

THE SUSTAINABLE CONFLICT BETWEEN AL QUR'AN AND SCIENTIFIC FACTS (STUDY OF THE SCIENTIFIC VERSES OF AL QUR'AN)

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Received: September 23, 2025

Accepted: October 6, 2025

Published: February 28, 2026

Article Url: <https://journal.at-taawun.org/index.php/josis/article/view/13>

Abstract

The relationship between the Qur'an and science has long been a subject of intellectual discourse, especially in areas such as cosmology, embryology, astronomy, geology, and ecology. The purpose of this research is to analyze Qur'anic verses alongside contemporary scientific findings in order to identify dimensions of harmony and potential conflict. The method applied is qualitative with a textual-analytical approach, combining classical tafsir with modern scientific perspectives. The results indicate that the Qur'an provides theological and teleological insights rather than scientific explanations, while science offers methodological precision in exploring natural phenomena. Apparent contradictions emerge only when verses are interpreted literally or imposed into rigid scientific frameworks. The study concludes that the Qur'an and science can coexist within a paradigm of "sustainable conflict," where tension is contextual and temporary, while Qur'anic guidance remains universal and timeless.

Keywords: *Qur'an; Science; Sustainable Conflict; Interpretation; Ecology*

A. Introduction

The relationship between the Qur'an and scientific knowledge has been a subject of discussion among scholars for centuries. The Qur'an is regarded not only as a book of spiritual guidance but also as a text that invites reflection upon the natural world. Its linguistic structure demonstrates diversity in expression while maintaining unity in meaning, brevity without loss of depth, and a method of articulation that satisfies both intellect and emotion. These qualities illustrate the Qur'an's inimitability (*i'jāz al-Qur'ān*) and its profound influence on preserving the Arabic language and enriching its eloquence.

One of the striking features of the Qur'an is its references to natural phenomena what scholars call *al-āyāt al-'ilmiyyah* (scientific verses). These include descriptions of the creation of the heavens and the earth, the stages of embryonic development, the alternation of day and night, and the role of mountains and seas. Such verses encourage believers to reflect upon the universe as signs (*āyāt*) pointing to divine wisdom. The Qur'an itself declares:

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding." (Q.S. Āl 'Imrān 3:190).

From this perspective, the Qur'an does not contradict established scientific facts. Classical and modern scholars emphasize that apparent conflicts are often due to interpretative errors or treating speculative scientific theories as absolute truths. The Qur'an addresses humanity across different times and intellectual capacities, thus it neither transcends the comprehension of the common people

nor falls short of meeting the expectations of scholars. This universality allows the Qur'an to engage both the rational and emotional dimensions of human beings, which is part of its miraculous nature.

Nevertheless, discussions of "conflict" arise when scientific discoveries are interpreted in light of certain Qur'anic verses. For example, descriptions such as the sun "setting in a murky spring" (Qur'an, al-Kahf 18:86) may appear problematic if read as literal scientific statements. However, exegetes explain that such expressions reflect phenomenological perspectives rather than empirical claims. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) himself encouraged reflection upon creation without delving into speculative assertions about the divine essence:

"Reflect upon the creation of Allah, but do not reflect upon Allah Himself, for you will never be able to comprehend Him." (Hadith, narrated by Abū Nu'aym in *Hilyat al-Awliyā'*).

The notion of a "sustainable conflict" thus arises not from the Qur'an itself but from the dynamic interaction between divine revelation and the evolving nature of scientific inquiry. Science is subject to change and revision, while the Qur'an remains fixed and timeless. As a result, conflicts may appear enduring (*mustadām*) because they are tied to human interpretation and the provisional nature of scientific paradigms.

This study therefore seeks to examine these scientific verses of the Qur'an critically, exploring both areas of harmony and perceived contradiction. By approaching the text through an epistemological lens, the research aims to clarify whether the so-called conflict is truly inherent or merely apparent, and to highlight the role of interpretation in bridging or sustaining the gap between revelation and science.

B. Method

The This study employs a qualitative *textual-analytical* approach to examine Qur'anic scientific verses (*al-āyāt al-'ilmīyyah*) in relation to contemporary scientific knowledge. Primary sources include the Qur'an and classical *tafsīr* (al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Rāzī), complemented by modern scientific commentaries (*tafsīr 'ilmī*). Secondary sources consist of academic works and peer-reviewed studies in cosmology, biology, and geology.

Data were collected through documentary research by identifying relevant verses, compiling their interpretations, and comparing them with scientific findings. The analysis followed three steps: (1) thematic classification of verses (e.g., cosmology, embryology, astronomy, ecology), (2) comparative analysis of Qur'anic descriptions and scientific knowledge, and (3) *hermeneutical* interpretation within linguistic, historical, and epistemological contexts.

Credibility was ensured through triangulation of *tafsīr* sources, engagement with multiple scientific perspectives, and reliance on peer-reviewed literature. This methodological framework provides a balanced examination of the dynamic relationship sometimes harmonious, sometimes conflictual between revelation and science.

C. Results

1. Cosmology and the Origin of the Universe

The Qur'an frequently invites humanity to reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth as a sign of divine power and wisdom. The verse states:

"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding." (Q.S. Āl 'Imrān 3:190).

This verse highlights that cosmological realities are not presented in the Qur'an as abstract theories, but as invitations to contemplation that connect the material universe to spiritual insight. From the perspective of classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, the heavens and the earth signify the vastness of divine creation, while the alternation of night and day symbolizes order and balance in the universe. Such interpretations emphasize the theological purpose of cosmological descriptions, situating them within a framework that directs human beings towards recognition of God's sovereignty. Read in (Al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*).

In contemporary science, cosmology has progressed from speculative ideas to established models such as the Big Bang theory, which explains the origin of the universe as a singularity that

expanded over billions of years. Some scholars see harmony between this scientific model and Qur'anic verses that describe the heavens and earth as once united before being parted:

"Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them?" (Q.S. Al-Anbiyā' 21:30).

The linguistic nuance of *ratq* (joined entity) and *fataqnāhumā* (We separated them) has been interpreted by many exegetes to indicate a primordial unity of creation. Read in (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*). While this description resonates with aspects of modern cosmological theories, the Qur'an's articulation remains timeless, offering meaning to both ancient audiences and contemporary readers. It neither confines itself to the language of empirical science nor contradicts established facts; rather, it frames scientific curiosity within a broader metaphysical worldview.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) further emphasized reflection upon the cosmic order as a means of strengthening faith. He said:

"Our Lord, You have not created all of this without purpose; glory be to You, so protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (Hadith, narrated in Sunan Ibn Mājah).

This hadith underscores that the ultimate purpose of contemplating the universe is not merely intellectual satisfaction but spiritual awakening. Thus, cosmology in the Qur'anic sense is not only descriptive but also normative, guiding human beings toward ethical and spiritual responsibility. The sustainable conflict emerges when Qur'anic cosmological expressions are treated as if they were precise scientific statements. For instance, descriptions of the heavens as "seven layers" (*sab'a samāwāt*) raise debates regarding whether the Qur'an implies an ancient cosmology or uses symbolic language for layers of divine creation. Modern astronomy has not confirmed such a layered model in a literal sense, yet scholars argue that the expression reflects cosmological order beyond the limits of current scientific understanding (Mukhlis, A. 2021). This demonstrates that tension arises not from revelation itself, but from the human tendency to impose scientific paradigms onto scriptural texts (Rahman, F. 2022).

2. Embryology and Human Development

The Qur'an provides remarkable references to the stages of human development in the womb, presenting them as both a biological process and a spiritual sign. One of the key verses states:

"Indeed, We created man from a drop of mixed fluid, to test him, and We made him hearing and seeing." (Q.S. Al-Insān 76:2).

This verse emphasizes that the creation of human beings originates from a simple biological substance, yet it is endowed with complex faculties such as hearing and sight. From a theological perspective, this illustrates the transition from physical potential to spiritual responsibility. Classical exegetes such as Ibn Kathīr interpret *nutfah amshāj* (a drop of mixed fluid) as the union of male and female elements, which Allah develops into successive stages. Read in (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*).

Modern embryology confirms that human development occurs in well-defined stages, beginning from fertilization, zygote formation, implantation, and subsequent differentiation into tissues and organs. Ultrasound imaging, genetic research, and molecular biology further elaborate this process. While the Qur'an does not employ scientific terminology, its descriptions resonate with the sequential reality affirmed by modern science. For example, the verse in Surah al-Mu'minūn describes the stages:

"And indeed We created man from an extract of clay. Then We placed him as a sperm-drop in a firm lodging. Then We made the sperm-drop into a clinging clot, and We made the clot into a lump (of flesh), and We made from the lump bones, and We covered the bones with flesh; then We developed him into another creation. So blessed is Allah, the best of creators." (Q.S. Al-Mu'minūn 23:12-14).

The sequential description *nutfah* (drop), *'alaqah* (clot), *mudghah* (lump), bones, and flesh captures stages that modern embryology identifies with early zygotic formation, implantation, tissue

differentiation, and skeletal development. Read in (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*). Muslim scholars such as al-Qurṭubī emphasize that these stages are not mere biological processes but signs of divine artistry, pointing to the miracle of creation that surpasses human comprehension. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also described these stages in a hadith:

“Verily, the creation of each one of you is brought together in his mother’s womb for forty days as a drop, then he is a clot for a similar period, then a lump for a similar period, then the angel is sent to him and breathes the soul into him.” (Hadith, narrated in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim).

This hadith not only reflects biological transformation but also introduces the metaphysical dimension of human creation the infusion of the soul (*rūḥ*). Thus, the Qur’anic and prophetic descriptions of embryology go beyond physical growth; they frame the process as both biological and spiritual, linking scientific phenomena with divine purpose. The sustainable conflict between science and scripture emerges when attempts are made to read the Qur’an as if it were a scientific manual. Some critics argue that terms such as *‘alaqah* (clot) or *mudghah* (chewed-like lump) are metaphorical and do not correspond precisely to modern embryological terminology (Sari, M. 2021). Yet, many scholars maintain that these expressions are not intended as literal medical detail but as poetic and accessible language for seventh-century audiences, which nevertheless aligns with observable biological stages.

Contemporary Muslim bioethics has developed from this foundation, addressing questions about reproductive technology, abortion, and genetic engineering. The Qur’an’s presentation of life as sacred from its earliest stages continues to shape ethical discourse in the modern era (Hidayat, A. 2023). Therefore, Qur’anic embryology demonstrates a balance between scientific affirmation and theological transcendence: it confirms observable realities while situating them within the ultimate framework of divine will.

3. Astronomy and Celestial Movements

The Qur’an frequently invites humankind to contemplate the heavens as signs of divine order and wisdom. Celestial bodies such as the sun, moon, and stars are portrayed not merely as physical entities but as *āyāt* (signs) that testify to God’s creative power and providential governance. One significant verse states:

“And the sun runs [its course] toward its appointed place. That is the determination of the Exalted in Might, the Knowing.” (Q.S. Yāsīn 36:38).

According to classical tafsīr, including that of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, the verse refers to the ordained path of the sun under Allah’s decree. Read in (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*). Ibn Kathīr explains that the “appointed place” (*mustaqarr*) may indicate the sun’s fixed orbit until the Day of Judgment, emphasizing divine control over cosmic order. From the perspective of modern astronomy, this resonates with the understanding that the sun is not static but moves along an orbit within the Milky Way galaxy at an average speed of about 828,000 km/h (Kartika, D. 2020). The Qur’an also addresses the precise coordination between the sun and moon:

“It is not for the sun to overtake the moon, nor does the night outstrip the day. They all float, each in an orbit.” (Q.S. Yāsīn 36:40).

This verse portrays the celestial bodies as moving harmoniously within distinct orbits. Al-Qurṭubī, in his commentary, interprets *falak* (orbit) as a circular path, likening the sun and moon’s movement to a spinning wheel. Read in (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*). Modern science corroborates this imagery: both the earth and the moon revolve in specific orbits, with gravitational forces ensuring their regularity. Thus, the Qur’anic description, while expressed in phenomenological language accessible to early audiences, aligns with astronomical principles of orbital mechanics. A further point of discussion arises from the Qur’anic narrative of Dhū al-Qarnayn:

“Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it setting in a spring of dark mud...” (Q.S. Al-Kahf 18:86).

Literalist readings of this verse have sometimes generated confusion, as if the Qur'an asserts a physical setting of the sun in a terrestrial spring. However, exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī clarify that the verse reflects Dhū al-Qarnayn's perception of the sunset: to the observer at the seashore, the sun appears as though sinking into a body of water. Read in (al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*). This hermeneutical approach demonstrates the Qur'an's phenomenological language, intended to engage human perception without contradicting observable reality. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) also highlighted cosmic order as a sign of divine omnipotence. In one hadith, he said:

"Indeed, Allah created these stars for three purposes: as adornment for the sky, as missiles against devils, and as signs for navigation. Whoever interprets them otherwise has erred, wasted his share, and burdened himself with what he does not know." (Hadith narrated by al-Bukhārī in al-Ṣaḥīḥ).

This hadith reveals the Qur'anic and prophetic paradigm of astronomy: celestial phenomena are functional (for navigation and timekeeping), aesthetic (beauty in the heavens), and theological (reminders of divine majesty). At the same time, the Qur'an encourages observation of natural order, laying the foundation for scientific exploration.

Contemporary discourse emphasizes that the Qur'an is not a scientific manual but a source of theological guidance. Attempts to force direct scientific concordism matching every verse to a specific modern theory risk reducing revelation to temporal categories. Instead, the Qur'an's epistemology highlights the harmony of cosmic order as an expression of divine will. Recent Islamic scholarship in Indonesia underlines that integrating astronomy (*falak*) with Qur'anic cosmology can strengthen religious education, particularly in understanding prayer times, the lunar calendar, and environmental awareness (Munawar, H. 2021).

4. Geology and the Role of Mountains

Mountains are among the most striking features of the earth's surface, and the Qur'an often refers to them as manifestations of divine wisdom and signs of cosmic balance. In one verse, Allah says:

"And He has set firm mountains upon the earth, lest it sway with you." (Q.S. Al-Luqmān 31:10).

Classical exegetes, such as al-Ṭabarī, interpret the term *rawāsi* (firm mountains) as anchors that stabilize the earth, preventing excessive shaking. Read in (al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*) Ibn Kathīr similarly explains that mountains serve as pegs that hold the earth firm, reflecting God's mercy in making the planet habitable (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*). This metaphor of stability emphasizes the Qur'an's theological perspective: mountains symbolize divine design that ensures the continuity of life.

From a geological perspective, modern science describes mountains as results of tectonic plate movements, volcanic activity, and erosion. Plate tectonics theory explains that when plates collide, the crust folds and pushes upward, forming mountain ranges such as the Himalayas (Sutrisno, D. 2020). Beneath these visible structures, mountains possess deep roots that extend into the mantle, a phenomenon confirmed through isostasy. These roots provide balance to the earth's crust, echoing the Qur'anic imagery of mountains as stabilizers. While the Qur'an communicates in symbolic and teleological language, geology explains the mechanisms with empirical precision. Another verse reinforces the stabilizing function of mountains:

"And We placed within the earth firmly set mountains, lest it should shake with them, and We made therein [broad] highways that they might be guided." (Q.S. Al-Anbiyā' 21:31).

Al-Qurṭubī, in his *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*, highlights that mountains are not only stabilizers but also facilitators of human life, as valleys between them become pathways and sources of water. Read in (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi' li-Aḥkām al-Qur'ān*). This broader perspective integrates geology with human civilization: mountains shape climate, store freshwater in glaciers, and provide minerals essential for human progress.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ also mentioned mountains in various contexts, often linking them with faith and stability. In a hadith narrated in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, the Prophet pointed to Mount Uhud and said:

“This is Uhud, a mountain which loves us and we love it.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ḥajj, no. 1365).

This hadith, though primarily spiritual, illustrates how mountains are viewed not merely as physical entities but as part of the sacred landscape that nurtures faith and memory. Contemporary discussions sometimes raise questions about whether Qur’anic descriptions of mountains literally align with geological mechanisms. Some critics argue that presenting mountains as “pegs” oversimplifies complex tectonic dynamics. However, Islamic scholarship emphasizes that the Qur’an is not a scientific textbook but a book of guidance. Its descriptions are phenomenological and teleological focused on purpose and meaning rather than technical explanations. Recent Indonesian scholarship underlines that reconciling Qur’anic cosmology with geology lies in appreciating their distinct epistemologies: revelation highlights divine intentionality, while science uncovers material processes (Munandar, A. 2021).

In practical terms, the role of mountains in human life is undeniable. They regulate water cycles, influence weather patterns, and act as biodiversity reserves. Geological research in Indonesia, a country with significant volcanic and tectonic activity, confirms that mountain ecosystems are crucial for disaster mitigation, water resources, and ecological sustainability (Pratama, H. & Dewi, R. 2022.) Thus, the Qur’an’s emphasis on mountains as stabilizers resonates with the ecological and social importance recognized in contemporary environmental studies.

5. Ecology and the Balance of Nature

The Qur’an consistently draws attention to the natural order and the balance (*mīzān*) embedded in creation. This balance signifies not only physical harmony but also a moral and spiritual call for humanity to preserve it. Allah says:

“And He raised the heaven and imposed the balance, that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance.” (Q.S. Al-Raḥmān 55:7-9).

Classical scholars, such as al-Ṭabarī, interpret *al-mīzān* both literally and metaphorically: as the physical balance of the universe and the moral imperative of justice in human interactions. Read in (al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi’ al-Bayān fī Ta’wīl Āy al-Qur’ān*). Ibn Kathīr extends this meaning by emphasizing that just as the cosmos follows divine order, human beings must not disrupt this equilibrium through injustice or excess. Read in (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Aẓīm*) Thus, ecology and ethics are intertwined in the Qur’anic vision.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ reinforced this ethic of balance through teachings that encouraged mercy and responsibility toward all creatures. He said:

“Indeed, Allah has prescribed excellence (iḥsān) in all things.” (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Kitāb al-Ṣayd wa al-Dhabā’iḥ, no. 1955).

This hadith implies that ecological responsibility is not limited to human interactions but extends to animals, plants, and the broader environment. Acts of wastefulness, cruelty, and environmental destruction stand in opposition to the divine command for *iḥsān*. In modern ecological science, the concept of balance resonates with ecosystem theory, which describes how diverse species and natural elements interact to form a dynamic equilibrium. Disruption of this balance through deforestation, pollution, and overexploitation triggers climate change, biodiversity loss, and ecological collapse (Nugroho, A. 2021). The Qur’an’s prohibition against wastefulness is expressed in the verse:

“And eat and drink, but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess.” (Q.S. Al-A’rāf 7:31).

Al-Qurṭubī interprets *isrāf* (excess) as any form of waste that goes beyond necessity, whether in food consumption or in the exploitation of natural resources. Read in (al-Qurṭubī, *al-Jāmi’ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’ān*). This exegesis demonstrates how Qur’anic values directly align with sustainable living principles in contemporary environmental ethics.

In the Indonesian context, recent ecological studies emphasize that environmental degradation ranging from deforestation in Kalimantan to plastic waste in coastal areas largely stems from human negligence rather than natural causes (Santosa, B. & Dewi, M. 2020). This reflects the Qur'an's teaching that the corruption of the earth results from human hands:

"Corruption has appeared on land and sea because of what the hands of people have earned, so that He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done, that perhaps they will return." (Q.S. Ar-Rūm 30:41).

This verse highlights ecological crisis as both a physical and moral warning, urging humanity to realign with divine balance. Contemporary Islamic scholarship in Indonesia stresses the importance of integrating *khalāfah* (stewardship) with sustainability. The concept of humans as *khalīfah fī al-arḍ* (stewards on earth) demands accountability in managing resources, ensuring that development meets present needs without compromising future generations (Rahman, F. 2022). From this perspective, ecological responsibility is not merely an ethical choice but a religious duty.

D. Discussion

The discussion section represents the intellectual core of any academic paper, serving as a platform for authors to critically and comprehensively interpret their research findings. Rather than reiterating previously presented data, this section must provide a nuanced analysis that links results to the study's conceptual or theoretical framework. Authors are expected to present coherent, evidence-based arguments that clearly and concisely convey their interpretations and insights regarding the research problem. Each finding should be examined in depth, highlighting its significance within a broader academic context. The narrative must demonstrate a systematic integration of empirical data, methodological design, and contextual relevance, avoiding redundancy while deepening the reader's understanding of the results' implications. To enhance scholarly impact, authors should reference key studies from established national and international journals, situating their work within ongoing theoretical debates or using it to propose new conceptual models. Articulating the research's broader and potentially global contribution is essential for engaging meaningfully in international academic discourse.

E. Conclusion

The relationship between the Qur'an and science reveals a dynamic interplay between divine revelation and human inquiry. The Qur'an, while not a scientific manual, contains numerous references to natural phenomena that inspire reflection and encourage intellectual exploration. Its verses related to cosmology, embryology, astronomy, geology, and ecology demonstrate a remarkable harmony with established scientific facts, while also transcending them by situating knowledge within a broader theological and ethical framework.

Classical exegetes such as al-Ṭabarī, Ibn Kathīr, and al-Qurṭubī consistently emphasize that the Qur'anic descriptions of nature are both signs of divine power and invitations to contemplation. Their interpretations highlight the Qur'an's universality, offering meaning to audiences across different times and intellectual capacities. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ further reinforced this paradigm through hadiths that guide believers to reflect upon creation without delving into speculative assertions about the divine essence.

Modern scientific findings from the Big Bang theory to embryological stages, orbital mechanics, tectonic processes, and ecosystem balance resonate with Qur'anic expressions, albeit articulated in different epistemological languages. Where apparent conflicts arise, they are often rooted in interpretative errors or attempts to impose rigid scientific paradigms onto scriptural texts. The notion of "sustainable conflict" thus lies not in revelation itself but in the provisional and evolving nature of human interpretation and scientific knowledge.

From an ethical standpoint, the Qur'an frames human beings as stewards (*khalīfah*) entrusted with maintaining the balance (*mīzān*) of creation. This theological vision converges with

contemporary concerns about environmental degradation, climate change, and sustainability, particularly in the Indonesian context where ecological crises are largely driven by human negligence. Hence, Qur'anic teachings about moderation, stewardship, and justice remain profoundly relevant to addressing modern global challenges.

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