Moderation and Tolerance in the Qur'anic Context: Significance and Analogues — A Comparative Thematic Study

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concepts of moderation and tolerance in the Qur'anic context, focusing on their semantic dimensions and conceptual analogues. It addresses the ambiguity surrounding these terms in contemporary Islamic discourse and their influence by Western epistemological frameworks. The research proposes Qur'anic alternatives—wasatiyyah (centrality/balance) and birr (righteousness/benevolence)—as more precise and comprehensive expressions. Using comparative and thematic methodologies, the study analyzes the linguistic, conceptual, and functional dimensions of these terms, exploring historical and contemporary applications while addressing current challenges. The findings indicate that Qur'anic concepts offer an integrated, monotheism-centered model capable of providing a balanced civilizational framework that preserves essential constants while accommodating societal and cultural variables.

Keywords: Qur'an, moderation, tolerance, wasatiyyah, birr, conceptual analogues, Qur'anic alternatives

INTRODUCTION

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it seeks to establish authentic Qur'anic concepts while critically evaluating imported terminologies through the Qur'anic text—accepting what is valid and rejecting what is not. This significance increases given the current circumstances, which are characterized by a clear overlap between Islamic and Western concepts. This overlap requires distinguishing between these concepts and highlighting Qur'anic distinctiveness. Moreover, the contemporary use of moderation and tolerance in global political and cultural contexts makes it necessary to re-examine these concepts from an authentic Qur'anic perspective.

Research Problem

The global intellectual and cultural arena shows increasing attention to the concepts of 'moderation' and 'tolerance,' especially in dealing with cultural and religious diversity. This attention has transferred to contemporary Islamic discourse, where these concepts are now used extensively in Islamic writings and speeches. However, this intensive use raises a deep epistemological problem about how precisely these terms express authentic Qur'anic concepts. Does the contemporary meaning of 'moderation' and 'tolerance' align with the comprehensive Qur'anic

vision? Are there Qur'anic concepts that express these values more precisely? The research problem centers on this key question: How does the Noble Qur'an present the concepts of moderation and tolerance, and what distinguishes them from contemporary concepts used in current Islamic discourse?

Research Questions

1. What is the conceptual problem in using the terms 'moderation' and 'tolerance'?
2. How adequate are the terms 'moderation,' 'tolerance,' and their synonyms in expressing Qur'anic concepts?
3. What are the semantic and practical differences between Qur'anic concepts and those of other civilizations and religions?
4. How can Qur'anic concepts be applied in the contemporary context?

Research Objectives

5. To eliminate the confusion arising from using the terms 'moderation' and 'tolerance.'
6. To investigate how precisely the terms moderation and tolerance and their synonyms express Qur'anic concepts.
7. To clarify the semantic and practical differences between Qur'anic concepts and those of other civilizations and religions.
8. To present a practical vision of Qur'anic concepts in the contemporary context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1. **Inductive Method:** Collecting data about academic material and study terminology with their synonyms in the context of religious texts.
2. **Descriptive-Analytical Method:** Understanding the meanings of moderation and tolerance, studying the verses, analyzing their meanings, understanding their contexts, and extracting alternative Qur'anic concepts.
3. **Comparative Method:** Investigating the concept of moderation and tolerance in world religions, comparing them with Qur'anic concepts, and clarifying similarities and differences between them.

Conceptual Foundation of Moderation and Tolerance

Clarifying the Meaning of Moderation and Tolerance

Moderation (I'tidal)

The Arabic root ('a-d-l) is used in the language to indicate uprightness and evenness, as well as deviation and inclination, and balance and equalization. The word (i'tidal) follows the morphological pattern (ifti'al), derived from the triliteral verb ('adala) with two added letters (ifta'ala): (i'tadala). The ancient Arabic understanding of (i'tidal) revolves around meanings of uprightness and evenness in posture, and was later used to mean balance and moderation at an early stage.

As for the common contemporary meaning, which positions moderation as the opposite of extremism and excess is a specific, recent terminological usage derived from the expansiveness of the Arabic language. In the Dictionary of Contemporary Arabic Language, under the explanation of (tawazuniyyah), it states: 'Abstract noun from balance: moderation and distance from extremism.' They clarified the meaning of moderation by mentioning distance from extremism, though this usage was not known in earlier periods.

Tolerance (Tasamuh)

The Arabic root (s-m-h) indicates ease and facility and is used in the context of giving and generosity. One says: tasamaha lahu, meaning: he dealt with him gently. The Muhammadan Shari'ah is described as samhah (easy/lenient), indicating the authenticity of this term and its closer attachment to the Shari'ah (Islamic law) than its counterpart, i'tidal. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said: 'I was sent with the upright, lenient religion (hanifiyyah samhah).' This means his Shari'ah—peace and blessings be upon him—is lenient in nature, and this includes tolerance towards others, both Muslims and non-Muslims.

Therefore, using the words moderation and tolerance as a semantic field opposing the concept of extremism and fanaticism is a specific, recent usage supported by the expansiveness of the Arabic language, particularly i'tidal, though tasamuh is more closely attached to the Shari'ah since it is described with samahah (leniency).

Origin of the Terms

Investigation shows that the use of the word (i'tidal) is taken from the English usage of 'Moderation,' which indicates the meaning of restraint generally, including self-restraint, then recently used as an antonym to extremism.

The English term is borrowed from the French 'modération,' which in its original usage meant 'reducing something,' then was used to mean self-restraint and controlling anger and bad character.

The correct approach is to describe the Shari'ah with how it described itself. I argue that what people seek they find in the term (wasatiyyah), as it adequately indicates the concept. The Messenger of Allah—peace and blessings be upon him and his family—said: 'Noah and his nation will come, and Allah the Exalted will say: Did you convey? He will say: Yes, O Lord. He will ask his nation: Did he convey to you? They will say: No prophet came to us. He will say to Noah: Who will testify for you? He will say: Muhammad—peace and blessings be upon him—and his nation. So we shall testify that he conveyed, and this is His saying, Exalted is His mention: "And thus We have made you a wasat (middle/just) nation, that you be witnesses over humanity..." [al-Baqarah: 143], and wasat means just.'

In this verse, there is an explicit declaration from the Almighty that this Ummah (Muslim nation) is described as a wasat nation, and the Prophet—peace and blessings be upon him and his family—clarified Allah's intent saying: wasat is justice. Thus, it is a nation of justice, and it must be described accordingly. We say: a nation of justice, and we call upon Muslims and the world to justice—what an excellent path it is. It suffices for the word (i'tidal) that it is derived from ('adl/justice), which is the ultimate purpose of revealing the Shari'ah.

The same applies to the term tasamuh, as its contemporary terminological usage corresponds in English to 'Tolerance,' which is imported from the Latin 'tolerantia,' indicating the meaning of endurance and bearing, in the context of liberation from fanaticism and harsh judgment of others—that is, acceptance of the different other. This meaning can be accepted within the boundaries of tasamuh, as the term carries meanings of gentleness and lenience. However, the term birr may be more appropriate, as it is a Qur'anic term carrying meanings of kindness, loyalty, benevolence, and the like.

Conceptual Analogues in the Noble Qur'an

The Concept of Wasatiyyah in the Qur'an

The concept of 'wasatiyyah' is among the central concepts in the Noble Qur'an, appearing in the description of the Islamic Ummah in the Almighty's saying: "And thus We have made you a wasat nation, that you be witnesses over humanity, and the Messenger be a witness over you" [al-Baqarah: 143]. This is a pivotal verse that comes at the beginning of the announcement of the qiblah's (direction of prayer) change , which carries the symbolism of the official declaration of the succession of Muhammad's Ummah ﷺ and the end of the succession of the Children of Israel. The concept of 'wasatiyyah' in the verse carries three meanings transmitted by al-Mawardi in al-Nukat wa'l-'Uyun:

1. **Spatial:** That which lies between two extremes, as in His saying: "Guard strictly the prayers, and the middle (wusta) prayer" [al-Baqarah: 238]. This is very clear, as the 'Asr prayer is in the middle of two prayers before and two after it.
2. **Excellence and Superiority:** As in their saying 'so-and-so is the most middle (awsat) of his people in lineage'—meaning the best and most elevated among them.
3. **Justice and Fairness:** This is the meaning by which the Prophet ﷺ interpreted wasat in the mentioned verse, where he said: 'Wasat is justice.'

These meanings apply to the Islamic Ummah except for the first—as it is the final Ummah with no Ummah after it. It is also appropriate to link the concept of 'wasatiyyah' in the Qur'anic context with several dimensions indicated by the explicit meaning of the verses:

- **The Testimonial Dimension:** The description of the Ummah as wasat is connected to the function of witnessing over humanity, establishing a civilizational dimension for the concept that goes beyond the limited behavioral meaning. The Islamic Ummah witnesses over all previous and subsequent nations.
- **The Epistemological Dimension:** Wasatiyyah establishes an integrated, balanced epistemological methodology based on combining revelation and reason, and transmission and reflection.
- **The Ethical Dimension:** Wasatiyyah is connected to an integrated ethical system based on balance and moderation in all aspects of life.

The Concept of Birr in the Qur'an

The concept of 'birr' is among the fundamental Qur'anic concepts that intersect with the concept of 'tolerance' in some aspects, yet goes beyond it in depth and comprehensiveness. This concept appears in the Noble Qur'an in multiple contexts, including the verse of birr in the Almighty's saying: "Righteousness (birr) is not that you turn your faces toward the east or west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives zakah (obligatory alms); [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship

and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous (muttaqun)" [al-Baqarah: 177].

This Qur'anic term 'birr' carries multiple meanings in the language, being used to mean:

- **Truthfulness and Connection:** As in birr towards parents, that is, being good to them and maintaining ties with them.
- **Expansiveness in Goodness:** It is said 'barra fi 'amalihi'—meaning he was expansive in benevolence.
- **Obedience and Goodness:** Birr is obedience and doing good; it is the opposite of disobedience.

These are all general meanings covering every good, but the Qur'an has its particular character for the concept of birr, appearing in several dimensions that can be extracted through the verse of birr:

The Doctrinal Dimension—The Core and Essence: The Noble Qur'an establishes birr upon faith, making belief in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets its solid foundation. This meaning is a purely Qur'anic formulation, as the Qur'an made the pillars of faith the basis and foundation of birr, establishing a major ethical principle that unfolds within the context of the verse.

The Social Dimension: Since birr is founded upon faith, this faith must show itself through righteous action. Thus, mention is made of the most evident sign revealing both birr and faith together, namely, spending on weak and needy categories. This is mentioned before the establishment of the obligatory prayer and the payment of obligatory zakah, because the former comes from choice and generosity of soul.

The Ethical Dimension: Since we mentioned that birr by its compound nature in the Qur'an establishes a major ethical principle in which the Muslim's conduct is organized by an integrated system, specific mention is made of a set of difficult ethics considered revealing ethical standards that distinguish between those truthful in their claim of faith and those dwelling in weakness. These are fulfilling covenants and patience in adversity and hardship. Whoever has these qualities, the Qur'an commends them with truthfulness and piety, and they reach the description and station of birr.

The Dimension of Dealing with the Other: The concept of birr in the Qur'an extends to cover the relationship with non-Muslims, as in the Almighty's saying: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes—from being righteous (tabarruhum) toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly" [al-Mumtahanah: 8]. This is not an ordinary extension or merely Arab noble character, but rather a deep Qur'anic ethical entity. When the Qur'an establishes major ethical principles of a compound nature and names this system 'birr,' then uses the same term in a thorny and sensitive matter such as 'dealing with the different other,' it not only expands the concept of birr but also affirms the governance of birr over the network of social relations—that the foundation and basis in it is birr and justice, and that enmity is a reaction and response to change. Notable is the combination of birr and qist (justice): the former indicates surplus benevolence, while the latter indicates obligatory justice.

These are all meanings abundant in the verse of birr in the Qur'an; it is a great semantic field in the Shari'ah, qualifying it to establish a major purposive (maqasidi) principle in the Noble Qur'an.

Other Related Qur'anic Concepts

Multiple Qur'anic concepts are connected to the meanings of moderation and tolerance, revealing the richness and comprehensiveness of the Qur'anic lexicon. We wish here to gather the terminological elements that approach the concepts of the semantic field of moderation and tolerance:

Justice and Equity ('Adl and Qist): The concepts of "adl' and 'qist' hold a central position in the Noble Qur'an and form the foundation of human relations. These two concepts are distinguished by representing an absolute value not tied to material interest or personal benefit, and by going beyond internal relations to include the relationship with the different other, even with the enemy. They are also connected to the principle of tawhid (monotheism), as justice in the Qur'an is linked to belief in Allah and obedience to Him.

Ease and Removal of Hardship (Yusr and Raf' al-Haraj): The concepts of 'ease' and 'removal of hardship' are among the fundamental concepts in Islamic Shari'ah, considered among its characteristics. They appear in multiple contexts in the Noble Qur'an, as in His saying: "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" [al-Baqarah: 185], and His saying: "He has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty" [al-Hajj: 78].

Critique of Contemporary Terminology in Islamic Discourse

It is clear from the preceding analysis that using the terms 'moderation' and 'tolerance' in contemporary Islamic discourse faces several problems. Starting with conceptual reductionism, which has confined them to limited behavioral dimensions, stripping them of their epistemological, ethical, and civilizational depth. Furthermore, this usage is disconnected from Qur'anic reference, as adopting these two concepts with their Western meanings has produced an internal contradiction in Islamic discourse, being sometimes used in ways that conflict with the

comprehensive Islamic vision. Therefore, it was necessary to abandon them and return to authentic Qur'anic concepts such as 'wasatiyyah' and 'birr,' which are distinguished by depth and comprehensiveness, coming from an integrated Qur'anic vision of existence, humanity, and values.

The Qur'anic System of Wasatiyyah and Birr

Analysis of Wasatiyyah Verses in Context

It was established earlier that the verse of Surat al-Baqarah: "And thus We have made you a wasat nation, that you be witnesses over humanity, and the Messenger be a witness over you" [al-Baqarah: 143] represents the foundational reference for the concept of wasatiyyah in the Noble Qur'an. Therefore, it was necessary to analyze its context for deeper understanding.

Its Immediate Context: This verse came in the context of discussing the change of the qiblah from Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) to the Sacred Ka'bah (the Sacred House in Mecca), a pivotal transformation in the history of the Islamic Ummah confirming its independent identity. It is the moment of official announcement of the end of the succession of the Children of Israel and the beginning of the reign of the Ummah of the end times.

The Beauty of Qur'anic Formulation: The use of the verb 'ja'ala' (made) in the verse ('ja'alnakum'—We made you) indicates that wasatiyyah is not merely an accidental attribute but an existential formation of the Ummah connected to its identity and purpose, referring back to Allah. He willed this for the Ummah, and it is written with Him that it is an Ummah of justice and moderation—this is its civilizational role, and its self-vision must be colored by this character, not deviating from it.

The Composite Meaning of the Concept of Wasat: It is justice and goodness as interpreted by the Prophet ﷺ, and can be understood as the central position of the Ummah among nations (geographically and civilizationally), considering that Allah is the Creator of geography and chose from it what He willed for the Ummah of His Beloved to assist them in performing their civilizational role.

Warning Against Excess: Since the Ummah is described with wasatiyyah, it was all the more appropriate to warn and caution against excess: "O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion and do not say about Allah except the truth" [al-Nisa': 171]. Similarly, the verse of Surat al-Ma'idah, except that the latter has the structure: "Do not commit excess in your religion beyond the truth" [al-Ma'idah: 77], which is in the context of emphasizing tawhid, indicating that the only permissible excess is excess in the tawhid of Allah, as it is excess in the truth.

The Standard of Wasatiyyah in the Noble Qur'an

The Shari'ah has endured and remained valid for every time and place only because its foundations are fixed while its branches are flexible. With this, it is moderate in approach, lenient in disposition, achieving balance in a manner suitable for all people across changing times. Al-Shatibi indicates something of this characteristic when he says: 'The Shari'ah proceeds in imposing obligations according to the middle, most just path, taking from both sides a share without inclination.' Thus, the matter is that the Shari'ah has achieved a precise balance between constancy and change. Wasatiyyah is clear in the aspects of the Shari'ah, being characterized by comprehensiveness like Islam itself.

We observe that Islam achieves constancy in objectives, purposes, and universals, while offering flexibility in means, mechanisms, and particulars. This is the strongest reason for its validity for every time and place, and it is what has shaped and determined for Muslims their understanding of the relationship between text and reality. Thus, they combined the sacredness of the text with the dynamism of reality in complete harmony between revelation and reason—revelation being sovereign and dominant, while reason is understanding, applying, and prioritizing.

Comparison with Analogues and Conceptions in Non-Islamic Civilizations and Religions

Moderation and Tolerance in Other Conceptions

Ancient Greece

Moderation was a fundamental concept in Greek philosophy, particularly in the works of Aristotle and Plato. Aristotle defined virtue as moderation and the mean, indicating that virtue lies in the middle between deficiency and excess. Plato emphasized the importance of moderation in the politics of the Republic, describing the just state as one that achieves balance among wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice. Socrates considered tolerance a means of reaching truth through dialogue with those of different and opposing ideas, for if a person were fanatical, it would blind him to accepting the truth. Aristotle likewise considered it one form of virtues—a state of balance between excessive compliance and fanaticism in opinions and principles. However, their matter was not

free from problems, as social stratification and social exceptions tarnished these fine principles. These were elite rights and not for everyone; slaves were viewed as incomplete humans, and free women and non-citizens were not treated as free male citizens were. This is the essence of the European mentality, through which we can understand Europe's contradiction in applying the civil rights it advocates—they are rights particular to the white man, not for others.

Christianity

Among the clear paradoxes is the divergence of Christian historical application from the texts of the New Testament in which they believe. We find calls to love and tolerance even towards enemies, as attributed to Christ, peace be upon him: 'Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you' (Matthew 5:44). This corresponds in meaning to His saying: "And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend" [Fussilat: 34]. It is known that Christ in his early period and original model did not bear the sword, and Christians often cite this as evidence of Christianity's peacefulness, boasting of it over those whose prophets were warriors and fighters, ignoring a Christian historical burden characterized by violence.

In historical application, Christianity witnessed extended periods of fanaticism and violence. Moments appeared that cannot be considered exceptional in Christian history; rather, they are deep-rooted and reveal an essence and recurring pattern, such as the infamous Inquisition, religious wars, Crusader campaigns, and then the frenzy of colonialism unleashed upon the entire world—the Christian religion being their spark and fuse. Perhaps the idea of religious tolerance did not crystallize in its contemporary form except after the religious conflicts that ground Europe to dust. Accordingly, it can be considered the result of social, political, and religious exhaustion, rather than being built upon an epistemological foundation. There was no widespread intellectual framework accepting the different other, unlike the early Islamic experience that accepted different communities—such as the Jews in Medina—and coexisted with them, granting them rights as part of the Ummah.

Judaism

Jewish books are not devoid of texts calling to justice and benevolence like any other religion, but it is no secret that the Talmud contains unfair discrimination between Jews and Gentiles. It is not like the differentiation between the Muslim and the dhimmi (a protected non-Muslim citizen) and others in Islamic Shari'ah, for the Shari'ah respects the humanity of the different other and deals with him on the basis of mutual mercy, hoping for his success and entry into Islam. But the reality is different in Judaism, as it contains a contemptuous view of the different other, as if he were less than human, and must be hated and opposed. It is therefore not surprising that Talmudic texts came to nourish feelings of hatred and increase Jewish isolation and hostility toward nations. There appear many sayings that distinguish between Jews and Gentiles, as it is said: 'The Jew opens with thanks to the Lord that he was not created from the Gentiles or made a woman or a slave,' and one cannot enter Judaism easily—it is more like an exclusive privilege club.

This preferentialist idea is deep-rooted and crystallized in Jewish thought. Zionism has exposed these truths to the world in its recent war on Gaza after the Al-Aqsa Flood. Historically, Jewish reform movements did not come except belatedly, and they are perhaps closer to being an American phenomenon. They come, in one form or another, as a response to the changing reality and an attempt to reach a moment of internal peace with the different other from whom one cannot separate in society, since living with him according to this exclusionary view is impossible. Thus, it became necessary to reinterpret the text to be more open. All of this is contrary to the Islamic epistemological framework, for the Muslim has no such internal conflict—he accepts the other and coexists with him because his Qur'an commands him to do so, and his Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was a noble example in dealing with those who differed, being the practical model for the Ummah.

Eastern Religions

China: The ancient Chinese perceived the concept of the mean through their human nature, or through traces of knowledge they possessed. Confucius developed an ethical model he named the Superior Man, the Higher Man, or the Noble Man—a personality embodying the highest ethics and pursuing justice and goodness in all its affairs. This personality can be described as moderate and tolerant, based on the pillars of distinguishing ethics between right and wrong. His teachings also included the call to the Doctrine of the Mean: a set of teachings calling for the necessity of adhering to the path of virtue to avoid excess and deficiency, and that the person without this moderation goes astray, and his deviant behavior reflects upon the world. Therefore, he needs spiritual purity, mental presence, and behavioral refinement to reach the desired moderation and a state of harmony and consonance with the world. However, the people's reference is closer to the humanistic model—it is a materialistic rational reference believing in the mental and spiritual elevation of the human being, and though it does not negate

the call of God in the human heart, it does not interact with it, having no connection to the unseen world. Consequently, there is no governance of tawhid over it, making it difficult thereafter to determine the essence of right and wrong, as we mentioned earlier—all matters remain relative, and only the governance of tawhid gives the human constancy in the witnessed world.

Hinduism: It is difficult for the observer to find the characteristic of moderation and tolerance in the religion of India in its current form, because its essence is based on the idea of class distinction among people, and its legislation entrenches this racist idea and reinforces it. This social deformity perhaps originates from the deformity of the origin of tawhid among them; for if the origin of tawhid were correct, it would reflect on their view of existence and life and would resolve the most problematic matters. The Hinduism that called, among other things, to what other religions called for in terms of moderation and tolerance, nevertheless failed to overcome the greatest obstacle to achieving moderation and tolerance: social stratification. They even mandated bathing after touching a corpse, a menstruating woman, or those belonging to the lower class of the outcaste. Likewise, the ritual of burning dead humans and burning his wife with him while alive, while cows are buried with special memorial ceremonies— there is a harshness at odds with manifestations of tolerance and moderation. In their followed law—the Law of Manu—is a set of precise and fine ethics, some of which may agree with the virtues of the Shari'ah such as the prohibition of gambling, wine, astrology, theft, and bribery, and it mandates respect for the family and elevation of the mother's status. However, these virtues nearly vanish in the Shari'ah's immersion in racism and its reinforcement, for it affirms the supremacy of the Brahmin caste (priests) over society, that it is the source of wisdom and good, and it did not do justice to the oppressed outcasts who are outside the class classification from the outset. Even the woman did not obtain justice ensuring her rights even if her family were from the upper classes—rather, she is subordinate to males in an oppressive subordination that nearly negates her consideration as a free, choosing human being. Also, the punishments imposed by the law are unrealistic and characterized by exaggeration and oppression, as the same crime's gravity differs according to the class of the criminal. We mention the doctrines of the earth only to demonstrate the loftiness of the Islamic Shari'ah's status, that it is the best of what was revealed from the Lord, and that in it lies humanity's sufficiency, salvation, and success.

Aspects of Difference and Distinction in the Qur'anic Concept

Comparison between Wasatiyyah and Moderation

Based on the preceding elaboration, the concept of wasatiyyah in the Qur'an carries a composite meaning, bearing meanings of justice, goodness, balance, and intermediacy—meanings that establish major ethical principles. The essential difference is that it is connected to tawhid, being the epistemological foundation and ultimate reference, not subject to human whims and their multiple variables. It also represents an integrated epistemological methodology for reflection, judgment, and action, having a close connection to witnessing over humanity and the mission of achieving global balance and peace. All of this is Allah's decree and will for this Ummah—it is most like being part of the genetic structure of the Ummah.

In contrast, the concept of 'Moderation' in Western thought has a simple meaning, it means reducing the intensity of something and distancing from extremism. It arose in the context of religious and political conflicts in Europe and is predominantly political and social in dimension, being a human creation and the product of a specific historical experience. It is today closely attached to secular liberal thought.

Comparison between Birr and Tolerance

Likewise, birr in the Qur'an has a comprehensive, composite meaning, covering benevolence, connection, and expansiveness in goodness. It strikes its foundation in the pillars of faith and is a positive presence involving initiative in benevolence, not merely passivity. It is connected to an integrated value system such as truthfulness, loyalty, and patience, and is shown in tangible works and behaviors, not merely a heartfelt emotional practice.

Meanwhile, the concept of 'Tolerance' in Western thought is established to mean enduring the other and being patient with him, from the Latin (tolerantia). Like its counterpart moderation, it arose in the context of religious conflicts in Europe. Among its clear paradoxes is its inclusion of a passive stance of enduring the other without obligating benevolence towards him—because this meaning is ethical and religious. Likewise, it is connected to the values of liberalism and the system of individual rights and personal freedoms.

Accordingly, Western concepts of moderation and tolerance can be critiqued from a Qur'anic perspective from multiple angles. Epistemologically, we see the absence of a doctrinal foundation for Western concepts, depriving them of depth and continuity. Worse still is their epistemological and ethical fluidity and relativity, leading to the erosion and transformation of concepts according to changing interests. Reality's testimony is most truthful: in application, the world witnesses the double standards in applying concepts of tolerance and moderation, and that they are used in service of political and economic agendas rather than being absolute human values.

Distinguishing Characteristics of the Qur'anic Model

Islam is generally distinguished by a set of characteristics that distinguish its concepts and make them sustainable and valid for every time and place. This includes concepts such as moderation and tolerance in their specific usage, or wasatiyyah and birr in the Qur'anic conception. The sum of these characteristics can be traced to several matters, the most important being:

- **Comprehensiveness of the Model:** It combines individual and societal dealings, covering the relationship with Allah, the self, people, and the world.
- **Integration:** It is not confined to one aspect to the exclusion of another but connects creed and ethics, as appeared clearly in the compound concept of birr. Islam's great, intelligent equation is its linking of constants and variables—it achieves constancy in objectives, purposes, and universals while offering flexibility in means, mechanisms, and particulars.
- **Realism:** The Qur'an did not demand irrationality from its believers; rather, it takes into account human nature, capacities, and limits, and considers available circumstances and possibilities. This is what the jurisprudence of reality, emergent issues, and variables has drawn from.
- **Ethicality:** It goes beyond merely enduring the other to being benevolent and cooperative with him, viewing him through the eye of mercy and hoping for his guidance, because all of this is connected to an integrated ethical system that regulates conduct, going beyond the formal legal framework to the value and ethical dimension.

Applications of Qur'anic Concepts

Historical Models of Applying Qur'anic Concepts

The Model of the Medina Charter

Perhaps the first Islamic historical model that can be relied upon as evidence of the practical representation of the Qur'an is the Medina Charter, whose foundations were established by the Prophet ﷺ. It represents a practical embodiment of Qur'anic concepts and prophetic wisdom, translating Islamic principles into lived reality and a comprehensive social system from which Muslims draw inspiration. The Charter was founded upon the two Qur'anic pillars of wasatiyyah and birr, reflecting an integrated application of His saying: "And thus We have made you a wasat nation" [al-Baqarah: 143], and: "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion... from being righteous (tabarruhum) toward them and acting justly toward them" [al-Mumtahanah: 8].

The purposive (maqasidi) dimension of wasatiyyah in the Charter can be observed at several levels. Politically, it established the concept of 'one Ummah' in the second clause: 'They are one Ummah distinct from other people,' going beyond narrow affiliations to the bond of shared homeland, while establishing a unified legal reference: 'Whatever dispute or controversy may arise among the people of this Charter feared to cause corruption shall be referred to Allah and to the Messenger.' This achieves balance among different societal segments through a unified referential framework. Socially, it acknowledged diversity while sharing a common destiny: 'The Jews shall spend with the believers as long as they are at war' (Clause 38). It balanced the right to differ and the duty of cooperation: 'The Jews have their religion and the Muslims have their religion,' while establishing: 'There shall be mutual aid among them against those who wage war against the people of this Charter.' It also went beyond the logic of power to the ethics of Qur'anic birr by establishing human immunity: 'Whoever goes out is secure and whoever remains is secure in Medina, except one who has done wrong or committed sin,' and establishing the principle: 'Assistance is for the wronged.'

Von Grunebaum affirms that "This Charter constituted the first contractual formula in the world to establish balance between individual rights and collective responsibilities, presenting a mature model that goes beyond religious and tribal polarizations.' Al-'Alwani indicated that 'The Charter established a Qur'anic methodology in managing diversity, achieving the precise blend between wasatiyyah in its comprehensive civilizational meaning and birr in its deep ethical concept.' Thus, the Medinan model presented a foundational formula going beyond the boundaries of its time and place, offering a complete methodology for applying Qur'anic concepts in managing diverse societies, in a manner that can inspire the building of contemporary societies and address their current crises.

The Model of the 'Umarian Covenant'

At a later stage, when the Muslim state expanded and included new subjects in a complex geopolitical region, we find the 'Umarian Covenant granted by al-Faruq (title of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the second Caliph)—may Allah be pleased with him—to the people of Iliya' (Jerusalem), a unique applied model of wasatiyyah and birr in Islam.

It is an extension of the same mentality formed by the teachings of revelation. This was shown in the Covenant's respect for the religious particularity of the People of the Book, as the words of the Covenant guaranteed them 'security for themselves, their properties, their churches, and their crosses... that their churches shall not be inhabited [by others], nor destroyed, nor shall anything be diminished from them or from their precincts... nor shall they be coerced regarding their religion.'

The Covenant represented a practical translation of Qur'anic wasatiyyah that combines justice and goodness, precisely balancing the interests of the Islamic state and the rights of non-Muslim subjects, thereby establishing an exceptional model in interreligious relations in an age when minority rights were violated. We are speaking of a formative origin in the conceptual framework of the believing mind. The Qur'anic birr is prominent in securing the Christians' economic, religious, and social rights, thereby activating the principle of the Noble Qur'an: '...that you should be righteous toward them and act justly toward them' [al-Mumtahanah: 8]. This is another example in which the Qur'anic character and Muhammadan cultivation among Muslims are shown. As Sukhaynini indicates, the Covenant 'embodied Islam's view of the relationship with the other as a balanced monotheistic relationship that goes beyond the traditional classification of tolerance to the horizons of recognizing the natural and acquired rights of the human being regardless of his religion.'

The Model of Al-Andalus

We cannot wade into the depths of wasatiyyah and birr while neglecting the unique Andalusian model that extended for several centuries. It was not a transient state of formal coexistence but rather a deep civilizational interaction among distinct cultures and religions. This civilizational interaction was paved by the Qur'an through what it imprinted upon the hearts of believers and shaped their view of themselves and the different other. Its foundations were established by the Noble Messenger ﷺ. It is a realistic Islamic utopia, and evidence of Islam's supreme ability to absorb the different other into the Ummah—something other religions, ancient and modern, have failed to achieve. This interaction can be observed at several levels.

At the social level, we note the existence of a state closest to social integration, with non-Muslims engaging in the expanse of public life noticeably in gatherings of knowledge, literature, and art. This gave the Andalusian culture its particularity and distinctive character, being characterized by richness and diversity. It is mentioned in writings that Jews used to visit Muslims and congratulate them on their festivals. Culturally, al-Andalus witnessed an active intellectual and cultural movement, shown in translating Greek sciences and philosophy, developing Arabic sciences and literature, and innovating new forms of art and architecture. Participants in this intellectual movement included adherents of different religions, leading to the enrichment and diversification of Andalusian culture. Some cite as evidence the linguistic duality that arose in al-Andalus between Arabic and Spanish as a manifestation of this cultural cross-fertilization, and how Arabic continued among Spaniards long after the end of Islamic rule, indicating the depth of cultural influence. Though some political tensions appeared from time to time, the Islamic state in al-Andalus was able to provide a political and legal framework protecting the rights of all inhabitants and ensuring them freedom of creed and worship. This was shown in the documents and covenants granted by the Islamic state to the dhimmis (non-Muslims under Islamic protection), which guaranteed them security, safety, and freedom to practice their religious rites.

If we wish to analyze this phenomenon considering the Qur'anic concepts of wasatiyyah and birr, we find that wasatiyyah was shown in the methodological balance achieved by the state and society in al-Andalus among different religious and cultural segments. No party was excluded or marginalized; rather, all engaged in building civilization, reflecting the Qur'anic dimension of wasatiyyah as an integrated way of life. As for birr, it was shown in the benevolence and justice that Muslims showed in their dealings with non-Muslims, working to protect and care for them and provide them with means of dignified living. This is the essence of Qur'anic birr, which goes beyond merely passive tolerance to active positivity. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the Andalusian experience was not entirely ideal, as it witnessed some periods of tension and conflict, and some manifestations of religious fanaticism appeared. However, these cases remain exceptions in the long history of al-Andalus and do not negate the general principle, which is coexistence and tolerance founded upon wasatiyyah and birr.

Challenges to Applying Qur'anic Concepts in the Current Era

Intellectual and Cultural Challenges

The process of applying Qur'anic concepts of wasatiyyah and birr in the current era faces several intellectual and cultural challenges, including:

The Dominance of Western Concepts: The spread of Western concepts on the global stage, including concepts such as moderation and tolerance in global discourse, such that Qur'anic alternatives are hardly promoted. However, with the collapse of the Western model today after its ethical crisis exposed by the Ukraine war and the Gaza war, the Islamic world today is closer to a stage of turning around and returning to Qur'anic roots, having lost confidence in the Western model and all its representations.

Misunderstanding of Qur'anic Concepts: Islamic discourse may also face misunderstanding of Qur'anic concepts among Muslims and others, especially since there exist among Muslims those who distort truths and promote falsehood in the garb of truth. This requires preachers to intensify counter-media campaigns that expose the falsity of claims and their dangerous consequences.

The Gap between Theory and Practice: Most dangerous of all is the gap between the theoretical and applied aspects. The discourse presented by Islamists is beautiful, but the absence of a successful model weakens the transformation of Qur'anic concepts into practical applications in various fields of life. Therefore, every experiment and attempt to create a successful Islamic model is fought fiercely so that Muslims lose hope in their religion—but Allah is dominant over His affair.

Political and Social Challenges

Qur'anic concepts face challenges connected to the contemporary political and social reality. These are serious matters whose impact cannot be minimized, such as political and sectarian conflicts and what may lead to terrorism and extremism thinking. Muslims suffer from fragmentation among those who distort the meanings of religious texts, each wanting to promote what he advocates. Here the need for the discourse of wasatiyyah becomes pressing. The recent Al-Aqsa Flood (October 7, 2023 operation) has addressed many of these issues that were churning among the Ummah's youth at the beginning of the Arab revolutions. Here emerges the role of social institutions in facing these challenges, as their weakness and diminishing influence and presence exposes Muslim youth to every sinful fabricator.

Truthfully, many of these crises, particularly terrorism and extremism, have social roots related to economic crises, as poverty and unemployment impede the application of the values of tolerance and birr, increasing social tension and the state of congestion. Addressing the matter at its roots requires social reform.

A Practical Vision for Activating Qur'anic Concepts in Contemporary Reality

Based on the foregoing, a practical vision for activating Qur'anic concepts can be conceived. These are matters requiring awareness, a studied plan, practical efforts, and continuous evaluation—meaning we transition from the stage of uncontrolled random work to institutional work. This begins with renewing religious discourse and its methods across all platforms. This falls upon the shoulders of those responsible for the affairs of imams and khatibs (Friday sermon preachers). Preparing preachers and equipping them with modern methods is particularly important for reaching youth.

Likewise, educational curricula must be reviewed and developed, making them based on Qur'anic concepts, for religious education is of immense importance—indeed, it is the most important tributary in the field. All other matters are ancillary. The danger of opposing educational projects is not hidden, and were it not for their importance, everyone would not compete for them. How then can the guardians of identity and religion be heedless of this? Connected to this context, and to strengthen the presence of Qur'anic concepts, the role of social and cultural institutions must be activated, particularly those concerned with applying Qur'anic values in different fields. Such major projects cannot be covered by a single entity, and the private sector must be involved and its role activated. Practice witnesses that it is more active than governmental work for known administrative reasons.

For a more comprehensive view, reforming the political and economic system is capable of nipping many causes of corruption in the bud, because the corruption of these systems harms society in all aspects and levels. Despotism suppresses the human being and distorts his concepts, including the conceptual disturbance of the centrality of the Qur'an's role in purifying souls and building civilization.

Promising Contemporary Models: Malaysia as an Example

The historical models that achieved wasatiyyah and birr and reflected Qur'anic values and the Muhammadan Sunnah (Prophetic tradition) were all during the era of Islam's glory and its zenith, not from weakness but from strength. They are thereby evidence of the truthfulness of the claimants of the call, for the human being reveals the reality of his mettle at the time of his power and dominance.

Also, the form of the Muslim state today has changed, influenced by the civil state in its Western description, which magnifies the gap of comparison between historical and contemporary Islamic models, as hardly anything unites the state of the earlier and later people except the fundamentals of faith. Generally, the question of the Muslim state has not crystallized since the fall of the caliphate (Islamic political leadership / al-Khilafah), and it is ground between the longings of the past and the prophecies of the end times.

The Islamic world is not without models in which Muslims have coexisted with other religious minorities in peace and security. True, the Arab region is witnessing major transformations due to the conflict of regional and global powers and their proxies, resulting in circles of violence against everyone and disabling the achievement of the desired Qur'anic values. This makes drawing inspiration from a contemporary Arab experience difficult, though

there are signs of hope in the new Syrian experience. But outside the Arab region, there exist models worthy of praise and from which to draw inspiration.

Malaysia represents a promising contemporary model in which the application of the Qur'anic concepts of wasatiyyah and birr is shown on the ground. Malaysia has been able to establish a political, economic, and social system that draws upon the essence of these two Qur'anic concepts, despite the challenges imposed by ethnic and religious plurality in Malaysian society. As Fatihah Salim indicates, Malaysia 'has been able to embrace and contain immediate events and tensions, most like the embrace and carrying of fetuses in one womb.'

To excavate 'wasatiyyah' in the Malaysian experience, we may perceive it in the achievement of precise balance between constants and variables. Malaysia has preserved the Islamic identity of the state in the text of the constitution while guaranteeing full citizenship rights to non-Muslim minorities. This is shown in what the researcher Kazim Shabib indicated: 'Because cultural plurality as a political or social philosophy works to domesticate cultural diversity.' It has also balanced adherence to Islamic authenticity and openness to the developments of the age, combining value commitment and material progress. Islam is with development and prosperity, but it makes all of that between gratitude and the scale—Muslims feel grateful for their Lord's blessing upon them by subjugating for them what is in the heavens and earth, and all of that is in the scale of the servants' deeds on the Day of Resurrection. It is thus controlled, value-based development.

The testimonial dimension of wasatiyyah was shown in Malaysia's ability to present a civilizational model combining faith and civilization, which accords with what was established earlier regarding the testimonial dimension of wasatiyyah: the description of the Ummah as wasat is connected to the function of witnessing over humanity, establishing a civilizational dimension for the concept that goes beyond the limited behavioral meaning.

As for the concept of 'birr,' the dimensions of Qur'anic birr were embodied in the Malaysian model through: The social dimension of birr, shown in policies of eliminating social disparities and eradicating poverty, and establishing state-owned companies in which Malays and other ethnic components participate. Nasir Yusuf says: 'Development during this time aimed at attempting to balance between developing the Indigenous Malay population and others.' Thus, birr was shown in combating poverty, not the poor, as is happening in contemporary Western models. The dimension of dealing with the other was embodied in the policy of mutual respect among the different ethnic and religious components in Malaysia, as birr's basis and foundation are the pillars of faith, establishing a major ethical principle. This dimension was reflected in what Fatihah Salim described as Malaysia 'having been able to narrow the gap between its cultures, following in this field well-crafted plans and programs, aiming through them to build a common culture without imposing one at the expense of another.'

The Malaysian model was also distinguished by applying the principles of 'justice and equity' emphasized by the Noble Qur'an. It was established earlier that the concepts of "adl' and 'qist' hold a central position in the Noble Qur'an and form the foundation of human relations. This was shown in the Malaysian constitution, which guaranteed 'freedom of other religions, where about 19% follow Buddhism, most of them Chinese, and Christians 9%, Hindus 6%, in addition to other religions.'

The Malaysian model presents us with a practical lesson in applying the concepts of wasatiyyah, birr, and justice in a complex contemporary reality. This accords with the essence of our call that Qur'anic concepts achieve balance between cultural particularity and human universality—they come from a particular Islamic vision but address all of humanity. They also establish an integrated methodology in dealing with the other, combining justice and benevolence, rights and duties, interests and values.

CONCLUSION: KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Findings

1. The study demonstrated that the concepts of 'moderation' and 'tolerance' as used in contemporary discourse carry Western meanings that differ from authentic Qur'anic concepts, resulting in a semantic drift that has affected the understanding and application of these concepts in the Islamic context.
2. The alternative Qur'anic concepts such as 'wasatiyyah' and 'birr' present a vision of greater depth and comprehensiveness, being connected to an integrated epistemological and ethical system that combines constancy and flexibility.
3. Qur'anic concepts are based on firm epistemological foundations coming from tawhid and istikhlaf (vicegerency), and are characterized by comprehensiveness, integration, realism, positivity, and ethicality.
4. Qur'anic concepts differ from those of other religions and civilizations in that they present a precise balance between constancy and change, particularity and universality, rights and duties, and individual and society. This is a balance lacking in many contemporary concepts that tend toward one side at the expense of the other. They are an alternative capable of achieving peaceful coexistence among different cultures

and religions, and of building a human society based on justice, benevolence, and cooperation in righteousness and piety.

5. Qur'anic concepts achieve balance between cultural particularity and human universality, coming from a particular Islamic vision but addressing all of humanity.

6. Qur'anic concepts establish an integrated methodology in dealing with the other, combining justice and benevolence, rights and duties, interests and values.

Recommendations

1. Establish specialized research centers for studying Qur'anic concepts and their application in contemporary reality.

2. Develop educational curricula to strengthen the values of wasatiyyah and birr at all educational levels.

3. Train teachers on methods of teaching Qur'anic concepts using modern approaches.

4. Encourage cultural and civilizational dialogue between Muslims and others on the basis of shared humanity, and support institutions for spreading a culture of dialogue and understanding among cultures and religions.

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