

REINTERPRETING *ḤADĪD* IN Q.S. AL-ḤADĪD [57]: 25: ANALYSIS OF ABDULLAH SAEED'S CONTEXTUAL APPROACH

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Abstract: This article is motivated by the differing interpretations of the term *ḥadīd* and its associated *manāfiʿ* in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 among classical and modern Muslim scholars. Classical scholars interpreted the term *ḥadīd* as iron used for armour and weapons of war, whereas later scholars understood the term *ḥadīd* as iron that serves as the foundation for industrial development and as a basis for the prosperity and strength of nations. Stemming from this difference in interpretation, the terms *ḥadīd* and *manāfiʿ* carry the potential for polysemic meaning, allowing them to be understood in various contexts. This research adopts a library research design using contextual interpretation methods and descriptive-analytical analysis. Through Abdullah Saeed's contextual linguistic analysis—examining the historical context surrounding the identification of universal ethical principles and interpreting contemporary realities to derive a more holistic meaning—the research reveals that the term *ḥadīd* in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 is not merely understood as iron in the material sense; rather, it represents strength, means of defense, technology, and instruments for the advancement of human civilization. In the contemporary context, this meaning may be understood as symbolizing technological development, which should be utilized in a just, responsible, and human welfare-oriented manner. Accordingly, Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 provides us with an ethical basis that technology should not be employed as a means of destruction, oppression, or exploitation but should instead be directed towards promoting justice and social welfare.

Keywords: Abdullah Saeed, Contextual Interpretation, Iron, Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25, Technological Ethics.

Abstrak: Artikel ini dilatarbelakangi oleh perbedaan penafsiran ulama klasik dan modern terhadap kata *ḥadīd* dan *manafiʿ* pada Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25. Ulama klasik menafsirkan kata *ḥadīd* sebagai besi untuk baju perang dan alat-alat perang, sedangkan ulama setelahnya menafsirkan kata *ḥadīd* sebagai besi yang dengannya dapat dibangun industri dan landasan kuat untuk kemakmuran dan kekuatan bangsa. Berangkat dari perbedaan penafsiran ini, redaksi *ḥadīd* dan *manāfiʿ* mengandung

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kemungkinan makna polisemik sehingga dapat dipahami dalam berbagai konteks. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kepustakaan (*library research*) dengan menggunakan metode tafsir kontekstual dan analisis deskriptif-analitis. Melalui analisis linguistik kontekstual Abdullah Saeed, dengan mengkaji konteks historis awal identifikasi prinsip etis universal, serta pembacaan terhadap realitas kontemporer untuk memberikan makna yang lebih utuh, didapatkan bahwa hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lafaz *ḥadīd* dalam Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 tidak hanya dimaknai sebagai besi dalam arti material, tetapi juga merepresentasikan kekuatan, alat pertahanan, teknologi, dan instrumen kemajuan peradaban manusia. Dalam konteks modern, makna tersebut dapat dipahami sebagai simbol perkembangan teknologi yang harus digunakan secara adil, bertanggung jawab, dan berorientasi pada kemaslahatan manusia. Dengan demikian, Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 memberikan landasan etis kepada kita bahwa teknologi tidak boleh dijadikan sarana kerusakan, penindasan, dan eksploitasi, melainkan harus diarahkan untuk menciptakan keadilan dan kesejahteraan sosial.

Kata-kata Kunci: Abdullah Saeed, Besi, Etika Teknologi, Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25, Tafsir Kontekstual.

Introduction

Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 affirms that *ḥadīd* was sent down as a means of strength (*ba'sun shadīd*) and benefit (*manāfi' li al-nās*) for humankind to establish justice. In the interpretations of classical Muslim exegetes, the meaning of *ḥadīd* was generally understood within the socio-historical context of the early Muslim community (Ichwan and Salisu 2024, 107–26). Accordingly, this verse was interpreted in relation to the need for physical and military strength. Ibn Kathīr, for example, understood *ḥadīd* primarily as referring to military equipment, including swords, spears, arrows, and coats of mail, which functioned as instruments of protection and defence for the Muslim community (Jābir 1989, 549). In contrast, modern exegetes such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali interpreted *ḥadīd* as a symbol of civilisational progress and an indicator of national strength, an interpretation shaped by contemporary global social realities (Ali 2009, 426). Similar views are also found in the interpretations of Ṭaṇṭāwī Jawharī (Ṭaṇṭāwī 1998, 228) and Wahbah al-Zuhaylī (Zuhaili 2013, 1203; Prakoso 2020, 67–88). These differing interpretations indicate that the expressions *ḥadīd* and its associated *manāfi'* possess polysemic potential, thereby allowing them to be understood across diverse contexts.

In the contemporary context, the utilisation of *ḥadīd* has developed in an increasingly rapid and complex manner. *Ḥadīd* has become a fundamental element in industry, information technology, transportation, and modern weaponry, thereby playing a significant role in shaping global economic and political power. However, the advancement of modern technology has given rise to paradoxical consequences: while it offers greater convenience and efficiency, it has also generated a range of social challenges. This phenomenon has become increasingly evident with the expanding use of robotics and artificial intelligence (AI) systems across industrial production and service sectors (Acemoglu and Restrepo 2020, 2188–244). The continuous advancement of digital technology, automation, and artificial intelligence is gradually transforming the structure of the global labour market. According to *The Future of Jobs Report 2025*, published by the

World Economic Forum, technological transformation is projected to displace approximately 92 million jobs by 2030, particularly in administrative occupations and repetitive tasks (Frey and Osborne 2017, 254–80; World Economic Forum 2025). These developments demonstrate that technological progress requires a robust ethical foundation capable of guiding its application in a wise and responsible manner (Jobin et al. 2019, 389–99).

In this context, the author identifies a divergence between classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegetes regarding the interpretation of the term *ḥadīd* and its associated *manāfi'*. Neither the classical nor the modern interpretations have fully addressed the implications of *ḥadīd* in a more specific manner within the context of the present age. Abdullah Saeed argues that the primary challenge of modern Qur'anic interpretation does not lie in contextualisation itself but rather in the failure to connect the original meaning of the Qur'anic verse with universal ethical principles that are relevant to contemporary contexts (Saeed 2006, 25; Irfansyah and Khairunnisa 2023, 34–50; Jayana 2019, 37–52). Therefore, there is a need for an interpretive approach that preserves the continuity between the textual meaning, the original historical context, and the challenges of modern society. From this perspective, the interpretation of *ḥadīd* becomes a significant subject of inquiry through a contextual approach, enabling the Qur'an to continue functioning as a living source of ethical values that remains responsive to the changing realities of the modern world.

To date, studies on Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 have generally approached the verse through a partial interpretive framework, whether from historical or thematic perspectives, with primary emphasis on the function of iron as a means of strength and material benefit. Previous studies reveal three major interpretive trends: first, classical exegesis that emphasises the socio-historical context of early Islam, as discussed by Ira Saputra Milsih (Malisih et al. 2022, 343–75); second, thematic studies in Islamic economics that relate the verse to the concepts of production and welfare, as examined by Riza Wahyu Rahmanda and colleagues (Rahmanda et al. 2025, 252–61); and third, contemporary interpretations that understand *al-ḥadīd* symbolically as a representation of civilisational progress, as proposed by Melisa Humairoh (Humairoh 2025, 412–29). Despite their diverse perspectives, these studies are predominantly descriptive in nature. Consequently, the universal ethical dimension of *manāfi' li al-nās* has not been systematically developed to address the challenges associated with the use of material power and technology in contemporary society. Therefore, no study has yet been identified that specifically applies Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach to relate the original meaning of the verse to contemporary social realities, thereby establishing the novelty of the present study.

Based on these issues, this study is founded on the hypothesis that applying Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach to Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 can produce a

more comprehensive understanding of the verse. Through linguistic analysis, an examination of the early historical context, the identification of universal ethical principles, and an interpretation of contemporary realities, *ḥadīd* may be understood not merely as a material object or a symbol of progress, but as a Qur'anic principle for the governance of material power and technology. This approach is consistent with the efforts of a number of modern Muslim scholars who seek to bridge the values of divine revelation with the contemporary challenges facing humanity (Rahman 1982, 5–7; Ahmad 2023, 595). Accordingly, this study aims to formulate an understanding of *ḥadīd* and its associated *manāfi* that is not only descriptive but also prescriptive, thereby providing ethical guidance for the utilisation of *ḥadīd* in a manner that is consistent with the Qur'anic values of justice, balance, and the public good.

This study employs a qualitative library research design and adopts a descriptive-analytical method to examine the meaning of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 through the application of Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach to Qur'anic interpretation. This approach was selected because it enables the verse to be understood not only from a textual perspective concerning the book (*al-kitāb*), the balance (*al-mizān*), and iron (*ḥadīd*), but also within the broader framework of social justice and civilisational transformation. In this study, the data sources are classified into primary and secondary sources. The primary source is the Qur'an, with particular focus on Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25. The secondary sources consist of Abdullah Saeed's works that support the contextual interpretation of the verse, namely *Reading the Qur'an in the Twenty-First Century* and *Interpreting the Qur'an: Towards a Contemporary Approach*. These two works are employed to establish the theoretical framework of contextuality and to understand the interpretive methodology proposed by Abdullah Saeed.

In addition, the secondary sources in this study include both classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegetical works to trace the development and dynamics of the interpretation of this verse across different historical periods. Arabic linguistic works are also employed to analyse the linguistic aspects of the verse, alongside peer-reviewed journal articles and previous studies relevant to Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25. Collectively, these sources serve as supporting materials to enrich the analysis and strengthen the study's arguments. Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach consists of at least seven analytical stages: (1) gaining a general understanding of the overall meaning and purpose of the verse; (2) identifying the Qur'anic verse to be interpreted; (3) conducting a linguistic analysis; (4) analysing its literary context; (5) examining the broader macro-historical context at the time of the verse's initial revelation; (6) exploring parallel Qur'anic texts and the hierarchy of Qur'anic values; and (7) relating the interpretation of the text to the contemporary context (Saeed 2014, 97–107; Barir 2026, 203232).

Linguistic Analysis of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25

Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 generally addresses three interconnected elements: the mission of the messengers, who were sent with clear proofs; the revelation of the *kitāb* and *mīzān* as normative instruments; and the sending down of iron (*al-ḥadīd*), which possesses great strength and provides extensive benefits for humankind. These three elements are presented within a unified statement, indicating that God provides not only moral guidance but also the material capacity necessary to establish justice in social life. Within Abdullah Saeed's contextual methodology, the analysis begins with a fundamental premise: the Qur'an is a revelation addressed to humankind, rather than merely a theological document about God. Saeed emphasizes that the purpose of the Qur'an's revelation is to guide human beings toward moral excellence and an egalitarian social order. From this perspective, this study understands *al-qist* (justice), presented as the purpose of sending the messengers, not merely as a doctrinal statement, but as a moral orientation that demands concrete realization in communal life (Nurani 2021, 159–82).

The meaning of this verse does not stand in isolation. Rather, it emerges from the interaction between God as the divine author, the structure of the text itself, the first Muslim community as the recipient of revelation, and the socio-historical context of Medina in which it was revealed. The first recipients of the revelation were situated in circumstances that required not only faith, but also the concrete capacity to establish a just social order amid external pressures and the need for internal consolidation. Within this context, the *kitāb*, *mīzān*, and *ḥadīd* can initially be understood not as three separate concepts, but as an integrated set of normative and material instruments that mutually support one another. From this preliminary understanding, Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 can be read as part of the Qur'an's broader vision of establishing a society grounded in justice, responsibility, and human welfare, before undertaking a more detailed linguistic and historical analysis in the subsequent stages.

Although classical exegetical works provide an important foundation for understanding the lexical, theological, and historical dimensions of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25, this study proposes an interpretive framework that connects the verse's normative orientation with changing conditions of human life, an aspect that has not been sufficiently explored in previous exegetical studies and works. Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach is particularly relevant to this purpose because it seeks to relate the socio-historical context of the Qur'an's initial revelation to the contexts in which the Qur'an is interpreted in subsequent periods, while maintaining the ethical and moral values underlying the text (Saeed and Akbar 2021, 527; Nuryahya et al. 2026, 230).

This approach enables the present study to examine Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 as an integrated discourse on justice, normative guidance, strength, and human benefit, rather than reducing its meaning to the lexical or historical significance of

al-ḥadīd alone. Through this contextual movement, the study further considers how the Qur'an's normative message concerning strength and human benefit may acquire contemporary significance in the context of technological development and its ethical use. In this respect, Saeed's framework provides the analytical bridge between the historical understanding of the verse and its contemporary ethical interpretation, thereby distinguishing the present study from exegetical discussions that remain primarily focused on the classical dimensions of the verse.

In the next stage of Abdullah Saeed's contextual approach, the interpreter examines the verse's linguistic meaning to understand its intended meaning and purpose at the time of revelation (Saeed 2014, 101). The term *ḥadīd* derives from the root *ḥ-d-d*, which fundamentally refers to a boundary or separator between two things, preventing them from mixing. In Arabic usage, the expression *ḥadd al-shayf* denotes a characteristic that distinguishes one thing from another (Manẓūr 1883, 375). This meaning developed further in the expression *ḥudūd Allāh*, which refers to divinely prescribed legal boundaries, while *ḥadīd* is associated with sharpness and strength, as reflected in the expression *ḥaddada al-sikkīn*, meaning to sharpen a knife (Yusoff 2009, 182). Based on these linguistic data, this study argues that the relationship between *ḥadīd* and the root *ḥ-d-d* provides an indication of material characteristics such as firmness and sharpness, without treating boundary as the lexical meaning of *ḥadīd*. In Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25, these characteristics are further emphasized through the association of *ḥadīd* with *ba'sun shadīdun* and *manāfi'u li al-nās*. This construction demonstrates that iron is presented not merely as a material substance, but in terms of its capacity to generate strength and provide benefits for humankind. Thus, the meaning of *ḥadīd* moves from the identification of a material toward the characteristics and functions derived from it, providing a basis for examining its strength and benefits within the normative and ethical framework of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25.

From this, it becomes evident that the semantic field of the root *ḥ-d-d* (ح-د-د) develops from the abstract concept of a boundary to the concrete meaning of something characterised by sharpness and strength. Furthermore, the term *ḥadīd* is not always understood in a purely material sense; it may also be employed metaphorically to denote intellectual acuity or perceptive insight. Expressions such as *ḥadīd al-naẓar* (keen-sighted) and *ḥadīd al-fahm* (sharp in understanding) are commonly used to describe a person's intellectual acuity or sharpness of thought (Husain 1992, 222). This semantic extension demonstrates that *ḥadīd* possesses a degree of semantic flexibility in Arabic usage, whereby its meaning can extend from a concrete material characterized by hardness and sharpness to an abstract quality associated with acuity, firmness, and strength. This flexibility is significant because it shows that the semantic potential of *ḥadīd* cannot be determined solely by its physical referent, but must also be examined in relation to the context in which it occurs (Abdul-Ghafour et al. 2019, 129–43). In Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]:

25, therefore, the material dimension of iron should be considered alongside the qualities of strength and utility explicitly associated with it. Such a reading provides an important linguistic foundation for examining how the physical properties of *ḥadīd* contribute to the broader normative meaning of the verse.

The term *ḥadīd* occurs six times in the Qur'an, with different contexts and grammatical functions, namely in Q.S. *Al-Isrā'* [17]: 50, Q.S. *Al-Kahf* [18]: 96, Q.S. *Al-Ḥajj* [22]: 21, Q.S. *Saba'* [34]: 10, Q.S. *Qāf* [50]: 22, and Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25. In Q.S. *Al-Kahf* [18]: 96, *ḥadīd* functions as a *mudāfilayh* in the phrase *zubar al-ḥadīd*, referring to iron as a concrete material. In Q.S. *Qāf* [50]: 22, by contrast, its position as the *khabar* in *fa-baṣaruka al-yawma ḥadīd* indicates sharpness as a quality, used metaphorically. In Q.S. *Al-Isrā'* [17]: 50, *ḥadīd* is juxtaposed with *ḥijārah* to emphasize the characteristic of hardness (Bāqī 1945, 195). These variations demonstrate that the meaning of *ḥadīd* is shaped by its syntactic context and its relationship with surrounding words, rather than being determined solely by its lexical meaning. On this basis, *ḥadīd* in Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 should be understood in relation to *ba'sun shadīd* and *manāfi'u li al-nās*, which highlight two of its principal dimensions: strength and benefit for humankind. *Ḥadīd* in this verse does not merely denote the material iron itself but acquires broader significance through its functions and benefits within the framework of justice and human welfare.

The chronological period of revelation further clarifies the pattern of the Qur'anic usage of the term *ḥadīd*. In the Meccan verses, such as Q.S. *Al-Isrā'* [17]: 50 and Q.S. *Qāf* [50]: 22, *ḥadīd* functions rhetorically to construct analogies and metaphors within theological arguments concerning resurrection and eschatology. Such usage is consistent with the broader conventions of the Arabic language, in which *ḥadīd* is employed figuratively to convey sharpness and strength, as illustrated by the expressions discussed earlier. By contrast, Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25, a Medinan verse, presents *ḥadīd* not as a metaphor but as the subject of a descriptive statement concerning its inherent qualities and its benefits for humankind. This shift in function from a rhetorical and persuasive role during the Meccan period to a descriptive and normative role during the Medinan period reflects the manner in which the Qur'an adapts its lexical choices to the evolving discursive objectives of the prophetic mission.

Three other key terms in Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 that warrant linguistic analysis are *mīzān*, *al-qist*, and *al-manāfi'*. The term *al-wazn* (الوزن) is derived from the root *w-z-n* (وزن), which generally conveys the meanings of balance, harmony, and rectitude (*al-ta'dīl wa al-istiqāmah*) (Zakariya 1972, 107). From this fundamental meaning emerge various usages related to weighing, establishing equivalence, determining measure, and specifying the proper proportion of an object. According to al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, *al-wazn* fundamentally signifies knowing the measure or proper proportion of something (*ma'rifatu qadr al-shay'*). In its ordinary usage,

the term refers to the process of measuring the weight of an object by means of a balance. However, the Qur'an employs the term in a much broader sense. When Allah commands people to weigh with justice in Q.S. Ash-Shu'arā' [26]: 182 and Q.S. Ar-Raḥmān [55]: 9, the command extends beyond economic transactions to encompass the obligation to uphold justice and maintain balance in all aspects of human conduct (Husain 1992, 878).

Ibn Manẓūr explains in *Lisān al-'Arab* that the fundamental meaning of *al-wazn* is to distinguish between the heaviness and lightness of an object through the process of weighing (Ifriqī 1994, 446). From this basic sense, its usage in the Arabic language developed to encompass additional meanings, including estimating, determining proportion, comparing two entities, and assessing a person's quality or status. Consequently, the expression *rajulun wazīn al-ra'y* is used to describe a person who possesses sound judgment and mature reasoning (Ifriqī 1994, 448). From the same root is derived the form *mīzān* (ميزان), which lexically denotes a weighing instrument or balance. Ibn Manẓūr further explains that the term originally referred to an instrument used for weighing various objects, but subsequently developed into a symbol of measurement, standard, and justice (Ifriqī 1994, 446–47). Accordingly, the use of *mīzān* in the Qur'an is not confined to the context of commercial transactions; rather, it also appears in social, moral, and theological contexts.

According to *al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, the forms *mīzān* and *mawāzīn* occur in a number of Qur'anic verses that may be classified into several principal themes (Bāqī 1945, 750). First, *mīzān* functions as a measuring instrument in economic transactions, as reflected in Q.S. Al-An'ām [6]: 152, Q.S. Al-A'rāf [7]: 85, and Q.S. Hūd [11]: 84–85. Second, *mīzān* serves as a symbol of justice and social equilibrium, as found in Q.S. Ash-Shūrā [42]: 17 and Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25. Third, *mawāzīn* refers to the scales of deeds on the Day of Resurrection, as mentioned in Q.S. Al-A'rāf [7]: 8–9, Q.S. Al-Mu'minūn [23]: 102–103, and Q.S. Al-Qārī'ah [101]: 6–9. In addition, the term *mīzān* is also employed within a cosmological context. In Q.S. Ar-Raḥmān [55]: 7–9, Allah declares that He raised the heaven and established the *mīzān*. This usage indicates that balance constitutes a fundamental principle governing the universe. The semantic field of the terms *wazn* and *mīzān* thus develops from a concrete to an abstract meaning. At its most basic level, it denotes the act of weighing and measuring, whereas at a broader level it encompasses the concepts of measure, standard, balance, justice, judgment, and the cosmic order that underpins both human life and the universe.

Taken together, the three lexicographical explanations reveal a substantial semantic convergence concerning *al-wazn* and *mīzān*. Ibn Fāris emphasizes the fundamental notion of proportion and balance, while al-Rāghib al-Aṣṣḥānī highlights the determination of the proper measure or proportion of an object.

Ibn Manzūr, meanwhile, begins from the concrete function of weighing and extends the meaning to estimation, comparison, and sound judgment. Thus, although their emphases differ, all three scholars connect the semantic field of *mīzān* with the determination of an appropriate measure and the avoidance of excess or deficiency. The distinction lies primarily in the level of abstraction: Ibn Fāris stresses the underlying semantic principle of balance, al-Rāghib focuses on the proper proportion of an object, and Ibn Manzūr demonstrates how this concrete meaning develops into broader evaluative and moral meanings.

This semantic development is particularly relevant to Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25, where *mīzān* occurs alongside the sending of the messengers and the revelation of the Scripture for the establishment of *al-qist*. In this context, *mīzān* cannot be reduced to a physical weighing instrument. Rather, its lexical development from measuring and proportion to judgment and balance provides a basis for understanding it as a normative standard through which justice is measured and maintained. The Qur'anic usage therefore preserves the concrete semantic core identified by the lexicographers while extending it into a broader social and moral framework.

Furthermore, the term *al-qist* (القسط) is derived from the root *qāf-sīn-ṭā'* (ق-س-ط), which occupies a distinctive place in the Arabic lexicographical tradition because it exhibits the phenomenon of *al-addād* (contronymy), namely, a single root that conveys two opposing meanings. Ibn Fāris explains that this root encompasses two contrasting semantic tendencies: justice and injustice. The form *al-qist* (القسط), with a *kasrah* on the letter *qāf*, denotes justice, whereas *al-qasṭ* (القسط), with a *fathah*, signifies deviation or injustice. From the same root are derived the verbs *aqṣaṭa* (أقسط), meaning to act justly, and *qasṭa* (قسط), meaning to act unjustly or to deviate from the truth (Zakariya 1972, 107). According to al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, the fundamental meaning of *al-qist* extends beyond justice as a normative concept. It also encompasses the allocation of a share or right to its rightful recipient in a manner that is proportionate and equitable. Thus, *al-qist* is understood as the rightful share assigned in accordance with the principle of justice, whereas its opposite is the appropriation of what rightfully belongs to another. In this sense, justice is not merely an abstract moral value but a concrete act of assigning rights to their rightful owners and granting each party its due share.

This understanding is reflected in the Qur'anic usage of the term. In Q.S. *Yūnus* [10]: 4, *al-qist* is employed to describe Allah's just recompense for those who believe and perform righteous deeds, whereas in Q.S. *Ar-Raḥmān* [55]: 9 the term is associated with the command to uphold the balance with justice (Husain 1992, 670). These usages demonstrate that *al-qist* is not confined to the legal sphere; rather, it also embodies the principles of balance and proportionality across various aspects of human life. Ibn Manzūr further explains that *al-qist* also denotes a share, allotment, or portion that is distributed fairly to an individual. From this meaning,

the term came to be used in contexts involving the distribution of property, the allocation of social rights, and the equitable allocation of resources. Consequently, the expression *taqāsaṭū al-shay'a baynabum* is used to describe the act of dividing something equally and justly among the parties involved (Ifriqī 1994, 377).

A comparison of these three lexicographical explanations shows that Ibn Fāris, al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī, and Ibn Manẓūr share a common understanding of *al-qisṭ* as a concept fundamentally related to justice and the avoidance of deviation, although each emphasizes a different semantic dimension. Ibn Fāris focuses on the basic opposition between *al-qisṭ*, which denotes justice, and *al-qasṭ*, which denotes injustice or deviation. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣfahānī develops this meaning by emphasizing the proper allocation of a person's share or right, indicating that justice involves giving each individual what rightfully belongs to them. Ibn Manẓūr similarly highlights the distributive dimension of the term by associating *al-qisṭ* with a share, allotment, or portion that is fairly assigned to an individual. Thus, while Ibn Fāris emphasizes the contrast between justice and deviation, al-Rāghib and Ibn Manẓūr place greater emphasis on the concrete realization of justice through the proportionate and equitable distribution of rights and shares. Taken together, these explanations indicate that the semantic field of *al-qisṭ* encompasses not only justice as an abstract moral principle but also its practical realization through fairness, proportionality, and the proper assignment of rights.

The concept of justice embodied in the term *al-qisṭ* is also closely associated with the notions of balance and precision in measurement. This relationship is reflected in the use of the term *al-qisṭās* (القسطاس), which denotes a balance or an accurate measuring instrument (Husain 1992, 670). In Q.S. Al-Isrā' [17]: 35, Allah commands people to measure with *al-qisṭās al-mustaqīm*, that is, with a balance that is upright and free from deviation. In this context, the balance functions not merely as a measuring instrument but also as a symbol of justice, ensuring that each party receives its rightful due in a precise and equitable manner.

An examination of the Qur'anic verses reveals that the term *al-qisṭ* is employed in a variety of contexts, all of which are oriented toward the establishment of justice. In the legal sphere, it affirms the obligation to adjudicate disputes objectively (Q.S. Al-Mā'idah [5]: 42). In the social sphere, it serves as the foundation for giving truthful testimony, even when doing so conflicts with one's own interests or those of close relatives (Q.S. An-Nisā' [4]: 135). In the economic sphere, it is manifested through the command to give full measure and weight (Q.S. Al-An'ām [6]: 152; Q.S. Hūd [11]: 85; Q.S. Ar-Raḥmān [55]: 9). Finally, in the eschatological sphere, Allah affirms that judgment on the Day of Resurrection will be carried out with *al-qisṭ*, ensuring that no creature will suffer injustice (Q.S. Al-Anbiyā' [21]: 47) (Bāqī 1945, 715).

The culmination of the Qur'anic use of the concept of *al-qisṭ* is found in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25, which states that Allah sent His messengers with clear

proofs, the Scripture, and the *mīzān* so that humanity might uphold justice (Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25.). This verse indicates that *al-qisṭ* constitutes one of the fundamental objectives of the prophetic mission: ensuring that rights are accorded proportionately, establishing balance in social, economic, and legal life, and preventing all forms of deviation that result in injustice toward others.

The choice of the term *al-qisṭ* in this verse, rather than *al-ʿadl*, which also denotes justice, warrants closer examination. From a lexical perspective, Ibn Fāris explains that the root *ʿa-d-l* (ع-د-ل) likewise encompasses two contrasting fundamental meanings: rectitude and balance (*al-istiwāʾ*) on the one hand, and deviation (*al-iʿwijāj*) on the other (Zakariya 1972, 246). Al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī further elaborates that *al-ʿadl* may be divided into two categories. The first is absolute justice, which is apprehended through reason and remains immutable under all circumstances. The second is justice established through the *shariʿah*, which may vary according to particular legal contexts (Husain 1992, 552). In the Qurʾān, the term *al-ʿadl* is predominantly employed in the context of interpersonal relations, such as dealing justly among wives (Q.S. An-Nisāʾ [4]: 3), bearing truthful witness (Q.S. Al-Māʾidah [5]: 8), and administering justice impartially (Q.S. An-Nisāʾ [4]: 58). According to *al-Muʿjam al-Mufahras li Alfāz al-Qurʾān al-Karīm*, the term *ʿadl*, in its various morphological forms, occurs twenty-eight times in the Qurʾān, whereas *al-qisṭ* and its derivatives appear in contexts that place greater emphasis on the measured and proportionate distribution of rights (Bāqī 1945, 448–49).

The nuanced distinction between these two terms may be understood from the explanation provided by al-Rāghib al-Aṣḥānī, who maintains that *al-ʿadl* is more closely associated with equality and equivalence (*al-musāwāh*) in the context of interpersonal relations, whereas *al-qisṭ* places greater emphasis on assigning each individual the share or portion to which they are entitled according to a proportionate and established standard (Husain 1992, 551). The comparison between *al-qisṭ* and *al-ʿadl* therefore indicates that the two terms share a common semantic foundation in justice, balance, and rectitude, but differ in their principal semantic emphasis. *Al-ʿadl* more strongly conveys the state or principle of balance and fairness, whereas *al-qisṭ* emphasizes the concrete realization of that principle through the equitable allocation of rights and shares. In other words, *al-ʿadl* may describe the normative condition of justice, while *al-qisṭ* highlights how that justice is manifested and distributed in concrete circumstances. This distinction helps explain why Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 employs *al-qisṭ* in conjunction with *mīzān*: the verse emphasizes not merely the existence of justice as a value, but its measurable and proportionate realization within human society.

The selection of *al-qisṭ* in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 cannot be separated from the broader context of the verse, which simultaneously refers to three interrelated instruments: the sending of the messengers, the revelation of the Scripture, and the establishment of the *mīzān*. These three elements function together as an

integrated system in which the messengers serve as the bearers and expositors of the divine message, the Scripture provides the normative framework, and the *mīzān* functions as the instrument of measurement and balance. The justice intended through these three instruments is not merely numerical equality among individuals; rather, it is justice that is measured, proportionate, and comprehensive across every dimension of human life, precisely the central semantic nuance conveyed by *al-qist*.

Furthermore, the mention of the revelation of iron (*al-ḥadīd*) immediately following these three instruments reinforces the Qur'an's choice of the term *al-qist*. Iron represents the material force that ensures the implementation of justice in reality, whether through tools, infrastructure, or means of defence. This integrated sequence of the messengers, the Scripture, the *mīzān*, and iron (*al-ḥadīd*) demonstrates that the intended concept of justice is comprehensive, encompassing both normative and material dimensions. The term *al-qist* is therefore the most appropriate lexical choice because it conveys a form of justice that is not merely textual or relational, but is concretely realised through all the means that Allah has provided. The precision of this lexical choice reflects the semantic coherence of the Qur'an, a coherence that cannot be conveyed as fully by the term *al-'adl*, whose semantic scope is comparatively more confined to the context of interpersonal balance.

The term *naḥ* (نفع) is derived from the root *n-f-'a* (ن-ف-ع), which, according to Ibn Fāris, fundamentally denotes the opposite of *al-ḍarar* (الضرر), namely harm or detriment (Zakariya 1972, 463). From this root are derived various forms denoting the act of conferring benefit (*naḥa'a*), receiving benefit (*intaḥa'a*), and that which constitutes a source of benefit (*manḥa'ah*). The semantic field of *naḥ* is centred on the notions of benefit, usefulness, and everything that brings about good for humanity. Al-Rāghib al-Aṣṣahānī explains that *naḥ* refers to anything that serves as a means of attaining various forms of good (*al-khayrāt*). Accordingly, *naḥ* does not merely signify practical or material advantage; rather, it encompasses every form of *maṣlaḥah* that leads human beings towards goodness. In this perspective, benefit stands in opposition to harm (*ḍarar*), as affirmed in numerous Qur'anic verses in which the two concepts are juxtaposed (Husain 1992, 819).

Ibn Manẓūr defines *naḥ* as the opposite of *ḍarar* (harm or detriment) and explains its various derivatives, which denote the acts of conferring benefit, receiving benefit, and seeking benefit (Ifriqī 1994, 358–59). A person who consistently benefits others is described as *naḥū'* or *naḥfā'*, referring to an individual whose presence brings *maṣlaḥah* to society. Ibn Manẓūr also relates the concept of benefit to one of the Divine Names, *al-Nāfi'*, meaning the One who bestows benefit upon whomever He wills (Ifriqī 1994, 359). In the Qur'an, one of the most prominent derivatives of this root is *manāfi'* (منافع), the plural form of *manḥa'ah* (منفعة), meaning benefits or uses. The use of the plural pattern *manāfi'* in Q.S. Al-

Ḥadīd [57]: 25 is particularly significant because *al-manfaʿah* denotes that which provides benefit or that from which benefit may be derived. Accordingly, in this verse, *al-ḥadīd* is presented as something that provides multiple benefits and may therefore be utilised for the welfare of humankind. The term *manāfiʿ* occurs eight times in the Qurʾān, including in Q.S. *Al-Baqarah* [2]: 219, Q.S. *An-Nahl* [16]: 5, Q.S. *Al-Ḥajj* [22]: 28 and 33, Q.S. *Al-Muʾminūn* [23]: 21, Q.S. *Yāsīn* [36]: 73, Q.S. *Ghāfir* [40]: 80, and Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 (Husain 1992, 715). Its Qurʾānic usage demonstrates that the concept of benefit encompasses various dimensions of human life, including the material, social, economic, and spiritual spheres.

The Qurʾānic use of the concept of *manāfiʿ* that is most closely associated with the development of human civilisation is found in Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25, in which Allah states: “*And We sent down iron, wherein is great strength and various benefits for humankind.*” The use of the plural form *manāfiʿ* underscores the breadth and diversity of the benefits that iron can provide for human life. To understand the intended meaning of the *manāfiʿ* (benefits) associated with *al-ḥadīd* at the time the verse was revealed, it is necessary to examine the syntactic structure of Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25. Abdullah Saeed argues that a text may employ particular syntactic features to emphasise specific ideas, and that the semantic sequencing of its elements can help determine which meanings are intended when a term is polysemous (Saeed 2014, 101).

Before mentioning *al-ḥadīd* and its *manāfiʿ* (benefits), Allah first refers to the sending of the messengers with clear proofs (*laqad arsalnā rusulanā bi al-bayyināt*), followed by the revelation of the Scripture and the *mīzān* (the balance of justice). This sequence indicates that the ultimate purpose of *al-ḥadīd* is to establish a just social order (*li-yaqūma al-nāsu bi al-qist*). *Al-qiyām*, that is, ‘*adl*’, refers to the establishment of a sound and upright condition, whereas *qist* is the outcome or manifestation of that state of balance (ʿAshūr 1984, 416). Such an order is to be guided by the teachings of the messengers and the Scripture, while the *manāfiʿ* of *al-ḥadīd* are to be assessed in light of the *mīzān*, the divinely ordained standard of justice.

According to Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, this juxtaposition also demonstrates the intrinsic relationship between normative values and material power. The former serves as the normative framework that guides humanity towards the truth, while the latter functions as the means of strength through which that truth can be realised within social life (Rāzī 1999, 232). It further signifies that these two dimensions are complementary and mutually reinforcing: justice cannot be established without both the presence of strength and the restraint of human desires. Through such strength, base desires and *shubuhāt* (specious doubts) can be restrained, preventing greed and miserliness from prevailing, so that people refrain from theft, usurpation, and arbitrary conduct (Ṭarīfī 2017, 2112).

Al-ʿUtbī states in the opening section of his *Tārīkh*:

A question once arose in my mind as to why the Scripture, the *mīzān* (the balance/justice), and iron are brought together within a single verse, for at first glance their combination appeared incongruous. I sought an explanation for this matter, yet I found no answer capable of dispelling my uncertainty or satisfying my intellectual inquiry. Eventually, after prolonged reflection, I came to realise that the Scripture constitutes the foundation of the *sharī'ah* and the guide to its religious rulings. It contains legal ordinances and prescribed limits. The *sharī'ah* prohibits hostility and injustice, rejects transgression and conflict, and commands justice and balance. None of these principles, however, can be effectively established without the means necessary to uphold them. It is for this reason that Allah conjoined the Scripture with the *mīzān* (Qāsimi 2010, 154).

The juxtaposition of the *kitāb* and the *mīzān* in this verse further reinforces their complementary functions. Ibn Kathīr explains that, through the revelation conveyed to the messengers, humanity receives a system of values that guides them towards the truth, thereby preparing them for the Hereafter and rectifying their religious life, while the principle of justice serves as the foundation for ordering life in this world (Kathīr 1999, 29). This is because worldly life cannot be properly sustained without justice; likewise, neither the state nor society can attain stability in the absence of justice (Ṭarīfī 2017, 2112).

The phrase *fīhi ba'sun shadīd* (therein is great strength) functions as a *ḥāl* qualifying *al-ḥadīd*. Syntactically, it is coordinated (*ma'ṭūf*) with the phrase *wa manāfi'u li al-nās*, indicating that both great strength and benefits for humankind constitute complementary attributes of iron (Khaḍr 1986, 49). This construction suggests that, because of its remarkable strength, there is scarcely any industry that does not depend upon iron. This understanding is further supported by Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, who interprets iron as the primary material from which a wide range of objects are produced, including weapons and many other implements (Suyūṭī 1981, 255). Likewise, Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, in *Tafsīr al-Māturīdī*, explains that the strength of iron is unparalleled in comparison with other materials. Although different materials may equally serve to pierce or strike, iron possesses superior strength and perfection. This distinctive quality explains why human beings have consistently relied upon iron as the principal material for warfare and combat, thereby exemplifying its *manāfi' li al-nās* (benefits for humankind) (Māturīdī 2005, 536). Moreover, iron is used in the manufacture of protective armour (*dir'*), as indicated in Allah's statement: "*And We taught him (David) the craft of making armour for you, so that it might protect you from your violence*" (Q.S. Al-Anbiyā' [21]: 80).

More specifically, the relationship between the phrases *ba's* and *manāfi'* may be understood as a form of *tanāzu'* (semantic interrelationship), indicating that iron possesses the potential to bring harm to some people while simultaneously providing benefits to others (Ashūr 1984, 417). Accordingly, *al-ḥadīd* is understood not only as a source of benefit but also as something that may lead to destruction (*ḥalāk*) when misused (Husain 1992, 819). In the context of warfare, iron also serves as a means through which the sincerity of true believers and the

hypocrisy of those who waver in faith become manifest, as indicated by Allah's statement: "*But when fighting was prescribed for them, a group of them feared people as they should have feared Allah, or even with greater fear*" (Q.S. An Nisā' [4]: 87). Thus, warfare makes evident who is truthful and who is deceitful, and this distinction is revealed through the use of iron (Māturīdī 2005, 537).

The syntactic and exegetical evidence therefore indicates that *ba'sun shadīd* and *manāfi'u li al-nās* represent two closely related dimensions of *al-ḥadīd*. The former emphasizes the inherent material capacity of iron, particularly its strength and durability, while the latter points to the various beneficial functions that may be derived from that capacity. The relationship between the two expressions is therefore not merely descriptive but functional: the strength of iron constitutes the material basis for its diverse uses. At the same time, because the same strength can be directed toward constructive or destructive purposes, its benefits cannot be separated from the manner in which it is utilized. In this sense, *manāfi'* does not imply that every application of iron is inherently beneficial; rather, it points to the potential benefits that arise from the appropriate use of its material properties. This semantic relationship provides an important basis for understanding *al-ḥadīd* not merely as a material possessing physical strength, but as a resource whose value is determined by how its power is employed for human purposes.

Macro Context I (Early Seventh Century CE): The Historical Setting of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25

Following the linguistic analysis of the verse, the next stage is to reconstruct Macro Context I (the Early Seventh Century CE) by examining the social, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual conditions surrounding the revelation of the verse. The purpose of this stage is to develop a comprehensive understanding of the historical circumstances in which the verse was revealed (Saeed 2014, 98). In *Fahm al-Qur'ān al-Ḥakīm: al-Tafsīr al-Wāḍiḥ Ḥasab Tartīb al-Nuzūl*, Muḥammad 'Ābid al-Jābirī classifies Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd as a Madinan *sūrah*, revealed as the ninety-fourth chapter in the chronological order of revelation, following Q.S. An-Nisā'. Muḥammad 'Izzat Darwazah likewise classifies Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd as the ninety-fourth *sūrah* in the chronological order of revelation, placing it after Q.S. Al-Zalzalah (Darwazah 1963, 16). This view is consistent with the opinion of the majority of Muslim scholars, who regard the *sūrah* as belonging to the Madinan period of revelation. Nevertheless, some scholars have suggested that the *sūrah* exhibits certain Makkan characteristics, particularly because its opening rhetorical style resembles that of several Makkan *sūrahs* (Jābirī 2009, 259).

Similarly, Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn 'Āshūr, in *al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*, argues that the opening verses of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd, up to approximately verse nine, display strong indications of Makkah characteristics, whereas the subsequent verses reflect the circumstances of the Muslim community in Madinah during its period of social and political consolidation ('Āshūr 1984, 354). Within this historical framework,

verse 25 may be understood as addressing a Muslim community that had evolved into a more organised society than that of the early Makkah phase of the Prophet's mission ('Ashūr 1984, 355).

Both classifications indicate that Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd belongs to the relatively later Madinan period, a phase during which the Muslim community had developed into a society with a more established social and political structure. At this stage, the Qur'an no longer focused solely on cultivating individual faith, as it had during the Makkan period, but also directed its message towards the establishment of a more stable and just social order (Nöldeke 1860, 191–93).

Ibn Qarnās argues that this sūrah constitutes an exhortation to continue giving *infāq* in support of the Muslim community engaged in warfare against the polytheists and in other military campaigns (Wijaya 2016, 71). It reflects a period in which the Muslim community had begun to confront the Quraysh openly. This situation required not only the strengthening of internal solidarity but also preparedness for external conflict through *jihād al-māl* (financial striving), particularly to support economically disadvantaged Muslims. However, before the Battle of Badr, a group of individuals refused to spend their wealth in the cause of Allah, as referred to in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 24. Subsequently, verse 25 was revealed, addressing the themes of justice and the means by which those who withheld *infāq* could be disciplined, thereby contributing to the establishment of social cohesion within the emerging Muslim community (Wijaya 2016, 72).

Fazlur Rahman emphasises that seventh-century Arabian society was characterised by pronounced social inequality and a tribal structure that frequently gave rise to intergroup conflicts (Nugroho et al. 2023, 275–89). Within such a context, the Qur'anic revelation functioned not only as a spiritual message but also as a moral force aimed at reforming unjust social practices. When this social background is taken into account, the Qur'an's teachings on justice, social solidarity, and collective responsibility can be understood as responses to the social realities confronting the community at that time (Rahman 2009, 33–36). Furthermore, the establishment of justice within the Madinan community depended not only upon divine guidance but also upon material means capable of translating those values into social practice. Within the context of a society engaged in constructing a new socio-political order, iron may therefore be understood as a symbol of the material power that enabled the implementation of the principles of justice taught by revelation (Shihab 2002, 415–18).

Accordingly, it may be argued that, within the historical context of the seventh century CE, *al-ḥadīd* primarily referred to iron in the form of weapons, swords, and instruments employed to enforce legal and communal obligations, including against those who refused to contribute *infāq* in support of *jihād*, particularly in relation to the Battle of Badr. From this perspective, it is unsurprising that classical exegetes interpreted the *manāfi'* of *al-ḥadīd* primarily in terms of weaponry,

warfare, and the enforcement of justice. Likewise, it is equally understandable that modern exegetes have expanded the interpretation of its benefits in light of changing historical and social realities.

This historical understanding is further supported by a ḥadīth transmitted by Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī from a report (*athbār*) attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās through the chain of Ikrimah, which states that the Prophet Adam (*‘alayhi al-salām*) descended to the earth carrying several implements made of iron, including an anvil, tongs, and a hammer. However, this report was subsequently criticised by a number of scholars. They maintained that the narration attributing to Ibn ‘Abbās an additional list of five iron tools, namely an anvil, tongs, a forging implement, a hammer, and a needle, is not authentic and should be regarded as an unreliable report (Ṭabarī 1922, 201). A similar criticism has been directed at the ḥadīth transmitted by al-Tha‘labī from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar concerning four things said to have been sent down from heaven: iron, water, fire, and salt (Dailamī 1986, 175). This report has been regarded as fabricated because its content is considered inconsistent with empirical reality as observed by human beings.

Muḥammad Jamāl al-Dīn al-Qāsimī also comments on this *ḥadīth*, arguing that, in reality, human beings manufacture various tools from iron extracted from the earth and process it according to their practical needs. Accordingly, the claim that all iron implements were brought down to earth during the time of the Prophet Adam is inconsistent with both historical evidence and material reality. Even if it were assumed that only a single iron implement had been brought down, such an implement would still have been of little practical value without the existence of iron as the raw material from which tools could be forged and manufactured (Qāsimī 2010, 155).

This discussion indicates that both the term *al-ḥadīd* and its *manāfi‘* (benefits) possess a universal semantic potential whose specific application depends upon historical and social context (Siddiq 2021, 84–107). This is evident, for example, in the interpretation of Sayyid Quṭb, whose understanding of *al-ḥadīd* largely corresponds to that of the classical exegetes, reflecting the socio-political circumstances of his time, when Egypt was experiencing armed struggle (*jihād*). By contrast, exegetes such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali, M. Quraish Shihab, and the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs offer broader interpretations of *al-ḥadīd* that extend beyond its military function. Ali highlights iron’s diverse benefits for human life, including its use in weapons, agriculture, and industry, while also associating it with power, authority, and the rule of law (Ali 2009, 426). Shihab similarly emphasises its *manāfi‘* for justice, national defence, civilisation, and industry (Shihab 2002, 46).

The Contemporary Meaning of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 and Its Relevance to the Ethical Use of Modern Technology

According to Abdullah Saeed, this stage of interpretation requires the findings derived from Macro Context I, including the earlier exegetical traditions, to be related to Macro Context II, namely the context of the twenty-first century. The objective is to identify both the continuities and the differences between these two contexts (Saeed 2014, 105; Bahri and Simangunsong 2024, 19–33). The reading of Macro Context I provides the foundation for understanding Macro Context II, as contemporary meaning cannot be constructed by detaching the verse from its historical context. The interpretation of *al-ḥadīd* in the early Islamic period provides insight into the function and significance of iron in the lives of the people at the time of revelation, particularly as a form of material power associated with practical needs and social order.

This historical account is necessary to distinguish which elements of the interpretation are context-specific and which embody a message that can be reconsidered under different circumstances. At this stage, the focus is no longer on preserving the particular forms of iron use as understood in the early Islamic period, but on identifying the principle underlying the utilization of such material power. This is where Macro Context II becomes necessary: to examine how this principle can be understood when the conditions of knowledge, human needs, and forms of material power have undergone significant changes in the twenty-first century. Thus, Macro Context I and Macro Context II form an analytical continuity: Macro Context I provides the historical foundation for interpretation, while Macro Context II serves as the space in which the relevance of that message is examined in light of contemporary realities.

Within Macro Context I, interpretations of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 primarily associated *al-ḥadīd* with material strength, weaponry, tools, defence, and other practical means through which the emerging Muslim community could secure its needs and social order. This interpretation was closely linked to the preceding verse concerning those who were unwilling to spend their wealth (*infāq*) in support of *jihād*. Consequently, iron was primarily understood as referring to weapons of war and everyday implements such as swords, knives, axes, and similar tools. This interpretation reflects the historical reality that, at the time of the revelation, iron was generally recognised only in relation to these functions.

Ḥadīd in Macro Context I also represents material power employed to meet human needs and maintain social order, while its association with *manāfi‘ li al-nās*, *al-mīzān*, and *al-qist* demonstrates that such power is oriented toward human welfare and justice. It can therefore be concluded that what is carried forward from Macro Context I is not the physical form of iron or its specific uses in the seventh century, but rather the principle that material power and capacity should be directed toward human benefit and governed by considerations of justice. This

principle subsequently serves as the point of departure for reading Macro Context II, in which modern technological development introduces new forms of power and human capability with a far broader scope of influence.

As discussed in Macro Context I, the origin of *ḥadīd* in the hadith literature has been associated with its being sent down from heaven. In addition, another report describes the descent of various types of iron in different forms. However, both reports have been regarded as inauthentic by a number of scholars (Sakhawi 1956, 226; Suyūṭī n.d., 224–26). On the other hand, human beings are endowed with an innate intellectual disposition (*gharīzah ‘aqliyyah*) that encourages them to continually seek, explore, and expand their knowledge. This understanding is consistent with a report attributed to the Prophet Muhammad stating that there are two desires that are never satisfied: the desire for knowledge and the desire for wealth (Arif 2023, 84–86). This intellectual drive is not a matter of chance but forms part of the divine design that prepares humanity to fulfil its role as *khalīfah* (Allah’s vicegerent) on earth (Ismail and Berghout 2024, 6–7). It is this very instinct that has propelled the progress of human civilisation across different eras and societies, inspiring people to observe the natural world, experiment with the materials available to them, and progressively develop increasingly sophisticated methods of utilising the resources that Allah has provided (Michael et al. 2020, 2–7).

Accordingly, iron (*ḥadīd*) as a fundamental material has undergone continuous development and transformation from one generation to another, evolving from simple tools and weapons forged during the earliest stages of civilisation into cast iron and steel during the Industrial Revolution. This entire process of development is the product of the intellectual capacity bestowed upon humanity by Allah (Rashid 2024, 11). Consequently, the gradual realisation of iron’s potential should not be understood merely as a secular historical phenomenon but also as a manifestation of Allah’s blessing (*ni‘mat Allāh*), operating through human reason, creativity, and endeavour (*ikhtiyār*) (Rashid 2024, 1). As civilisation has advanced and the demands of social life have become increasingly complex, the scope of iron’s utilisation has expanded far beyond anything imagined by earlier generations. Iron is no longer merely a means of survival; rather, it has become a foundational material supporting virtually every dimension of civilisation and, in the modern era, has evolved into a symbol of power whose significance extends well beyond the physical properties of the metal itself. In the fields of materials science and modern engineering, iron is regarded as a fundamental material underpinning technological advancement and modern industrial civilisation. It is extensively used across a wide range of critical sectors, including the construction of buildings and bridges, railway infrastructure, vehicles, industrial machinery, shipbuilding, and technological infrastructure, owing to its mechanical strength, durability, and versatility (Callister (Jr.) and Rethwisch 2018, 22).

If during the early Islamic period, iron was used primarily for warfare and the enforcement of law, its modern manifestation is found in technologies and industries of far greater complexity (Hidayat 2018, vii). Technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, digital systems, and other technological innovations can therefore be examined as contemporary forms of human capability rather than as direct semantic equivalents of *al-ḥadīd*. Like iron in the earlier context, these technologies possess considerable power to shape human life and social relations. Their ethical significance consequently depends on how such power is directed, whose interests it serves, and whether its benefits contribute to human welfare and a just social order (Erwin et al. 2023, 16; Floridi et al. 2018, 689–707).

Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 therefore speaks not only of iron in its literal sense but also conveys an ethical principle concerning the exercise of power in human life. This interpretation is grounded in the semantic range of the term *al-ḥadīd*, as discussed in the preceding linguistic analysis, where the word extends beyond its purely material meaning in Arabic usage. In the contemporary context, the exercise of power is no longer limited to physical force or material instruments in the form familiar to the early Muslim community. Technological systems now constitute an important form of human capability through which individuals, institutions, and states can influence economic activity, education, healthcare, communication, information, and national defence (Li and Li 2024, 353–56). This expanded capacity makes the ethical principles identified in the historical context particularly relevant: technological power must be assessed according to the benefits it generates, the harms it may produce, and the extent to which its use contributes to a just social order.

This principle becomes particularly significant when considering the relationship between technological power and justice. In the historical context, the strength associated with *al-ḥadīd* could support the protection and enforcement of communal order. In the contemporary context, technological systems similarly possess the capacity to address human needs, accelerate access to information, facilitate communication, and improve living conditions across various sectors (Espinosa et al. 2023, 67–76; Ibanga, 2024, 40; Wiryany et al. 2022, 250). Yet their benefits are not automatically distributed justly. When technological development is governed primarily by economic or political interests, it may contribute to social inequality, the concentration of digital power, and the marginalisation of particular groups (Coitinho and Silva 2024, 1–17; Obermeyer et al. 2019, 447–53). The principle derived from *al-qist* therefore requires technological power to be evaluated not only according to its efficiency or productive capacity but also according to its consequences for justice and the equitable distribution of its benefits.

This understanding is consistent with the structural arrangement of Q.S. Al-

Ḥadīd [57]: 25, which deliberately places *al-kitāb*, *al-mīzān*, and *al-ḥadīd* in a hierarchical sequence. This ordering indicates that every form of power must operate under the guidance of divine revelation and the principle of moral balance, while ultimately serving the establishment of justice (*al-qist*). Thus, *al-ḥadīd* should not be considered an autonomous form of power detached from ethical guidance. Its significance is determined by how its strength and utility are directed within the normative framework established by the verse. Applied to the contemporary context, this structure provides a basis for evaluating technological power according to its relationship with knowledge, moral balance, justice, and human benefit.

The arrangement of these elements within the Qur'anic discourse indicates that the problem of technology detached from justice is, at its core, not a technical issue that can be resolved merely through more sophisticated engineering or more effective regulations. Rather, its deepest root lies in a crisis of moral orientation, namely the failure to situate power within the framework of values and balance established by Allah. Technology, like iron in earlier times, is neither inherently just nor unjust. Its moral character depends entirely upon whether it is developed and employed within a framework governed by *al-kitāb* and *al-mīzān* as its guiding principles. A society that invests heavily in technological power while neglecting the cultivation of ethical and spiritual values is, in Qur'anic terms, constructing a building without a foundation. The consequences of such an imbalance, as history has repeatedly demonstrated, extend beyond the economic and political spheres to profoundly affect the very fabric of human existence. Recognising that technological power without a moral foundation ultimately tends to produce harm underscores that ethics and spirituality in technological development are not merely supplementary concerns but indispensable necessities (Ikhwansyah et al. 2025, 1687; Nuruddin and Anshory 2025, 4360–69; Saam 2022, 65; Saqib and Asghar 2024, 1; Chaudhary 2020, 639–57).

In the contemporary context, the principle of *al-qist* offers a direct critique of technological developments that disproportionately benefit particular groups, such as holders of capital, controllers of data, or technologically advanced nations, while leaving large segments of humanity increasingly marginalised (Couldry and Mejias 2019, 336–49). Likewise, the term *mīzān*, rooted in the meaning of weighing and measuring, reminds us that every exercise of power, including the application of technology, must first undergo careful ethical evaluation before being implemented. Technological progress that is not measured against the standards of moral values and the public good (*maṣlaḥah*) will only deepen existing inequalities (Elmahjub 2023, 73). Accordingly, from this interpretive perspective, the ethical principle derived from the historical function of *al-ḥadīd* can be applied to contemporary technological power.

Technology that is divorced from ethical and spiritual dimensions inevitably

encourages environmental exploitation, humanitarian crises, and moral degradation (Shaleh 2024, 239–64). For this reason, technology must always remain inseparably linked to justice. In this regard, M. Quraish Shihab aptly argues that when technology results in injustice or harm, it is not the technological product itself that should be rejected. Rather, attention should be directed towards educating, guiding, and holding accountable those who develop and employ the technology (Shihab 1996, 439–40).

The use of *al-ḥadīd* must be guided by sound and upright reason rather than by distorted ways of thinking (Qāsimī 2010, 153). Allah has subjected all that is in the heavens and on the earth to humankind so that they may utilise these blessings for the benefit of life (Q.S. Ibrāhīm [14]: 33). At the same time, however, He has endowed human beings with reason and appointed them as *khulafā'* (vicegerents) on earth (Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2]: 30–31). Consequently, this God-given intellect must be employed responsibly to develop and utilise technologies that promote justice, rather than technologies that facilitate the exploitation of either natural resources or human beings (Ali et al. 2025, 120).

In the interpretations of several modern Muslim exegetes, the elements mentioned in this verse are understood as the fundamental pillars of an orderly human civilisation. *Al-bayyināt* are interpreted as knowledge and wisdom that provide the intellectual foundation for directing human action, whereas *al-ḥadīd* is understood as the form of power that sustains social life (Qāsimī 2010, 154). This interpretation demonstrates that power cannot stand independently but must always remain under the guidance of knowledge and wisdom. Accordingly, the utilisation of technology, as the contemporary manifestation of power, should be directed by intellectual and moral responsibility so that it remains aligned with the objective of *maṣlaḥah* (the public good). This perspective resonates with the critique advanced by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who argues that the fundamental crisis of modernity arises when science and technology are divorced from their spiritual dimension. In his view, the problem of modern civilisation does not lie in technological advancement itself but in the loss of a sacred orientation in the pursuit and application of knowledge (Nasr 1996, 151–60).

Accordingly, integrating scientific knowledge with the values of *tawḥīd* is essential to ensure that the advancement of civilisation does not lose its humanistic orientation (Faruqi 1992, 63–70; Majid and Aljunied 2023, 407–23). In further elaborating this perspective, the elements mentioned in Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 may be understood as corresponding to the domains of the *sharī'ah*, the economic system, and political authority. This interpretation demonstrates that knowledge and wisdom constitute the foundation upon which the entire structure of human society should be guided, ensuring that it remains within the framework of justice and the public good. Consequently, power can never exist as an autonomous force; rather, it must always remain subject to ethical and moral principles.

Furthermore, Q.S. *Al-Ḥadīd* [57]: 25 contains the expressions *ba'sun shadīd* (great strength) and *manāfi'u li al-nās* (benefits for humankind). Although iron possesses immense power (*fīhi ba'sun shadīd*), enabling it to serve purposes far beyond the manufacture of weapons, the juxtaposition of these two expressions has been understood by Muslim exegetes to indicate that anything endowed with great power invariably embodies two inseparable dimensions: the potential to generate benefit and the potential to cause harm. From a linguistic perspective, the Qur'an deliberately employs the plural form *manāfi'* rather than the singular *naf'*. The term *al-manfa'ah* denotes something that actively provides benefit and can be utilised by human beings. This is not merely a grammatical choice; rather, the plural form signifies that the intended benefits are diverse and encompass multiple dimensions of human life simultaneously. Within the context of modern technology, this linguistic nuance is highly significant. Technology should not be evaluated solely in terms of a single dimension of benefit such as economic efficiency but rather according to the full range of its consequences. Does it expand equitable access to education? Does it strengthen public health? Does it broaden opportunities for social participation, or does it instead restrict them? This is the genuine implication of *manāfi'u li al-nās*: benefits that are tangible, multidimensional, and widely accessible to humanity, rather than benefits concentrated in the hands of a privileged minority (Deursen and Dijk 2019, 354–75).

Iron, which in earlier times served as an instrument for safeguarding security, can likewise become an instrument of destruction when used to oppress or harm innocent people. Modern technology exhibits the same dual character. Developments in artificial intelligence (AI), digital systems, and industrial automation undoubtedly provide numerous advantages for humanity. At the same time, however, they generate new challenges, including information manipulation (Vosoughi et al. 2018, 1146–51), the misuse of personal data, digital exploitation, and the displacement of human labour through the increasing dominance of machines and robotics (Zuboff 2015, 7–89). These developments demonstrate that the social consequences of technology are shaped by the interests, intentions, institutional arrangements, and ethical orientations that govern its development and use.

The consequences of technological development extend beyond individual users to society as a whole. Moreover, these consequences are not confined to worldly affairs but also carry profound spiritual implications for human responsibility. This understanding is consistent with the continuation of the verse, *wa li-ya'lama Allāhu man yanṣuruhu wa rusulahu bi al-ghayb*, which may be understood as indicating that the power entrusted by Allah to humanity is intended to uphold goodness and the public good. Accordingly, technology should not be employed solely for material interests but should also function as a means of directing human beings towards moral and spiritual responsibility.

From this perspective, technological development should not be grounded exclusively in intellectual capability but must also be guided by ethical consciousness and a commitment to serving Allah. Technology is fundamentally the product of the human intellect bestowed by Allah; consequently, its utilisation must remain within the principles of *bismi rabbik* (in the name of your Lord) and *yanṣurullāh* (supporting the cause of Allah), meaning that it should be oriented towards divine values and the welfare of humanity. Accordingly, the contextual transformation of Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 does not replace the historical meaning of *al-ḥadīd* with technology. Rather, it extends the ethical principle embedded in the verse from the responsible use of material power in the early Muslim community to the responsible governance of technological power in contemporary society. The historical form of power has changed, but the normative orientation toward human benefit, moral balance, and justice remains continuous. In this sense, the contemporary relevance of the verse lies in providing an ethical framework for directing technological development toward *al-qist* and *manāfi‘ li al-nās*.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the application of Abdullah Saeed's contextualist approach to Q.S. Al-Ḥadīd [57]: 25 produces an understanding of the verse that is simultaneously more linguistically grounded, historically situated, and ethically generative than either classical or modern exegesis alone has achieved. Through three analytically structured stages semantic-linguistic analysis, socio-historical contextualization, and contemporary recontextualization the study establishes that ḥadīd is not merely a reference to iron as a physical material, but a Qur'anic principle governing the ethical management of power in human civilization across all historical periods.

The study's central finding is that the normative hierarchy encoded in the verse al-kitāb and al-mīzān preceding *al-ḥadīd* constitutes a timeless ethical architecture applicable to every form of power that human civilization develops. In the contemporary era, this hierarchy demands that technological development, including artificial intelligence, digital systems, and industrial automation, be guided by revealed knowledge, disciplined by moral balance, and evaluated by its contribution to justice (*al-qist*) and human welfare (*manāfi‘u li al-nās*). The dual nature of *ḥadīd*, simultaneously capable of great benefit (*manāfi‘*) and great harm (*ba's*), applies with equal structural force to modern technology, whose moral direction is never determined by the technology itself but always by the values and intentions of those who develop and deploy it.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that Saeed's contextualist method, when applied systematically to a verse of this nature, is capable of bridging the gap between classical textual meaning and contemporary ethical challenges without sacrificing either philological precision or moral relevance. Future research may extend this framework to other Qur'anic verses

that address material power and human responsibility, or examine its application within specific domains of technology governance such as artificial intelligence policy, digital ethics, or environmental technology.

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