segment of Part I (the opening of v. 191) introduces a principle of reciprocity, requiring Muslims to resist the enemy as they themselves have been expelled. This section corresponds to the opening of Part III (the end of v. 191), which articulates a similar principle in a specific context—namely, that fighting in *al-Masjid al-Haram* is permissible only if the enemy initiates aggression. These corresponding segments (B–B′) reinforce the Qur'anic principle of just warfare, in which resistance is justified solely as a response to prior aggression.

At the center of this composition lies Part II, which contains the statement *"wal-fitnatu asyaddu mina al-qatl"* (persecution is worse than killing). This declaration functions as both the rhetorical and theological pivot of the passage. According to the principles of Semitic Rhetoric, such a central position is deliberate, revealing the core purpose of the entire discourse. As the organizing axis of the composition, this phrase articulates the moral foundation of jihad: defending faith and removing oppression rather than pursuing aggression or territorial expansion. Its semantic and structural influence extends to every segment and piece of the text, linking the surrounding commands of warfare into a coherent

[38] M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an: A New Translation*, Oxford World's Classics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21–22.

whole. Each directive finds its justification through this pivotal idea, making the central statement the point from which meaning radiates outward and to which all elements return. Collectively, the passage forms a mirror composition—A–B–C–B′–A′—in which the central clause anchors the rhetorical symmetry and theological unity of the discourse.

Thematically, the Qur'an does not present war as an end in itself but rather as a means for self-defense, the establishment of justice, and the elimination of oppression.[39] The ethical values emphasized are proportionality, the prohibition of transgression, respect for forgiveness, and the restriction of enmity only to those who commit injustice.[40] This rhetorical analysis demonstrates that the Qur'anic discourse on warfare is deeply grounded in moral principles, creating a balance between the historical reality of conflict and the universal values of humanity.

2. **Contemporary Ethical Implications of Qur'anic War Injunctions in QS. 2: 190-193**

Within the Qur'anic discourse on warfare, QS. al-Baqarah 2:190–193 articulates one of the most ethically nuanced paradigms of conflict in religious scripture. The passage does not merely regulate combat but redefines it within a moral, theological, and rhetorical framework. At its core lies a moral vision in which warfare is not a pursuit of domination or political gain but a means of defending human dignity and religious freedom. Through the interplay of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) and classical Arabic rhetoric (Balaghah), the Qur'an constructs a discourse that transcends legal prescription, shaping a timeless ethic of restraint, justice, and compassion.

This integration reveals that Qur'anic war ethics are profoundly rhetorical rather than merely juridical. The Semitic structure provides the architectural balance that sustains the moral logic of the passage, while Balaghah animates this logic through persuasive eloquence and emotive force. Together, these rhetorical systems construct a holistic ethical framework: warfare is legitimized only by justice, restrained by ethics, and sanctified by

[39] Khadijah Mohd, Mustaffa Abdullah, and Abdul Karim Ali, 'Idealism of Jihad and War from the Quranic Perspective', *AlBayan,* 15(2), 2017: 240–41, doi:10.1163/22321969-12340053.

[40] Ahmad Baidowi et al., 'Promoting Qur'anic Verses That Reject Violence', *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies,* 10(6), 2021: 23–24, doi:10.36941/ajis-2021-0150; Muhammad Rusdi et al., 'Islam and the Ethics of War', 1–2.

divine purpose. The Qur'anic discourse thus anticipates modern notions of ethical warfare and humanitarian law by insisting that armed struggle must always serve a higher moral cause and remain bounded by compassion and proportionality.[41]

In verse 2: 190, the Qur'an initiates its ethical directive with a symmetrical command: *"*Fight in God's cause against those who fight you, but do not overstep the limits.*"* The Semitic structure establishes a moral equilibrium between obligation and restraint—permitting combat only as a response to aggression—while the eloquent brevity of *la ta'tadu* (do not overstep the limits) encapsulates the entire moral code of war. This rhetorical economy enshrines the principle of proportionality, which resonates with contemporary humanitarian norms forbidding excessive force or harm to non-combatants.[42] The verse thus anticipates the ethical principles that underpin modern international humanitarian law, grounding them not in secular reason but in divine command.

The rhetorical coherence between structure (SRA) and style (Balaghah) in verse 2: 191 further amplifies the ethical balance. Structurally, the verse frames legal reciprocity —*"kill them wherever you encounter them"*— within a rhetorical symmetry that mirrors moral causality: the response is conditioned by prior aggression. Stylistically, the rhythmic parallelism and phonetic symmetry evoke gravity and restraint rather than triumphalism. This balance transforms the verse from a license for violence into a statement of moral justice, emphasizing that the objective of combat is not annihilation but the restoration of peace and moral order.[43]

Verse 2: 192 deepens this ethic through a rhetorical turn from confrontation to reconciliation: *"*but if they stop, then God is most forgiving and merciful.*"* The Semitic structure, marked by the conditional *fa in intahaw*, delineates a moral boundary that signals the cessation of combat upon the enemy's withdrawal. Simultaneously, the stylistic invocation of divine mercy *(ghafur rahim)* tempers juridical justice with compassion. The

[41] Muhammad Rusdi et al., *'Islam and the Ethics of War'*, 1–2.

[42] René Provost and Vishakha Wijenayake, 'Collateral Kids: Weighing the Lives of Children in Targeting', *Leiden Journal of International Law,* 37(4), 2024: 1018–38, doi:10.1017/S0922156524000219.

[43] Liyakat Takim, 'Peace and War in the Qur'an and Juridical Literature: A Comparative Perspective', *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare,* 38(2), 2011: 142, doi:10.15453/0191-5096.3604.

rhetorical transition from law to mercy mirrors the Qur'an's moral logic—conflict is legitimate only as long as oppression persists, but reconciliation becomes obligatory once hostility ends. This conditional ethic prefigures modern restorative justice paradigms, emphasizing reconciliation over retribution.[44]

By integrating Semitic Rhetorical structure and Balaghah, verse 2: 193 achieves both logical and moral completeness: *"*Fight them until there is no more persecution, and worship is devoted to God. If they cease hostilities, there can be no [further] hostility, except towards aggressors.*"* Structurally, the verse forms a circular composition bounded by mercy and justice; stylistically, it refines the ethical message through contrast, metonymy, and lexical symmetry. The key phrase *la ʿudwana illa ʿala al-zalimin* ("there can be no [further] hostility, except towards aggressors") encapsulates the Qur'an's enduring war ethic: justice as the only legitimate motive and moral limit of violence. In contemporary ethical terms, this principle resonates with the doctrine of *jus ad bellum* — war as a last resort justified only against oppression—[45] and *jus in bello*—ethical restraint in the conduct of war.[46]

Collectively, QS. 2: 190–193 constructs a theology of disciplined warfare divinely sanctioned yet ethically bounded. The fusion of rhetorical structure and stylistic eloquence transforms these verses from legal injunctions into a moral philosophy of conflict. Contemporary readers can discern in them a prototype of ethical warfare that prioritizes justice, limits aggression, and promotes reconciliation. In an age where war is often dehumanized and instrumentalized,[47] these Qur'anic injunctions invite a return to moral consciousness, reminding humanity that even in conflict, the divine command is not domination but restraint, not vengeance but restoration.

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[44] Jean Chrysostome K. Kiyala, 'Combining Social Justice with Restorative and Transitional Justice: An Agenda for an Integrative Justice Model in Transitional Societies', in *Restorative and Transitional Justice: Perspectives, Progress and Considerations for the Future*, ed. Jessica Evans (Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2017), 81–177.

[45] Larry May, 'The Principle of Just Cause', in *War*, by Emily Crookston, ed. Larry May, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 49–66, doi:10.1017/CBO9780511840982.004.

[46] Jens David Ohlin, 'The Basic Structure of Jus in Bello', in *The Cambridge Handbook of the Just War*, ed. Larry May, 1st edn (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 234–54, doi:10.1017/9781316591307.015.

[47] Paweł Ścigaj, 'Savage Wars and Conflict Dehumanization', in *Routledge Handbook of the Future of Warfare*, ed. Artur Gruszczak and Sebastian Kaempf (Taylor and Francis, 2023), 442–51.

The ethical implications of this passage thus extend beyond the historical context of the early Muslim community. They provide a timeless moral compass for contemporary societies grappling with the ethics of violence, resistance, and humanitarian intervention.[48] By reading QS. 2: 190–193 through the dual lens of Semitic Rhetorical structure and Arabic eloquence, one uncovers a sophisticated moral discourse that anticipates modern humanitarian principles while grounding them in the spiritual vocabulary of divine justice and mercy. The Qur'an's war ethics, therefore, remain profoundly relevant—not as relics of a bygone era but as a living moral vision for peace through justice and compassion.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the integration of *Semitic Rhetorical Analysis* (SRA) and *Balaghah* (Arabic rhetoric) provides a comprehensive interpretive framework for understanding the Qur'anic ethics of warfare in QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193. Through SRA, the passage reveals a concentric and symmetrical structure (A–B–C–B′–A′) that embodies the fundamental principles of Qur'anic war ethics: prohibition of aggression, obligation of proportional self-defense, respect for sacred time and space, and cessation of conflict when the adversary desists. This structural symmetry highlights that the Qur'anic construction of war ethics is not merely normative but also rhetorical and aesthetic, reinforcing the moral message through balanced composition and textual harmony.

Meanwhile, *Balaghah* uncovers the micro-rhetorical artistry that amplifies this moral vision. Devices such as *jinas* (paronomasia), *tibaq* (antithesis), *isti'arah* (metaphor), and *mushakalah* (stylistic correspondence) enhance the coherence, rhythm, and persuasive force of the text. These rhetorical strategies transform legal injunctions into an ethically charged and spiritually resonant message, emphasizing proportionality, restraint, and compassion even within the context of conflict.

The findings of this study also resonate with insights offered by classical Qur'anic commentators. Exegetes such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir consistently interpret

[48] Imron Sahoh and Yasmin Sattar, 'The idea of peace and conflict resolution in Islam', *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences,* 37(3), 2016: 333–34.

these verses as proving ethical limits on warfare, particularly the prohibition of aggression (la taʿtadu), the legitimacy of fighting only against those who start hostilities, and the obligation to cease fighting when the enemy desists. Similarly, al-Saʿdi emphasizes that the command to fight in this passage is inseparable from the ethical constraints that go with it, underscoring the Qurʾan's broader goal of justice and restraint in conflict. The rhetorical patterns shown through SRA and Balaghah therefore do not replace classical tafsir but rather illuminate the literary and structural mechanisms through which these ethical principles are articulated in the Qurʾanic discourse.

Together, the structural balance of SRA and the stylistic precision of *Balaghah* articulate a Qur'anic ethic of war that is both juridically sound and morally elevated. Warfare is sanctioned only as a defensive response, strictly bounded by ethical limits, and aimed ultimately at restoring justice and peace. The passage thus situates combat within a framework of divine mercy —"*fa in intahaw fa inna Allaha ghafurun rahim*"— affirming that reconciliation is the ultimate goal once hostility ceases. In a contemporary context, these findings demonstrate that the Qur'anic paradigm not only anticipates the foundational principles of modern humanitarian law—proportionality, non-aggression, and the protection of non-combatants—but also serves as a moral corrective to modern practices of warfare that frequently violate justice and humanity. Hence, the combined application of SRA and *Balaghah* not only clarifies the internal coherence of the Qur'anic text but also reaffirms its enduring significance in shaping the global discourse on peace.

This study is limited to a single Qur'anic passage (QS. al-Baqarah (2): 190–193). Future research could investigate whether the rhetorical patterns identified here are consistently employed across other Qur'anic passages addressing conflict, peace, reconciliation, or justice, thereby enabling a more comprehensive assessment of the Qur'an's ethical and rhetorical discourse. Extending this integrative analytical framework may also deepen scholarly understanding of how rhetorical structure functions to reinforce moral principles within the Qur'anic text.

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