

Is Co-existence Possible? An Islamic Response

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Outline

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- VII. Examples of Common Errors
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I. The Short Answer-1

Just and peaceful
co-existence is
imperative, possible
and feasible.



I. The Short Answer -2

- Imperative because there is no other acceptable option.
- Possible because it did exist and still exists.
- Feasible because we have to be optimists in the face of our common challenges

II. A Key Verse on Peaceful Co-Existence

“Allah does not forbid you [Muslims], in regard to those [other communities] who do not fight against you because of [your] faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing with them in kindness [*Birr*] and justice [*Qist*]. Surely, Allah loves those who act justly” Qur’an, 60:8



III. Verse Analysis -1

A. Divine Command

- Command is from Allah, The One and only Creator and Sustainer of the universe and Lord of all humans & other creation.
- Divine authority & sanction of the command [not just political correctness]
- Command came through all prophets and is consonant w/pure innate human nature
- Accountability for non-compliance in this life and in the life to come

III. Verse Analysis -2

B. Two Conditions

- What are Muslims entitled to?
- 1. Not to be fought against because of religious choice and commitment
- 2. Not to be severely oppressed and driven from their homes
- The two conditions are fully consistent with other Qur'anic verses [22:39-40; 2:190-194]
- Are these conditions excessive or unique?

III. Verse Analysis -3

C. Two Reciprocal Rights

- What are other peaceful and just communities entitled to in return?
- 1. To be dealt with in kindness
 - ❖ Qur'anic term [*Birr*] is more than kindness
- 2. To be dealt with in justice
 - ❖ Qur'anic term [*Qist*] is more than justice
- Powerful motive to comply: to be blessed with the love of Allah

IV. Qur'anic Textual Context - 1

- **1. Sanctity of human life [5:32, 17:33]**
- **2. No coercion in matters of faith
[e.g. 2:256, 88:21]**
- **3. Accepting religious diversity
[10:99, 11:118]**
- **4. Universal human dignity [17:70]**



IV. Qur'anic Textual Context -2

- **5. Universal justice for all**
[16:90, 4:134, 5:8]
- **6. Universal human equality and brotherhood irrespective of ethnic, color or linguistic diversity** [4:1,30:22, 49:13]
- **7. Essence of faith is mercy to all**
[21:107]



V. Threats to Co-existence -1

- **1. Mixing normative Islam with Muslims**
 - ❖ Muslims are imperfect. Who else is?
 - ❖ Some Muslim cultural practices may be contrary to [Normative] Islam
 - ❖ Injustices enhance radicalization of some
 - ❖ Understanding causes is no justification
- **2. Media stereotypes & images**
- **3. Historical legacies**



V. Threats to Co-existence -2

- **4. Focus on extremists' actions & views**
- **5. Post 9/11 guilt by association**
- **6. Some Muslim actions violate Islamic teachings and may confirm prejudices and stereotypes**
- **7. Undue generalization of certain texts and ignoring their textual & historical context [the cut-and-paste approach]**



VI. Avoiding Misinterpretations

Some Basic Rules

- **1. Primacy of the Qur'an & Sunnah**
- **2. Scholars' opinions' are fallible**
- **3. Language issues: Translation, restricted/contextual meaning**
- **4. Consider the historical context**
- **5. Consider the textual context**
- **6. No violation of Qur'anic values**



VII. Examples of Common Errors

1. Does The Qur'an preach "HOLY WAR"?-1

- Holy War in nowhere in the Qur'an
- Root of "Jihad" is [J-H-D] meaning to exert maximum effort, to strive
- Usage in primary sources
 - ❖ 1. Individual: self-purification [22:77-78; 29:6]
 - ❖ 2. Social: charity, argument [49:15, 25:52]
 - ❖ 3. Combative: *Qital*, or fighting



VII. Examples of Common Errors

1. Does The Qur'an preach "HOLY WAR"?-2

➤ Combative Jihad is allowed only to stop aggression or oppression

[22:39-40, 2:190-4, 60:8-9]

➤ Strict code of conduct

❖ Exhausting just peaceful means first

❖ Sparing non-combatants

❖ Humane treatment of POW

❖ Refraining from destruction



VII. Examples of Common Errors

2. Are Muslims Told To Kill Non-Muslims

Wherever They Find Them? 9:5 -1

- Language problem: Epithet *[Mushrikeen]* in the verse was never used in the Qur'an to refer to the people of the Book [Jews and Christians]
- Historical context: 9:5 relates to a specific group of Arabs responsible for aggression and murder of innocent people during the Prophet's time



VII. Examples of Common Errors

2. Are Muslims Told To Kill Non-Muslims

Wherever They Find Them? 9:5 -2

- Textual context: explains why; breaking treaties and initiating aggression[9:1-15]
- Unrelated to those who respected treaties
- Is a Muslim man allowed to marry a Christian woman [5:5] also to kill her [9:5]?
- Generalization violates key definitive verses [e.g. 2:190; 60:8]



VII. Examples of Common Errors

3. Fighting People of the Book & Neighbours for no Reason but their Faiths? [9:29,123] -1

- Historical context: serious threats in the crucial formative phase including murder, high treason at wartime and deploying invading armies.
- Necessity of pre-emptive strikes to stop attacks
- Textual context: 2:190, 60:8-9 and many other verses call for peaceful co-existence and mutual kindness and justice with peaceful, not with belligerent, neighbours.



VII. Examples of Common Errors

3. Fighting People of the Book & Neighbours for no Reason but their Faiths? [9:29,123] -2

- Prophet [P] did not fight all neighbours
 - ❖ Prophet's treaties with peaceful neighbours
 - ❖ No fighting with Abyssinians
- ***Jizyah*** [poll tax] is not punishment or bribe
- Poll tax is matched with state services
- “***An Yadin***” = if they have the ability to
- “***Saghiroon***” = accepting state authority



VII. Examples of Common Errors

4. No Friendship with non-Muslims? [5:52]

- Language problem: *Awliyaa'* speaks of protection or over lordship not friendship
- Textual/Historical context explain why
 - ❖ Instead of alliance w/Muslims [3:28]
 - ❖ As an act of hypocrisy in wartime [5:53]
 - ❖ W/those who mock Islam [e.g. 5:57-59]
- General Qur'anic context [60:8-9]
- Interfaith marriage [5:5]: more intimate than friendship



VIII. Promoting Just and Peaceful Co-existence -1

- 1. Attitudes of **fairness and humility**
- 2. **Reaching out** to one another
- 3. **Mutual understanding** & respect
 - ❖ Build on commonalities
 - ❖ Respectfully discuss differences
 - ❖ Engage in intra-faith dialogue too
- 4. Connect between **peace & justice**



VIII. Promoting Just and Peaceful Co-existence -2

- 5. **Work together** for common good
 - ❖ Alleviation of **poverty**
 - ❖ Better **health** care
 - ❖ Elimination of all forms of **hate & racism**
 - ❖ Dealing with all forms of violence
 - ❖ Environmental protection [ecology]
 - ❖ Enhancing family and community values



IX. Conclusions

- Just and peaceful co-existence is imperative, possible and feasible
- Many challenges need to be faced
- Need Joint action and mutual co-operation
- Yes, we can do it [God willing] if we are serious about it



Further References & contact

- My email: Jamalbadawi@hotmail.com
- On the myth of “holy war”, Muslim relation with other communities and common non-contextual misinterpretations of the Qur’an, see: www.Islamonline.net under “contemporary issues”, **“Muslim and non-Muslim Relations”** also under **“Reading Islam- Islam in 176 hours”** audio programs
- On women issues, see www.soundvision.com
- **“Gender Equity in Islam”**

