REALISM IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: A COMPARISON BETWEEN WESTERN AND ISLAMIC (QUR'AN) PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

This study aims to look at the similarities and differences between realist concepts in International Relations theory and Islam in the context of the Qur'an, which is the holy book of Muslims. Where the understanding of basic realist concepts such as human nature, international anarchy system, and power can not only be understood from social phenomena, but also can be learned from the Qur'an (old manuscript) and Tafsir (Exegesis). This study uses combination of two approaches, qualitative combine Tafsir approach (Maudhu'i). The main data is taken from relevant literature and books including the Qur'an Tafsir. Anarchy for realists is caused by the negligence of the absence of supreme power (government) which causes war. Meanwhile, in Islam anarchy is caused because there is no legitimate supreme power in the world of God the Owner of nature, so that humans are required to follow God's will such as doing justice, peace, fulfilling promises, cooperation. The leader (khalifah) is an extension of God's command to carry out His guidance in managing the earth. For realists humans are egoistic and evil creatures as innate characteristics, in Islam humans are inseparable from the gift of their duality, namely "syahwat" and "ghadab" which if mismanaged will cause "fasad (damage)" (chaos). This study is useful for general readers and researchers who are interested in the Islamization of social sciences, especially International Relations, in getting a basis for thinking (postulates) in particular. The results show clearer understanding of the similarities and differences.

Keywords: *Concept, International Relations, Realism, Qur'an*

Introduction

Since the birth of the perspective and theory of International Relations that we know today is a product of western history which is believed by scientists to start from Westphalia in 1816. The Westphalia system then developed with the advancement of western civilization at the end of the 18th-20th centuries and America controlled many countries around the world, how the political system, leadership, relations between one nation and another were regulated in a system known as "democracy" today. (Sulesena, 2021) But, that does not mean that only Europe, especially America, has the right to talk about politics, international relations, humanity and other matters, because in fact even further than America found its government system, China has also inherited its leadership since pre-dynastic times, Arab states and Africa also have their own government and political systems. It's just that the development of science in the last two centuries has inspired more of the western world as the West's expansion throughout the world has brought all knowledge to dominate the world as we know it today. But that does not mean that the works, understandings and knowledge of the past centuries have disappeared on earth, many records related to politics, government have been immortalized and reprinted with the latest versions and become study materials, guidelines for some people such as Sun Tzu's book "war strategy", the book Muqaddimah (Ibn Khaldun) and many others. In fact, some of these guidelines and knowledge are still stored in holy books. (Puspitasari, 2012)

The creation and evolution of international relations theory has been influenced by a complex interaction between historical, intellectual, and political factors. The ongoing development of IR theory reflects the dynamic nature of global politics and the continuous effort to understand and interpret the complexities of international relations. The field of

International Relations (IR) theory has developed through the interaction of various factors, including the development of the modern state system, debates between different theoretical perspectives, and the ever-changing global political landscape. The origins of modern IR theory are rooted in the historical development of the international system and the emergence of the study of international relations as an academic discipline. (UPSC, 2020)

The evolution of modern international relations theory has been influenced by the progressive monopoly of the state over the authority of law, war, and diplomacy. (Holzgrefe,1989) The field of international relations emerged in the early 20th century, largely in response to the growing demand to find less harmful and more effective ways to conduct relations between societies, governments, and economies.(McClelland & Pfaltzgraff, 2024) This period saw a surge in writing and research inspired by the belief that systematic observation and inquiry could contribute to a better understanding of international relations.

Formally rooted in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, international relations (IR) theory as it is commonly understood today derives primarily from the Western intellectual tradition. From the 18th to the 20th century, much of the global conversation about power, state behavior, and international politics was influenced by Western IR theory, particularly realism. The historical spread of Western civilization and its impact on the international political system, including the widespread acceptance of notions of democracy and state sovereignty, is reflected in the dominance of the Western perspective in IR. (Acharya & Buzan, 2010)

However, the various political and philosophical traditions that have influenced international relations in other regions of the world are not adequately represented by this Western-centered framework. Rich political ideas and principles of governance based on religious writings such as the

Qur'an provide civilizations such as the Islamic world with different perspectives on authority, power, human nature and global order. In Muslim-majority societies, these perspectives have survived centuries of scholarly study and still impact modern political theory. (Acharya, 2020; Yusoff, 2022)

It is important to compare Islamic and Western realism for a number of reasons. By presenting an alternative framework that incorporates ethical, spiritual and moral dimensions that are often missing from Western secular theories, it first challenges the implicit assumption that Western IR theories are universally applicable. Second, by broadening the analytical lens to include non-Western epistemologies, such comparisons enhance theoretical discourse and can offer new perspectives on perennial issues such as cooperation, conflict and justice in international relations. Third, understanding these contrasting viewpoints encourages intercultural communication and respect, both of which are essential for successful diplomacy and global governance in an increasingly multipolar and culturally diverse world. (Nuruzzaman, 2018; Gökçe, 2024)

Theories of International Relations make it possible to understand the world around us, with each theory representing a different theoretical perspective. Major schools of thought in International Relations theory, including realism, liberalism, constructivism, and rational choice, have emerged as a result of ongoing debates and intellectual developments within the field.(Norwich Univ, n.d).

This study aims to explore the similarities and differences between Western realism and the Islamic worldview as derived from the Qur'an and classical Islamic thought. It focuses on key realist concepts such as anarchy, power, and human nature, examining how each perspective interprets these

concepts and their implications for international relations. By doing so, this research contributes to a more inclusive and nuanced understanding of realism that transcends cultural boundaries and offers practical relevance for scholars and policymakers engaged in a complex global environment.

Literature Review

Realism in International Relations: Foundations and Developments

Realism has been a major theory in International Relations (IR) since its intellectual roots in classics such as Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War (Arifin, 2022). Realism emphasizes the competitive, conflictual and force-driven nature of international politics, where sovereign states are the main actors pursuing their national interests in an anarchic international system (James, 2022). Fundamentalist realist scholars such as Hans Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz, and John Mearsheimer have outlined key realist concepts including the balance of power, the security dilemma, and offensive and defensive strategies (Morgenthau, 1948; Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001). Morgenthau's classical realism highlights human nature as the driver of power politics, while Waltz's neorealism shifts the focus to the anarchic structure of the international system as the primary determinant of state behavior (Forde, 1995; Nye, 1988).

The Hedley Bull School of English offered a nuanced realist perspective by introducing the concept of an international society where states share common rules and institutions, balancing power politics with normative order (Bull, 1977). This approach has opened up new avenues for exploring the interaction between power and ethics in international relations, which is relevant when comparing Western realism with other worldviews.

Islamic Perspectives on International Relations

Islamic political thought provides a rich tradition that addresses governance, justice, and international relations through religious texts, particularly the Qur'an and its commentaries (Tafsir). Scholars such as Fazlur Rahman and Mohammad Hashim Kamali have emphasized the integration of ethical and spiritual dimensions in political behavior, which contrasts with the secular focus of Western IR theories (Kamali, 2008; Rahman, 1980). Kamali (2008) argues that Sharia law offers a comprehensive framework for justice and cooperation that transcends power politics.

The Qur'an and Tafsir have been studied extensively to understand how Islamic teachings inform concepts such as human nature, leadership, power and justice (Muttaqin, 2024). For example, the role of the khalifah (steward or leader) is seen as a divinely appointed authority responsible for upholding justice and peace, which contrasts with the realist emphasis on self-interest and the accumulation of power (Sachedina, 2001).

Comparative Scholars: Realism and Islamic Thought

Several scholars have explored the intersections and differences between Western realism and the Islamic perspective on international relations. Mamadkul (2022) notes that while both perspectives recognize the reality of conflict and the need for security, the Islamic worldview incorporates moral and ethical imperatives rooted in divine authority, which are largely absent in secular realist theory. Acharya and Buzan (2007) further highlight that Islamic principles such as Ummah (global Muslim

community) and Shura (consultation) propose alternative mechanisms for order and governance that challenge realist assumptions of anarchic self-help systems.

In addition, Islamic political thought emphasizes universal moral values and divine law as guiding principles in international affairs, which contrasts with realism's prioritization of national interests and power politics (Kelsay, 1993). This moral dimension introduces concepts of justice, peace and cooperation that broaden the analytical scope beyond the realistic focus on conflict and competition.

Themes in the Literature: Anarchy, Power, and Human Nature

Anarchy: Realism argues that the international system is anarchic, lacking a central authority to enforce rules, which forces states to rely on self-effort for survival (Waltz, 1979). In contrast, Islamic thought recognizes the absence of a supreme earthly authority but asserts that ultimate sovereignty belongs to God (Allah). This theological foundation shapes a different understanding of order, in which human leaders (caliphs) are entrusted to carry out divine guidance to promote justice and peace (Qur'an 2:30; 4:59) (Kamali, 2008; Muttaqin, 2024).

Power: Realists view power as the primary currency in international politics, necessary for security and influence (Morgenthau, 1948). The Islamic perspective recognizes power but frames it within ethical limits and responsibilities to uphold justice and prevent corruption (Sachedina, 2001). The Qur'an warns against the abuse of power and emphasizes accountability to God, which contrasts with the realistic acceptance that power struggles are inevitable (Qur'an 11:85; 28:83).

Human Nature: Classical realism attributes conflict to the selfish and power-hungry nature of humans (Morgenthau, 1948). Islamic teachings present a more complex view of human nature, which includes rationality and moral responsibility, with the potential for both good and evil (Kamali, 2008). The duality of human desire (syahwat) and anger (ghadab) must be managed to avoid chaos (fasad), emphasizing ethical self-regulation (Muttaqin, 2024).

Realism in International Relations Theory

Core Assumptions of Realism

Realism is an old theory used to explain international politics, with its roots going back to ancient times. Realism proposes several core assumptions: state-centrism, anarchy, egoism, and power politics.

State-centrism: States are considered the primary actors in the international system, surpassing other entities in terms of importance.

Anarchy: The international system is characterized by anarchy, meaning the absence of a central authority or world government capable of regulating interactions between states. This absence of a supreme power leads to a self-help system where states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their survival and security.

Egoism: Realists assume that states are rational and unitary actors who prioritize their own self-interest. States seek to maximize their power, security, and wealth in a competitive international environment.

Power politics: The pursuit of power and security is the primary concern of all states. States engage in power politics to protect themselves and advance their interests. This often leads to security dilemmas, where one state's efforts to enhance its security may be perceived as threatening by another state, leading to an arms race or conflict. (Camisão, 2020: Lomia 2020)

Classical Realism vs. Neorealism

Within realism, there are different schools of thought, including classical realism and neorealism (structural realism). Classical realism, exemplified by thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau, emphasizes the role of human nature in shaping international politics. Morgenthau argued that states are driven by the will to power, which is rooted in man's innate egoism and desire to dominate. (Forde, 1995)

Neorealism, on the other hand, focuses on the structure of the international system as the main determinant of state behavior. Kenneth Waltz, a prominent neorealist, argues that the anarchic structure of the international system forces states to pursue power to ensure their survival. Neorealism downplays the role of human nature and instead emphasizes the limits imposed by the international system. (Nye, 1988)

Criticisms of Realism

Despite the growing number of works on realism and Islamic thought separately, there is a lack of systematic comparative studies that analyze their fundamental assumptions side by side. Most of the existing literature discusses these perspectives separately or addresses their intersection superficially. This gap highlights the importance of studies that deepen the

dialogue between Western and Islamic approaches to international relations. (Guzzini, 2004)

Criticisms and Gaps in the Literature

Although realism remains influential, it faces criticism from liberalism, constructivism, and feminist IR theory, which challenge its assumptions about power, cooperation, and gender (Guzzini, 2004). Similarly, some scholars argue that Western IR theory does not adequately represent non-Western worldviews, underscoring the need to incorporate perspectives such as Islamic political thought (Acharya & Buzan, 2007).

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Tafsir (Exegesis) and the Qur'an

Tafsir plays an important role in interpreting the Qur'ān and understanding its relevance to contemporary issues, including international relations. Tafsir involves the interpretation and scholarly explanation of Qur'ānic verses, providing context, clarification, and guidance on their application. There are various schools of Tafsir, each with its own methodology and approach to interpreting the Qur'ān. Some Tafsir scholars emphasize the literal meaning of the text, while others focus on its allegorical or symbolic interpretation. In the context of realism and Islam,

Tafsir help explain how the Qur'ān addresses issues such as human nature, international relations, power and justice (Muttaqin, 2024).

Theoretical Framework

Realism: History, Core Assumptions, and Key Scholars

Islamic history has greatly influenced its perspective on international relations (IR) through a number of concepts and practices that have developed since the time of the Prophet Muhammad to classical and contemporary scholars.

History and Contribution of Islam in International Relations

Islam was born in the 7th century in the Arabian Peninsula with the Prophet Muhammad as the leader and carrier of the Qur'anic revelation. From the beginning, Islam was not only a religion, but also a political and social system that regulated relations between communities and countries. The Prophet Muhammad sent envoys and letters to various kings around his territory to inform the existence of the sovereign state of Medina, as well as to spread the message of Islam. This marked the beginning of a pattern of international relations in Islam that was based on proselytization, politics, and the expansion of influence. (Alzain, 2021)

Classical Islamic scholars such as Imam Hanafi and Ibn Khaldun made major contributions to political theory and international relations, long before the modern discipline of IR was born in the West. For example, Imam Hanafi divided the world into three regions: Darul Islam (Islamic territory), Darul Harbi (territory opposed to Islam), and Darul Ahdi (territory in agreement with Islam), which became the basis of strategic thinking in interstate relations. Ibn Khaldun developed the theory of 'ashabiyyah (group solidarity) which integrates revelation and empirical ratios, as a basis for understanding socio-political dynamics and relationships between communities. (Kalpakian, 2008)

Islamic Perspectives on International Relations

Islam views international relations not only from the political and power aspects, but also from a moral and spiritual point of view. The Islamic perspective combines physical and metaphysical realities, where concepts such as justice, solidarity of the Ummah, and moral responsibility take center stage. Islam teaches that peace and justice can be achieved not only through the balance of power (as in Western Realism theory), but also through ethical values and religious norms that govern behavior between states and individuals. Islam rejects the view that conflict is an absolute destiny, and positions Islam as the mediator that can bring peace and justice. (Mohammed, 2024)

Relevance of Islam in International Relations Science

In the context of international relations science, the Islamic perspective offers an alternative approach that differs from the dominance of a more empirical and secular Western view. The Islamic perspective integrates the proposition of revelation (Al-Qur'an and Hadith) with rational and

empirical arguments, resulting in a distinctive and holistic methodology.History also shows that the concept of jihad in Islam was once the foundation of Indonesia's independence struggle, which is a clear example of the application of Islamic international relations principles in a modern context. (Abdillah & Masyrofah, 2024)

Islamic history shapes a unique perspective of international relations by combining political, moral and spiritual aspects. Concepts such as Darul Islam, Ummah, justice, and solidarity provide a foundation of thought that is distinct from Western theories, but also relevant to understanding the dynamics of interstate relations in the Muslim world and globally. This perspective emphasizes that in Islam, international relations are not only about power and interests, but also about ethical values and broader humanitarian goals. (Salah Mohammed, 2024; Khan, 1997)

The development of IR theory has also been shaped by key figures and scholars who have contributed to the advancement of different theoretical perspectives. For example, scholars such as Hedley Bull have played an important role in shaping the British School of International Relations, which emphasizes the idea of a society of states existing at the international level. (McGlinchey & Gold, 2017)

In Islamic studies, the major schools of thought in International Relations theory, including realism, liberalism, constructivism, and rational choice, have emerged not as a result of ongoing debates and intellectual developments in the field. Rather, these major schools of thought constitute a unified outlook that is an innate human trait that must be utilized and managed. An example can be seen in the concept of "anarchy" where the concept of anarchy refers to the absence of a central authority or sovereign power over states. This means that in the international system, there is no hierarchical structure or overarching body that can enforce laws, resolve disputes or maintain order. Anarchy is widely accepted as a basic condition

of the international system and is not necessarily synonymous with chaos or disorder. (Milner,1991).

Likewise, Islam also believes that the world is anarchy. In the sense that there is no supreme power that can control the world, except for God. God is the supreme authority, while the leader (khalifah) is someone who is given the responsibility of managing the earth. (Q.S, 2: 30) This is based on the word of God (Allah) in His book (Qur'an,) which has the following meaning:

"To Allah (alone) belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. And to Allah is the final return". (Q.S, 24: 42).

"As for those who take other protectors besides Him, Allah is Watchful over them. And you ˹O Prophet˺ are not a keeper over them" ".(Q.S, 42:6)

In the discourse of the two verses above, it is clearly believed that there is no supreme authority in this world except God Almighty as the only one who deserves to be obeyed. However, this is not the final word. In his further explanation, in other verses Allah also tells humans to obey the Messenger and leaders.

"O believers! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority(Ulil Amri) among you. Should you disagree on anything, then refer it to Allah and His Messenger, if you ˹truly˺ believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is the best and fairest resolution." (Q.S, 4:59)

And Remember when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place a successive human (khalifah) authority on earth." They asked Allah,

"Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness?" Allah responded, "I know what you do not know." (Q.S, 2:30)

While the first point acknowledges that God is the highest authority in the world and even the universe, the second point also tells us to obey prophets and leaders. This does not indicate that the world system is anarchy and there is no government that can be followed because God cannot be seen and touched, and the Prophet has passed away and also leaders who are not fit to be leaders. However, some of the verses above provide limitations on human action. On the one hand, Islam believes that the highest authority in the world is God who must be followed by his teachings, and God also tells humans to obey their leaders.

The Realist Concept in International Relations

It is important to understand that realism in international relations is a school of theory that focuses on the political and power aspects, while the Islamic perspective in international relations involves religious values and Islamic principles. Both have different approaches in analyzing and understanding international relations.

The concept of realism in international relations is a school of theory that focuses on four main ideas, namely political groupism, egoism, international anarchy, and power politics. The theory of political realism originated from the writings of Thomas Hobbes and Niccol Machiavelli, and emerged as an international relations-based approach in the period between World War I and World War II. (Bell, 2023)

Realism and Neo Liberalism

Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War demonstrates realism's skepticism towards the restraining effects of morality. In a speech attributed to the Athenians in the Melian dialog, Thucydides notes that "truth, as time passes, is only questioned among those of equal strength, while the strong do what they can and the weak endure what they must". (Elman, 2007)

Humans are equal in the sense that "the weakest have sufficient strength to kill the strongest, whether by secret intrigue or by alliance with others". "From this equality of ability comes equality of hope in achieving our goals. And therefore, if there are two people who want the same thing, which they cannot enjoy anyway, they become enemies; and on the way to their goal (which is essentially their own conversation, and sometimes only their pleasure) seek to destroy or subdue each other." (Hobbes, 1851)

Classical realism got its start in 1939 with the publication of Edward Hallett Carr's The 20 Years' Crisis. Classical realism became the outstanding realist standard with the publication of Hans Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace in 1948. Classical realism was originally formulated in response to the liberal approach to international politics during the interwar period. The main element of classical realism lies in the will to power, which is rooted in the flawed human nature (egoism). States are constantly engaged in a struggle to improve their capabilities. Morgenthau believed that "the main signpost that helped political realism to find its way through the international political landscape was the concept of interests defined in terms of power." (Morgenthau, 2005)

Classical realism explains conflictual behavior by human failings. Certain wars are explained, for example, by aggressive statesmen or domestic political systems that allow greedy parochial groups to pursue self-

interested, expansionist foreign policies. For classical realists, international politics can be characterized as evil: bad things happen because foreign policy makers are sometimes evil. (Spirtas,1996). Moreover, political realism, according to Morgenthau, refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a state with the moral laws that govern the universe. He further states "there is an enormous difference between the belief that all nations are under the judgment of God, which is incomprehensible to the human mind, and the blasphemous belief that God is always on one's side and what one wills cannot be un-willed by God." (Morgenthau, 2005)

The realist worldview was revised with the publication of Kenneth Waltz's book Theory of International Politics in 1979. One of the differences between classical realism and neorealism is their view on the source and content of state preferences. According to Morgenthau, state leaders are motivated by their lust for power. Waltz's theory, on the other hand, ignores leaders' motivations and state characteristics as causal variables of international outcomes, except for the minimal assumption that states seek to survive. (Elman, 2007) instead emphasizes an anarchic international system. With an anarchic international order, each unit must "put itself in a position to take care of itself because no one else can be relied upon to do so". (Donnelly, 2005) In other words, there is no central authority or government to protect the state in the international system, so the state must pursue self-help methods for its own security.

Research Methodology

This study uses combination of two approaches, qualitative combine Tafsir approach *(Maudhu'i/thematic).* The main data is taken from relevant literature and books including the Qur'an Tafsir. This research begins by examining the literature related to realist studies in the Western perspective that commonly use today, then looking at how the Realist perspective in Islam by examining the basis of the verses that explain the realist concept

in the Qur'an, using the Maudhu'i (thematic) method of the verse and then examining its meaning using the books of interpretation to get a more comprehensive meaning and explanation, then comparing the Western and Islamic realist concepts in International Relations, so that the similarities and differences are obtained and consideration is given to which theory is more relevant for the present.

Result and Discussion

Concepts of International Relations in the Qur'an and Tafsir

The foundation of the realist concept related to international relations can be seen from the arguments of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30

"Remember when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to place a successive human (caliph) authority on earth.' They asked Allah, 'Will You place in it someone who will spread corruption there and shed blood while we glorify Your praises and proclaim Your holiness? Allah responded, 'I know what you do not know."(Q.S, 2:30)

To understand this concept, see the explanation from the scholars remember O Muhammad *(when your Lord said to the angels, "I want to make a caliph on the earth")* to replace Me in carrying out My provisions therein, namely Adam. *(They asked, "Do you want to make someone who corrupts) by his immoral actions (and sheds blood) pouring it out through murder as the jinn did.* They were originally the inhabitants of the earth, but when they committed corruption, Allah sent angels to expel them to the islands and mountains *(there? Whereas, we)* always *(praise)* with *"Subhānallāh" (and purify Your name)"* purifying You from all attributes unworthy of You. That is, "We are more deserving as your substitutes." *(He [Allah] said, "Indeed, I know what you do not know.")* I know the benefit of appointing Adam as My successor. Adam's

descendants consist of obedient and disobedient servants so that My justice appears among them. (Jalaluddin Al Mahalli & Jalaluddin As-Suyouti, 1971)

But the most important thing is that this verse does not merely explain about the beginning of human beings, there are several things that need to be seen related to the understanding that we are discussing.
First, in the sentence (when your Lord said to the angel, "I want to make a caliph on earth") this explains that basically the essence of human presence on earth has a definite purpose and function, namely as a caliph which linguistically comes from the word "khulafa" which means "behind" From here the word caliph is often interpreted as a "substitute" because what is replaced is always behind, after the one it replaces (Shihab, 1994). or in other words "caliph" is the people who take turns, inhabit, rule and build on earth. (Ibn Kathir, 1993) In terms of caliphs can be interpreted as 1) Representative of the Prophet Muhammad SAW after he died who implemented Islamic law in the Islamic state. 2) Head of religion and king in the Islamic state. 3) Goverment or Leader.

When referring to the Qur'an, the word khalifah can be traced that in the singular form is repeated twice, namely in Surah al-Baqarah verse 30, and in Surah Shad verse 26 which becomes While in the plural form is also used twice, namely: (Rasyad, 2022)

a) Khalifah which is repeated four times, namely in Surah al-An'am verse 165, which is interpreted as "rulers", then in Surah Yunus verse 43, interpreted as "substitutes", then still in Surah Yunus, namely verse 73, interpreted as "power holders", and finally in Surah Fathir verse 39, interpreted as caliphs.

b) Khulafa', this word in the Qur'an is repeated three times, namely in Surah al-'Araf verses 69 and 74, both of which are interpreted as "successors (in power)", then there is in Surah al-Naml verse 62, which is interpreted as "caliph on earth (making power on earth). (Ministry of Religious Affairs , 1415 AH)

They asked, *"Do You want to make people who corrupt) by their immoral acts (and shed blood) pour it out through murder as the jinn do.* They were originally the inhabitants of the earth, but when they committed corruption, Allah sent

angels to expel them to the islands and mountains *(there? Whereas, we) always (praise) with "Subhānallāh" (and purify Your name)"* purifying You from all attributes unworthy of You. That is, *"We are more deserving as your successors."*(Jalaluddin Al Mahalli & Jalaluddin As-Suyouti, 1971)

This sentence provides initial information that humans have a nature that is destructive and sheds blood like other creatures that are believed to have inhabited the earth.(Muhammad Ibrahim Al Hifnawi This destructive background goes back to the duality in human nature, namely *Syahwat* and *Ghadab* which can be positive if controlled and cause mafsadat (damage) if it cannot be controlled (chaos). (Baidowi, 2008)

Since the word used above is "khalifah" which has the habit of what has been described, the angel asked his question about the reason for man's selection, with the statement "Whereas we always praise You (God)". The Angels assume that the world is only built with "Tasbih and Tahmid" which distances God's Essence, attributes, and actions from everything that is unnatural for Him, while praising God for all the favors He (God) has given.

He (God) said, *'Indeed, I know what you do not know,'* this is a very general sentence. God does not give an answer to what His angel has questioned, but He (God) emphasizes that only He knows what has happened and will happen. Therefore, there are no specific details about what God's intention is in making humans as caliphs who have the basic characteristic of "making damage and then repairing it" in a world that is not only built with "tasbih and tahmid" alone. God could have built the world with other things such as worship, adoration, war, crisis, monetary, or peace and others.

The important point is that there is no fixed form of the world system that God has planned for humans, while humans themselves always follow the pattern that is always attached to duality, which duality is then managed by humans themselves which then makes them Realists, liberalists, Constructivists or others which can have good results, or have bad effects and cause damage, as what the angels already know that humans are

identical to spilling blood and making damage to get what they want. (Tafsir Jalalain)

Realism and Islam: Points of Convergence and Divergence

The intersection between realism and Islam is complex and controversial area, with points of convergence and divergence. Some scholars argue that certain aspects of Islamic thought are in line with realist principles, while others emphasize the differences between the two perspectives. (Baroudi, 2016)

Human Nature

Realism expresses a pessimistic view of human nature, seeing human beings as inherently selfish, self-centered, and power-hungry. This view is reflected in the writings of classical realists such as Thomas Hobbes, who described human life in its natural state as a "war of all against all". (Hobbes, 1994)

In Islam, human nature is understood as a duality, with both positive and negative tendencies. The Qur'an describes humans as having the potential for both good and evil, with the capacity for reason, compassion, and justice, as well as tendencies towards selfishness, greed, and aggression. The concepts of lust (desire) and ghadab (anger) are basic instincts that can lead to fasad (damage or disorder) if not managed properly. (Amrona, 2023)

International Anarchy

Realism views the international system as anarchic, with no higher authority to enforce rules or maintain order. This leads to a self-help system where states must rely on their own capabilities to ensure their security and survival.

Islam also recognizes the absence of a global authority but offers a different solution to the problem of anarchy. Instead of relying solely on self-help, Islam emphasizes the importance of abiding by divine law (Sharia) and ethical principles in international relations. The Qur'an calls on Muslims to uphold justice, fulfill promises and cooperate with each other.

The concept of "Khalifah" (leader or successor) represents the idea of a just and righteous ruler who rules according to God's will. (Baroudi, 2016)

Power and Justice

Realism emphasizes the pursuit of power as a means of ensuring the survival of the state and advancing national interests. While realists recognize the importance of morality, they argue that states must prioritize their security, even if it means committing unethical or immoral acts.

Islam recognizes the importance of power but emphasizes that power must be exercised justly and ethically. The Qur'an condemns the use of power for oppression or aggression and calls on Muslims to uphold justice, even if it means sacrificing their interests. The concept of "Adl" (justice) is central to Islamic ethics and is considered a fundamental principle of governance. (Al Khatib, 2023)

Jihad

The concept of jihad in Islam is often misunderstood and misinterpreted in the context of international relations. While some view jihad as a justification for violence and aggression, mainstream Islamic thought interprets it as a broader concept that includes both internal and external struggles. Internal jihad refers to the struggle against one's own base desires and temptations, while external jihad refers to the defense of Islam and the Muslim community against aggression. However, even in the case of external jihad, Islamic law sets strict limits on the use of force and prohibits the targeting of civilians or the destruction of property. (Hasanzadeh & Renani,2021)

Qur'an as Alternative for IR Theory (Realism)

The Realism approach to International Relations (IR) theory is based on the belief that the international system is anarchic, with states acting out of self-interest and seeking to maximize their power to survive. This view often prioritizes security and balance of power to the exclusion of ethical and moral considerations. Realists tend to believe that conflict is inevitable

and that power politics should guide state behavior. In contrast, the Qur'ān presents a very different perspective, challenging some of the core tenets of Realism. For example, Realism's emphasis on anarchy contradicts the Qur'ānic concept of Tawhid, or the oneness of God, which encourages a universal moral order. The Qur'ān encourages collective responsibility and belief in divine justice, urging states to act with ethical obligations towards the global community rather than simply seeking self-interest. Furthermore, while Realism views power as the dominant currency in international relations, the Qur'ān emphasizes the importance of justice and fairness, warning against the abuse of power and advocating its ethical application to prevent oppression and promote justice. (Qur'an 5:8, 8:61, 4:90, 5:2)

The Qur'anic framework also criticizes the Realist assumption of the primacy of national interest, arguing that universal moral principles such as compassion, mercy and justice should guide the actions of the state. The framework emphasizes that national interests must be balanced with ethical considerations for the well-being of humanity as a whole. Moreover, while Realism accepts conflict as an inevitable part of the international system, the Qur'ān encourages peaceful resolution and reconciliation, allowing fighting only in self-defense. The emphasis on cooperation in the Qur'ān also challenges the Realist focus on the balance of power, arguing that stability can be achieved through mutual cooperation for the common good, not through competition. The Qur'ānic view of human nature, which recognizes flaws but highlights the potential for moral growth, offers a more optimistic outlook than the Realist belief in humans as inherently selfish and power-seeking. Finally, while Realists emphasize state sovereignty and the rejection of external accountability, the Qur'ān emphasizes that sovereignty is accompanied by moral responsibility and accountability to God and the people, advocating ethical leadership and the responsible use of power. This moral leadership, according to the Qur'ān, calls for rulers to act justly, compassionately, and with consideration for the well-being of all people, which contrasts with Realism's more pragmatic and power-driven view of leadership. (Qur'an 99:6-8, 4:58, 2:190, 49:13, 4:58)

This research has explored the similarities and differences between realist concepts in International Relations (IR) theory and Islamic perspectives sourced from the Qur'an and its commentaries. The analysis

reveals that while Western realism and Islamic thought recognize the reality of conflict, power and the absence of a supreme global authority, they differ significantly in their basic principles, ethical considerations and approaches to human nature and governance.

Epistemological and Methodological Differences

Realism, rooted in Western thought, adopts a positivist approach that often excludes moral and ethical values from its analysis of international politics. Realism views the international system as inherently anarchic, driven by nation-state self-interest, and prioritizes power politics as the primary means of ensuring survival. In contrast, Islam integrates moral and ethical values as essential components of its worldview, drawn from divine revelation (the Qur'an) and the teachings of the Prophet (the *Sunnah*). Islamic thought does not reject rationality but complements it with spiritual and ethical guidance, offering a more holistic approach to understanding international relations.

Human Nature and Governance

Realism depicts human nature as selfish, self-centered, and power-hungry, leading to a constant struggle for dominance in an anarchic world. This pessimistic view is exemplified in the works of classical realists such as Thomas Hobbes, who described life in its natural state as "wicked, savage, and short." In contrast, Islam recognizes the duality of human nature, acknowledging both positive and negative tendencies. Humans are endowed with lust (desire) and "ghadab" (anger), which, if not managed properly, can lead to "fasad" (chaos and corruption). However, Islam also emphasizes the potential for moral growth, justice and compassion, guided by divine principles. The concept of *khalifah* (leader or caliph) underscores the responsibility of humans to rule the earth justly and in accordance with God's will.

International Anarchy and Divine Authority

Both realism and Islam recognize the absence of a supreme global authority in the international system. For realists, this anarchy leads to a

self-sufficient system in which states must rely on their own strength to ensure security and survival. In contrast, Islam offers a different solution to this problem. While recognizing the lack of a supreme earthly authority, Islam holds that ultimate sovereignty belongs to God, and that human leaders (the caliphs or ulil amri) are tasked with implementing divine guidance on earth. This perspective shifts the focus from pure power politics to a system in which justice, ethical governance, and cooperation are paramount. The Qur'an calls for the fulfillment of promises, the establishment of justice, and the avoidance of oppression, even in the pursuit of national interests.

Power, Justice, and Ethical Leadership

Realism emphasizes the accumulation of power as the primary means of ensuring the survival of the state, often at the expense of moral considerations. In contrast, Islam emphasizes the ethical use of power and the pursuit of justice (adl). The Qur'an condemns the abuse of power and calls on leaders to act with compassion, justice, and accountability. While realists view conflict as inevitable, Islam encourages peaceful resolution and cooperation, permitting the use of force only in self-defense and under strict ethical guidelines. The concept of jihad, often misunderstood, is not simply a call to arms, but encompasses a broader struggle for self-improvement, justice, and the defense of the Muslim community against aggression.

The Relevance of Islamic Realism in Contemporary International Relations

In today's complex global landscape, where power politics alone often fails to address the challenges of international relations, an Islamic perspective offers a valuable alternative. By integrating moral and ethical principles into the analysis of global politics, Islamic realism provides a framework that emphasizes justice, cooperation and the well-being of humanity as a whole. The Qur'anic emphasis on universal moral values, such as compassion, mercy and justice, challenges the realist assumption that national interests should always take precedence over ethical considerations.

Conclusion

Although Western realism and Islamic thought have some similarities in their recognition of conflict and the need for self-preservation, they differ fundamentally in their approaches to human nature, governance, and the role of ethics in international relations. Realism's focus on power and national interests is counterbalanced by Islam's emphasis on justice, ethical leadership and divine guidance. In a world increasingly characterized by global interdependence and ethical dilemmas, the Islamic perspective offers an attractive alternative to the traditional realist framework, advocating for a more just and compassionate international order.

This study underscores the importance of integrating multiple perspectives, including religious and ethical considerations, into the study of international relations. In doing so, it opens up new avenues for understanding and addressing global political challenges in ways that prioritize not only power and security but also justice, morality and the common good.

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