



# Literal and Figurative Usage and their Effect on Deriving the Objectives of the Law: A Study of the Qur'anic Verses on Governance (Siyasa Shar'iyah)

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**Abstract.** *This study examines the effect of literal and figurative usage (haqiqa and majaz) on deriving the objectives of Islamic law from Qur'anic verses concerning governance, including authority, obedience, allegiance, military preparation, warfare, and communal interests. The study begins by discussing literal and figurative usage, their classifications, and relevant legal-theoretical principles, followed by an explanation of the objectives of Islamic law and the scope of governance-related verses. It then applies a five-step analytical procedure to five key verses: Q. 4:59 on those in authority, Q. 48:10 on allegiance, Q. 8:60 on preparation, Q. 2:195 on self-destruction, and Q. 2:193 on fitna. Each verse is examined through philological commentaries, legal theory, and the derivation of its corresponding legal objective and governance implications. The findings demonstrate that figurative usage is not merely rhetorical but contributes substantively to legal interpretation. The extended meaning of amr establishes authority subject to higher principles, while the figurative meaning of the divine hand sanctifies political allegiance. The literal breadth of quwwa encompasses changing instruments of preparation. Figurative interpretations of destruction and fitna broaden objectives toward preserving political order and removing causes of conflict. Three principles emerge: literal meaning is presumed, figurative interpretation requires contextual evidence, and figuratively derived objectives require greater contextual discipline.*

**Keywords:** *Governance In Islamic Law; Literal And Figurative Usage; Military Preparation; Objectives Of Islamic Law; The Pledge Of Allegiance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Praise be to God, who sent down His Book in clear Arabic speech and made its exposition proceed through ranks of literal and figurative usage, of plain statement and allusion; and blessings upon His Prophet, who was given the most comprehensive of words. Among the most delicate topics in the theory of legal signification is that of literal and figurative usage, for upon it turns the determination of the Lawgiver's intent whenever a term admits both its assigned sense and another sense to which it has been transferred by a relation and an indicator. The topic becomes more delicate still when it concerns the verses on governance, since the rulings derived from them touch the whole structure of political association: whose authority is to be obeyed, by what a covenant is concluded, what is the purpose of force and fighting, and how the interests of the community are to be weighed. It has been observed that many studies treat literal and figurative usage as an abstract theoretical topic, or treat the verses of governance juristically without pausing at the semantic structure of their terms. The present study therefore joins the two: it tests how the dichotomy of literal and figurative usage operates in producing the legal objective from the verses of public affairs, and then how this is reflected in the rules and practice of Islamic governance.

The problem may be stated thus: how does the dichotomy of literal and figurative usage in the terms of the verses on governance affect the derivation of the objectives of the law from them, and what is the effect of this upon the rulings that regulate public affairs? From it follow these questions: (a) What are literal and figurative usage in legal theory, and what rules govern the movement between them? (b) What are the objectives of the law, their divisions, and the paths by which they are established? (c) What defines the verses on governance, and what are their fields? (d) Which terms in the verses studied carry literal and figurative senses, and how did the commentators and legal theorists analyse them? (e) What is the effect of determining the literal or the figurative upon the objective derived, and how is this reflected in the rules of governance?

(a) To establish the three foundational expositions concisely and functionally, in a manner serving the applied study. (b) To analyse, in the manner of legal theory, the terms of five pivotal verses on governance with respect to literal and figurative usage. (c) To derive the effect of the dichotomy upon the legal objective of each verse and to state the rank of its establishment. (d) To set out the practical consequences for the rules of governance: authority, the pledge, preparation, the weighing of interests, and the purpose of fighting. (e) To distil the rules governing the effect of literal and figurative usage upon the derivation of the objectives of this field.

The significance of the study lies in the fact that the verses on governance are the highest reference for the jurisprudence of state and society in Islam, and that error in determining the literal or figurative sense of their terms leads to error in their objectives whence arise extreme readings in both directions: one that freezes the figurative in its historical forms, and one that expands it without indicator until the rulings dissolve. Its originality lies in two matters: adherence to a uniform five-step procedure applied to the verses of the field one by one, which permits controlled comparison; and the distillation of governing rules from the application itself, foremost among them that an objective derived from figurative usage is wider in scope and in greater need of contextual discipline.

Each verse is studied according to five uniform steps: (1) Citation of the Qur'anic verse. (2) Its exposition from the philologically oriented commentaries (al-Tabari's *Jami' al-Bayan*, Ibn 'Atiyya's *al-Muharrar al-Wajiz*, al-Qurtubi's *al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, and Ibn 'Ashur's *al-Tahrir wa al-Tanwir*). (3) Analysis, in the manner of legal theory, of the terms carrying literal and figurative senses: determining the original assignment, the relation, the indicator, and the type of figurative usage. (4) Statement of the effect of literal and figurative usage upon the

derivation of the legal objective of the verse. (5) Statement of the effect upon the doctrine and practice of Islamic governance.

References are given in footnotes numbered consecutively from (1) to the last number in the study; the full bibliographic details of a source appear at its first occurrence and an abbreviated form thereafter. The place of citation is given by what remains stable across editions: dictionaries by entry, commentaries by sura and verse, the two Sahihs by book, and works of legal theory, objectives and governance by section or chapter. All sources are in Arabic.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Literal and Figurative Usage and the Rules Governing them in Legal Theory**

Haqiqa derives from haqq, denoting fixity; majaz derives from jawaz, denoting passage and transference (The Holy Qur'an.). Technically, the literal is a term used in the sense for which it was assigned in the convention of discourse, while the figurative is a term used in other than its assigned sense by reason of a relation between the two senses, together with an indicator precluding the original sense. Al-Ghazali defined the two terms and explained the division of the literal into lexical, legal and customary (Al-Ghazali et al., 1993). The relations of figurative usage are many; the best known in the verses of legal import are causality and effect, part and whole (naming the part and intending the whole, and the reverse), locality and occupancy, regard for what was or what will become, and metaphor founded upon resemblance.

Four rules govern the dichotomy in legal theory and they constitute the analytical apparatus of this study. First, the presumption is that speech is construed literally, and one moves to the figurative only upon a diverting indicator, since the figurative departs from the presumption (Al-Ghazali et al., 1997). Second, the indicator may be verbal, contextual, rational or legal, and the determinacy of the figurative varies with its strength. Third, a figurative sense may become predominant through usage until it precedes the abandoned literal sense in comprehension, and is then preferred. Fourth, the hesitation of a term between its literal and figurative sense is among the systematic causes of juristic disagreement, as Ibn Rushd established in the introduction to his work (Ibn Rushd al-Hafid et al., 2004). It should be noted that the majority of legal theorists affirm figurative usage in language and in the Qur'an, while some — such as Abu Ishaq al-Isfarayini — denied it, and Ibn Taymiyya famously contested the division itself; on the analysis of a number of leading scholars the dispute reduces in many of its forms to terminology, since there is no disagreement over the principle of extended usage

with its indicators, but only over its designation and the consequences attached to it. This study proceeds on the terminology of the majority, given its establishment in the discipline.

### **The Objectives of the Law**

Maqasid is the plural of maqsid, from qasd, whose root denotes straightness of path, purpose and direction (Ibn Faris, 1979). Technically they are the meanings and wisdoms observed by the Lawgiver in all or most states of legislation, as Ibn 'Ashur defined them (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004), their basis being al-Shatibi's inductive conclusion that the law was laid down for the interests of God's servants in this world and the next (Al-Shatibi and al-Muwafaqat, 1997). They are divided by their strength into the necessary (preservation of religion, life, intellect, lineage and property), the needed, and the improving (Al-Ghazali et al., 1993; Al-Shatibi and al-Muwafaqat, 1997); by their scope into general, particular to a field, and partial (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004); and by the path of their establishment into those stated in the texts, those established inductively, and those derived by appropriateness (Al-Shatibi and al-Muwafaqat, 1997; Al-Raysuni, 1993). The objectives of the field of governance such as the preservation of religion, the establishment of justice, the preservation of order and the repulsion of corruption belong to the particular objectives referable to the five necessities as a whole, for authority is instituted only to guard religion and to administer worldly affairs by it.

### **The Verses on Governance**

Siyasa derives lexically from saws: leadership and the management of a thing by what sets it right (Ibn Manzur, 1994). Technically, siyasa shar'iyya is the management of public affairs in a manner realising the interests of the community and averting harm from it, in accordance with the principles of the law, even where no specific text addresses the matter in detail. Ibn al-Qayyim transmitted from Ibn 'Aqil the comprehensive definition that it is any act by which people are brought nearer to rectitude and further from corruption, even if the Messenger did not institute it and no revelation was sent concerning it (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 2008); Ibn Taymiyya devoted to it his work combining offices, revenues and penalties upon the principle of rendering trusts and judging with justice (Ibn Taymiyya, 2009); and al-Mawardi arranged its rules under the chapters of the offices of state (Al-Mawardi, 2014).

Accordingly, the verses on governance are those regulating the management of public affairs, and they may be gathered inductively into five fields: the verses of authority, obedience and referral in disputes; the verses of covenants, the pledge of allegiance and fidelity; the verses of trusts and judging with justice; the verses of preparation, fighting, its purposes and peace; and the verses of public revenue, expenditure and the weighing of interests.

### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

The study selected five Qur'anic verses from the identified fields of governance as the primary texts for analysis. The selection was based on two criteria. First, the verse had to be central to the construction and understanding of its respective field among jurists of public law. Second, it had to contain a term involving a genuine distinction between literal assignment and figurative transference that produces a discernible effect on interpretation or legal ruling. These criteria were applied to ensure that the selected verses represent significant areas of governance while providing sufficient textual material for examining how semantic determination influences the derivation of legal objectives and their implications for Islamic governance.

### 4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### The Applied Study of the Verses on Governance

##### *Those in Authority*

##### a. Citation of the Verse

God, exalted be He, says: "O you who believe, obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you; and if you dispute over anything, refer it to God and the Messenger" (Q. 4:59)

##### b. Exposition from the philological commentaries

The predecessors differed over the identity of 'those in authority': some said the rulers and governors, others the people of knowledge and jurisprudence, and others both. Al-Tabari preferred the rulers and governors, on the strength of the sound reports commanding obedience to the imams in what is right (Al-Tabari, 2000); Ibn 'Atiyya and al-Qurtubi reported the positions and their grounds (Ibn 'Atiyya, 2002). The commentators noted the subtlety of repeating the verb with the Messenger and obey the Messenger' while omitting it with those in authority, indicating that obedience to them is not independent but subordinate to obedience to God and His Messenger in what accords with the law; and Ibn 'Ashur made the verse the foundation of the system of government in Islam, since it combines the establishment of obedience with the reference of disputes (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004).

##### c. Analysis of literal and figurative usage

The analysis turns upon the term *amr*: its assigned sense is the utterance requiring an act (the imperative form and its equivalents), while it is also applied to a matter, a state and an office. Whoever takes it in the verse to mean office and authority has thereby diverted it from the literal sense of utterance to an extended sense, the relation being causality or concomitance: the holder of office is the one who commands and forbids, so the whole matter is named after

its most evident instrument. The diverting indicator is strong: the annexation of *uli*, denoting possession, and the context of obedience, dispute and referral. It follows that 'those in authority' are not owners of unqualified utterance but holders of an office bounded by the true source of command; hence the referral in disputes is to God and the Messenger and not to them so that the very structure of the figurative usage prevents authority from becoming an independent source of legislation.

**d. Effect upon the derivation of the objective**

The objective derived is the establishment of an obeyed authority of bounded reference. The figurative usage widened the term from utterance to office and thus established a political apparatus whose obedience is obligatory for the preservation of order-one of the general objectives (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004)- while the roots of the literal sense (*amr* as the utterance of the one entitled to command) remain present in restricting that obedience to conformity with God's command; this is confirmed by the sound hadith that obedience is only in what is right (Al-Bukhari, 2002). The balance between the two aspects of the term produced the composite objective: an obedience preserving order, and a reference preserving religion. Had the figurative been taken absolutely, despotism would have followed; had the literal been taken alone, the meaning of office would have been lost.

**e. *Effect upon Islamic governance:***

Three rules follow: the legitimacy of public authority and the duty of obedience to it in what is right, so as to preserve order and prevent anarchy; the restriction of every act of authority to the reference of the law, so that no creature is obeyed in disobedience to the Creator; and the establishment of the principle of reference in disputes, which is the root of adjudication by the supreme reference in contemporary terms. The jurists of public law built upon this verse the chapters on the contracting of the imamate and its rights and duties, and Ibn Taymiyya made it the axis of his work on the offices of authority.

***The Pledge of Allegiance***

**a. Citation of the verse**

God, exalted be He, says: "Those who pledge allegiance to you pledge allegiance only to God; the hand of God is above their hands" (Q. 48:10)

**b. Exposition from the philological commentaries**

The verse was revealed concerning the Pledge of Good Pleasure beneath the tree. The commentators explained that *mubaya'a* is of the pattern of reciprocity from *bay'* (sale), since the one pledging offers himself and his obedience as a seller offers his goods; the term then became predominant for the contract of allegiance and obedience (Al-Mawardi, 2014). As for

'the hand of God is above their hands', the commentators followed two courses: affirmation with consignment of the modality to God, and exposition of the intended sense of the construction that their contract with the Prophet is a contract with God, and that God's power and covenant are above their contract by way of ratification and confirmation. Ibn 'Ashur took the construction as a figurative representation magnifying this pledge and affirming that God witnessed and guaranteed it (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004).

### **c. Analysis of literal and figurative usage**

The verse contains two semantic layers. The first is the term *mubaya'a* itself, a metaphor drawn from the contract of sale for the contract of obedience, the relation being resemblance in offering, commitment and reciprocal transfer; this figurative usage became predominant through usage until it functioned as a customary legal sense for the contract of allegiance a clear instance of the rule that a predominant figurative sense is preferred. The second is the construction 'the hand of God is above their hands': the second 'hands' is literal, since the pledge was made by clasping hands, while as to the first predication the two courses mentioned obtain, and the legal sense yielded is one and the same on either view the elevation of the divine covenant above the human contract by way of guarantee and confirmation. The word 'above' is literally spatial in sensible things but is here used for elevation of rank and emphasis, a well-known figurative usage of elevation in Arabic.

### **d. Effect upon the derivation of the objective**

The objective derived is the sanctification of the political contract, raising it from a human transaction to a covenant witnessed by God; and this objective was produced by the figurative usage itself: the metaphor of sale established that allegiance is a reciprocal commitment with a countervalue on the pattern of '*God has purchased from the believers their lives and their wealth in return for Paradise*' (Q. 9:111) while the construction of the hand and elevation established that breaking this contract is a breach of God's covenant, not merely a failure toward a human being; this is confirmed by the remainder of the verse: 'so whoever breaks his oath breaks it only against himself'. The rank of the objective is that of a purpose stated in its context, since the construction is adduced by way of justifying the encouragement to fidelity and the warning against breach.

### **e. Effect upon Islamic governance:**

It follows that the contract of allegiance and authority in Islam is neither a purely secular contract of adhesion nor a ceremonial form, but a covenant of religious inviolability and mutual obligation: upon the community, hearing and obedience in what is right; upon the holder of authority, fulfilment of what the contract requires; and that fidelity to political covenants

(pledges and treaties alike) is a legal principle guarded by religion before law. Hence the jurists were severe concerning the breaking of allegiance and the rending of unity, and equally severe concerning rulers who usurp what it requires: the figurative usage that sanctified the contract sanctified it for both parties (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 2008).

### ***Military Preparation***

#### **a. Citation of the verse**

God, exalted be He, says: “*And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of tethered horses, by which you frighten the enemy of God and your enemy*” (Q. 8:60)

#### **b. Exposition from the philological commentaries**

Quwwa in the language is the contrary of weakness, a comprehensive noun for everything by which one gains strength (Ibn Manzur, 1994). The Prophet interpreted 'power' as archery, saying from the pulpit, 'Truly power is shooting', repeating it three times (Muslim, 2002); and the commentators explained that this is an interpretation by the noblest instance of power in that age and the most injurious to the enemy, not a restriction of power to it, since the term is general and specifying the most complete instance does not particularise it (Al-Qurtubi, 1964). The conjunction of 'tethered horses' to 'power' is the conjunction of the particular to the general, by way of drawing attention to its importance in that age (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004).

#### **c. Analysis of literal and figurative usage**

This verse is an instructive counter-instance in the field of literal and figurative usage: the term 'power' is used in its general lexical sense, and it is the breadth of the literal sense itself — not transference — that has encompassed every new development in armament until the end of time; the inclusion of modern weaponry in the verse is inclusion within the generality of the literal sense, not construal as figurative. This is an important theoretical distinction: a general term embraces its newly arising instances literally. As for 'tethered horses', it is literal in its denotation, and the annexation of modern vehicles of war to it proceeds by analogy or by their inclusion in the generality of 'power', not by treating horses as a figure for them, since no indicator diverts the term from its literal sense. In 'by which you frighten' there is a circumstantial clause explaining the ground of preparation, and 'frightening' here bears its literal lexical sense: deterrent intimidation.

#### **d. Effect upon the derivation of the objective**

The objective is stated as a cause in 'by which you frighten': the purpose of preparation is deterrence sufficient to frighten the enemy away from aggression, not initiatory aggression; this is confirmed by God's immediately following the verse of preparation with 'and if they incline to peace, incline to it' (Q. 8:61) — force being a means of security and honourable



peace, not an end. The effect of our topic here runs in two directions: construing 'power' in its general literal sense is what renders the objective (deterrence) realisable in every age by its own instruments; and construing 'frightening' in its literal lexical sense (deterrent intimidation of an aggressor) prevents its confusion with the modern term 'terrorism' in the sense of aggression against peaceful people — so that lexical precision here protects the objective from distortion.

#### **e. Effect upon Islamic governance**

It follows, in the jurisprudence of the state: the obligation of defensive preparation according to capacity, incumbent upon the community and discharged by the public authority; the inclusion of military industry, technology and a war economy within the designation of 'power' literally and without artifice; the restriction of the building of force to the objective of deterrence and the protection of the homeland, so that the verse is read together with the verse of inclining to peace as a single whole; and the priority of competence (archery: accuracy at a distance) in ordering the priorities of preparation, in emulation of the prophetic specification of the most injurious instance. Thus is founded a legal military doctrine: maximal force, for a bounded purpose.

#### ***Self-Destruction***

##### **a. Citation of the verse**

God, exalted be He, says: “*And spend in the way of God, and do not cast yourselves with your own hands into destruction; and do good, for God loves those who do good*” (Q. 2:195)

##### **b. Exposition from the philological commentaries**

The commentators mentioned two views concerning the preposition in 'with your hands': that it is expletive for emphasis, the object being 'your hands'; or that it is transitive, the object being elided, namely 'yourselves'. On either view the sense is the prohibition of bringing oneself into the paths of destruction (Ibn 'Atiyya, 2002). It is soundly reported from Abu Ayyub al-Ansari — objecting to those who supposed that plunging into the enemy is self-destruction that the verse was revealed concerning them, the Ansar, when they contemplated remaining upon their properties and tending them and abandoning struggle, so that the destruction was residing upon wealth and abandoning campaign; al-Qurtubi related this in his commentary on the verse (Al-Qurtubi, 1964). Ibn 'Ashur reconciled the senses by holding that destruction is whatever leads to the ruin of the individual or of the community, including the abandonment of expenditure on the means of defence (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004).

**c. Analysis of literal and figurative usage**

The verse contains three cooperating figurative structures. 'Hands', on the first view, is a synecdoche whose relation is partiality: the acting part is named and the whole self intended, since the hand is the instrument of most acts and thus the part most indicative of the whole of conduct. 'Casting' is a metaphor for placing oneself in destruction without deliberation, the negligent being likened to one who hurls something from his hand. And 'into' makes destruction a terminus as though it were a place to be reached a figurative usage of spatial terminus for a moral state. The three structures thus cooperate in depicting negligence as a voluntary march to a sensible demise. The theoretical effect of this construction is that the term specifies no particular kind of ruin, so it remains general for whatever leads to it; hence it bore (without contradiction) both the ruin of reckless plunging without benefit and the ruin of abstaining from struggle and expenditure, and Abu Ayyub's understanding is a recognised aspect within the generality of the figure.

**d. Effect upon the derivation of the objective**

The objective derived is the obligation to preserve existence (individual and collective) from the causes of extinction, by assessing consequences before both action and abstention. The role of figurative usage in producing it is evident: had the term been a determinate literal expression, the objective would have been confined to preserving individual life; but the generality of the figure widened it until it included — on the Companions' own understanding — the ruin of the community through the abandonment of its struggle and expenditure, so that an apparently individual injunction became a collective objective: abstention may be the very casting into destruction. This is the clearest witness in the sample to the rule this study proposes: an objective derived from figurative usage is wider in scope, and its discipline lies in context (the context of the verse being expenditure in the way of God) and in the understanding of the first generations.

**e. Effect upon Islamic governance**

There follows a comprehensive principle in decisions of public affairs: the obligatory weighing of consequences in war, peace and finance. It is forbidden for the holder of authority to thrust the community into a confrontation whose predominant outcome is ruin without preponderant benefit, and equally forbidden for him to suspend the preparation and public expenditure whose neglect leads to the ruin of the polity; this includes policies of economy, health and environment whose neglect destroys a community. By its expansive figure the verse thus becomes a comprehensive rule of national security, governing both action and omission by the measure of consequence (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, 2008).

***Fitna*****a. Citation of the verse**

God, exalted be He, says: “And fight them until there is no fitna and religion belongs to God; but if they desist, there is no aggression save against the wrongdoers” (Q. 2:193)

**b. Exposition from the philological commentaries**

The root f-t-n denotes originally the placing of gold in fire to test its quality; it was then used for testing and trial, then for punishment and burning, then for turning people away from their religion and the harm attending it (Ibn Faris, 1979). The commentators interpreted fitna in the verse as associationism together with the persecution of the believers and their torture to turn them from their religion, following what is transmitted from Ibn 'Abbas and others (Al-Tabari, 2000); Ibn 'Ashur restricted it to the polytheists' turning Muslims from their religion by harm and obstruction, and held the terminus expressed by hatta to indicate that fighting ends with the ending of its cause (Ibn 'Ashur, 2004).

**c. Analysis of literal and figurative usage**

The term fitna is a model instance of a term's progression from the literal to the figurative and thence to a customary literal sense: its original assigned sense is the assaying of metal by fire; it was then transferred to severe testing in general by the relation of resemblance (the disclosure of substance through hardship); it then became predominant in Qur'anic usage for turning people from their religion by harm, until it functioned there as a customary Qur'anic literal sense. Construing it in the verse in this sense is therefore construing it according to the sense foremost in comprehension within the convention of Qur'anic discourse a direct application of the rule preferring an established predominant figurative sense. The ember of the original sense (burning and trial by fire) remains present in the shadows of the term, depicting religious persecution as a fire into which hearts are cast to be turned from their faith. As for hatta, it is a particle of terminus in its literal sense, and it is the centre of the verse's legislative signification.

**d. Effect upon the derivation of the objective**

The objective derived is composite: the cause of fighting is the removal of religious persecution and the securing of the believing community's freedom to remain upon its religion an aspect of the preservation of religion in both its positive and negative dimensions and its purpose is expressly bounded by the particle of terminus: when the persecution ceases, the ground of fighting ceases, as confirmed by 'but if they desist, there is no aggression save against the wrongdoers'. The effect of our dichotomy upon this derivation is fundamental: determining the sense of fitna (obstruction and persecution, as the leading scholars established) is what

determines the operative ground of fighting and its extent; had the term been construed otherwise than in its established sense, the objective would have changed entirely so that establishing the customary Qur'anic sense of the term is the safety valve of the objective.

#### **e. Effect upon Islamic governance**

It follows, in the jurisprudence of war and international relations, that fighting in Islam is grounded in a cause and bounded by a purpose, not absolute: its cause is aggression and religious persecution and its purpose their removal; that the decision of war and peace turns upon its cause, so that when the aggressors desist, abstention is obligatory save against a wrongdoer actively engaged; and that the protection of religious freedom for Muslims in the first place, and for others through the contracts of protection and safe conduct with their rules is an objective upon which the state's external policy is built. Thus this verse meets the verse of preparation in constructing a single doctrine: a deterrent force, a war grounded in cause, and an intended peace (Ibn Taymiyya, 2009).

### **Rules Governing the Effect of Literal and Figurative Usage on the Objectives of Governance**

**Table 1.** Semantic Analysis of Governance-Related Verses and Their Derived Objectives

| <b>Verse and term</b>                 | <b>Semantic status</b>                                                           | <b>Objective derived</b>                                                          | <b>Effect on governance</b>                                                 |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Q. 4:59 — amr                         | Figurative by concomitance, upon the indicator of annexation and context         | An obeyed authority of bounded reference                                          | Legitimacy of authority, its limitation, and reference in disputes          |
| Q. 48:10 — 'they pledge' and the hand | A metaphor grown predominant into customary usage, plus an emphatic construction | Sanctification of the political contract and God's guarantee of it                | Inviolability of breaking pledges and covenants, binding both parties       |
| Q. 8:60 — quwwa                       | A general literal sense of encompassing breadth (counter-instance)               | Deterrence, stated as a cause in 'you frighten'                                   | Obligation of preparation with the instruments of every age, for deterrence |
| Q. 2:195 — hands / casting / into     | Three cooperating general figurative structures                                  | Preservation of individual and collective existence by the measure of consequence | A comprehensive security principle governing action and omission alike      |
| Q. 2:193 — fitna                      | A progressive figure settled into customary Qur'anic usage                       | The cause and purpose of fighting: the removal of persecution                     | A war grounded in cause and bounded by purpose; an intended peace           |

Three governing rules emerge from the survey : First: the presumption favours the literal, and one moves to the figurative only upon an indicator; yet its instructive converse appeared in the verse of preparation, where it was the breadth of the general literal sense (not figurative usage) that encompassed new developments. It should therefore be noted that the flexibility of a text may arise from the generality of its literal sense before its figurative sense. Second: a figurative sense predominant through usage — as in 'pledging' and 'fitna' — becomes foremost in comprehension and is accordingly preferred, and establishing its settled sense is

the safety valve of the objective against distortion. Third: an objective derived from figurative usage is wider in scope than one derived from a determinate literal sense, because the figure opens the generality of the meaning (as in 'destruction' and 'authority'); yet this very breadth renders it more dependent upon two disciplines: the indicator of context, and the understanding of the first generations. With them the breadth remains a mercy and a capacity for inclusion; without them it becomes a gateway to manipulating the objectives of the most consequential field of the law for the life of nations.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The literal is a term used in the sense for which it was assigned in the convention of discourse, and the figurative a term used in another sense by a relation together with an indicator; the presumption favours the literal, a figurative sense predominant through usage is preferred, and the hesitation of a term between the two is a systematic cause of divergent understanding and derivation. The verses on governance are those regulating the management of public affairs in five fields: authority and obedience; covenants and the pledge of allegiance; trusts and judging with justice; preparation and fighting; and public revenue and the weighing of interests. The figurative sense of *amr* in the verse of those in authority constructed the objective of an obeyed authority of bounded reference: the figure established the political apparatus, the root of the literal sense restricted it to the true source of command, and the fruit is the rules of legitimacy, limitation and reference.

The metaphor of pledging and the construction of the hand in the verse of the pledge produced the objective of sanctifying the political contract under God's guarantee; its fruit is the inviolability of breach and the mutuality of obligation between the community and its ruler. The verse of preparation is an instructive counter-instance: it was the breadth of the general lexical sense of *quwwa*—not figurative usage—that encompassed new developments in armament; the objective is stated as a cause, namely deterrence, read together with the verse of inclining to peace; and establishing the literal sense of 'frightening' prevents its confusion with the modern term for aggression. The three cooperating figurative structures in the verse of destruction widened the objective from the preservation of individual life to the preservation of the polity, until it included, on the Companions' understanding, the ruin of abandoning struggle and expenditure; the verse thus became a comprehensive security principle governing action and omission by the measure of consequence. The term *fitna* progresses from the literal assaying of metal, through the figure of testing, to a customary Qur'anic sense of religious persecution; establishing this settled signification is what preserved the objective of the verse:

a war grounded in cause and bounded by purpose, ending with the ending of its cause. The survey yielded three governing rules: the primacy of the literal, with attention to the fact that a text's flexibility may arise from the generality of its literal sense; the preference of an established predominant figurative sense, whose determination safeguards the objective; and the greater breadth of an objective derived from figurative usage, together with its greater need for the disciplines of context and of the understanding of the first generations. The dichotomy of literal and figurative usage in the verses on governance is a legislative instrument that produces objectives, not a rhetorical ornament; disciplining it protects political jurisprudence from the twin readings of petrification and dissolution.

Future research should complete the project across the remaining verses of the five fields, including consultation, trusts, judging with justice, and public revenue, following the same five-step procedure in order to build a semantic and purposive lexicon of the verses on governance. Further study should also be devoted to the phenomenon of the “customary Qur'anic literal sense” in the terms of public law, particularly *fitna*, *bay'a*, *amr*, and *sultan*, as this phenomenon recurs as a key feature in the present sample. The findings of this study may also be employed to critically examine contemporary discourses that manipulate the terminology of this field by establishing its significations through a sound theoretical method. In addition, the third rule, concerning the breadth of an objective derived figuratively and its corresponding need for contextual and methodological discipline, should be tested in other fields, such as financial transactions, to assess its consistency. Finally, greater attention should be given in legal theory courses to the counter-instance represented by the verse of preparation, so as to demonstrate to students that a text's capacity to encompass new developments may arise from the generality of its literal sense rather than from figurative interpretation.

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