

Explaining Qur'anic Verse Selection in the State Funeral of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei through Revelatory Situation Matching

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ABSTRACT

The recitation of different Qur'anic verses for foreign delegations at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's state funeral prompted speculation that Iran was conveying hidden diplomatic messages through selective verse assignment. This study asks how verse selection for each delegation can be explained beyond ad hoc political signalling, and proposes revelatory situation matching as an analytical mechanism for this purpose. Using a qualitative case study design, it examines twenty delegation-verse pairs drawn from approximately nine hours of official livestream footage. Historical revelatory situations were reconstructed from al-Wāḥidī's *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* and the *tafsīr* literature; contemporary ceremonial situations were reconstructed from audiovisual observation and international media reports. Both corpora were coded independently through open, axial, and selective coding. The findings show that verse selection did not function as personalised political messaging to individual states, but as structural correspondence between historical revelatory situations and contemporary diplomatic circumstances: the strongest correspondences appeared among delegations associated with the Axis of Resistance, while partner states showed more moderate correspondences. The study concludes that revelatory situation matching extends the function of *asbāb al-nuzūl* beyond hermeneutics into an analytical tool for contemporary Qur'anic reception, while Qur'anic framing denotes the communicative effect produced once matched verses are performed before a public audience. These findings constitute an analytical reconstruction based on observable ceremonial patterns rather than a direct verification of the organisers' decision-making process.

Keywords: *Living Qur'an; Revelatory Situation Matching; Qur'anic Framing; asbāb al-nuzūl; religious diplomacy; symbolic communication.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an's function as a devotional recitation for Muslim piety was exceeded during the funeral procession of Ali Khamenei, Iran's Supreme Leader, who died amid the escalating war between the United States, Israel, and Iran. The procession became controversial when a different Qur'anic verse was recited for each foreign delegation, apparently aligned with its political standing and allegiance (Eye, 2026). This differentiation was observable as foreign delegations took turns paying their respects at the Grand Mosalla in Tehran (Motamedi, 2026). Official Iranian sources recorded the procession as a cross-city, cross-national event attended by large numbers of foreign delegations, with an officially arranged recitation programme spanning dozens of hours;

external sources such as Reuters (Hafezi & Choukeir, 2026) and the Financial Times emphasised its security, post-war, and diplomatic dimensions; (Millions to Attend Funeral Procession for Iran Supreme Leader, 2026) while cross-language analytical media widely interpreted the differing verses assigned to the Saudi, Lebanese, Pakistani, Qatari, Hamas, and other delegations as signals cloaked in revelatory language (Doostdar, 2026). The case therefore spans religious (recitation as public rite), political (post-conflict alliance management and rivalry), reputational-economic (Iran presenting itself as unisolated), and regional-security (post-war spatial vulnerability and transnational consolidation) dimensions within a single performative stage.

In the literature, this phenomenon sits at the intersection of three major traditions in Qur'anic Studies that remain insufficiently connected. First, Living Qur'an scholarship has shown that the Qur'an lives not only as a text to be read (Hasbullah, 2019), but as a social practice continually produced through ritual, culture, and the everyday life of Muslim communities (Bahri & Abraar, 2024). From this perspective, attention centres on how revelation acquires new functions through the community's interaction with the sacred text, so that Qur'anic authority is perpetually present within a changing social space (Rafiq, 2021). Second, research on audience reception of Qur'anic recitation shows that the meaning received is not uniform (Boullata, 2021; Purnama, 2020; Rafiq, 2014), but depends on the reader's or listener's epistemological position toward the sacred text (Shaleh et al., 2024). Third, scholarship on orality shows that the Qur'an has, from the outset, circulated as revelation transmitted through sound (Al-Ayyubi, 2020), such that its public recitation constitutes a performative act that is constitutive not merely supplementary to how the Qur'an builds religious authority.

However, this body of work has focused almost entirely on the Qur'an's reception within religious ritual, education, local communities, digital media, or the formation of Muslim piety. Very little research examines how Qur'anic recitation is positioned as an instrument of political communication in state diplomacy specifically, how different verses are assigned to different diplomatic audiences within a single official state event. A conceptual gap therefore remains regarding the mechanism by which a verse is transformed from its revelatory context into a contemporary diplomatic one, where Qur'anic orality no longer only signals religious piety but also functions as a symbolic language for constructing legitimacy, managing political alliances, and communicating geopolitical positioning to the international community. This study accordingly asks: how does the selection of Qur'anic verses for foreign delegations at a state funeral reactivate historical revelatory situations to construct contemporary diplomatic meaning, and what communicative effect does this selection produce once the matched verses are performed before a public audience?

In Qur'anic Studies, context is not treated as supplementary information but as an epistemic element that shapes the production of meaning. Abdel Haleem argues that adequate understanding and translation of the Qur'an is possible only when each verse is read within its linguistic, textual, and discursive context (*siyāq*), since Qur'anic meaning is built through the relations between verses and the discourse's overall structure, rather

than an atomistic reading of isolated phrases (2018). In a similar vein, Andrew Rippin shows that *asbāb al-nuzūl* developed as an exegetical genre linking verses to specific historical situations, thereby providing a narrative framework for meaning-formation within the *tafsīr* tradition (Rippin, 1988). *Asbāb al-nuzūl*, accordingly, does not merely record the history of revelation but constructs an interpretive relationship between text, event, and the community that received it.

Although research on the context of revelation has developed extensively within Qur'anic Studies, its methodological function remains dominated by hermeneutic concerns. Context is generally used to identify a verse's historical reference (Mukhlis, 2023), clarify semantic boundaries, explain inter-verse relations, and evaluate the validity of Qur'anic interpretation and translation (Saeed, 2013). Even in more recent developments, such as discussions of Qur'anic voice, preaching, revelatory communication, and early community formation attention remains directed at how the Qur'an addressed its first audience and how that historical horizon is reconstructed through interpretation (Neuwirth, 2019). To date, very little research has examined whether a given revelatory situation is systematically reactivated through verse selection for different contemporary audiences, particularly within political communication and state diplomacy. On this basis, this study does not aim to revise or replace the concept of *asbāb al-nuzūl*, but to extend its methodological function: from a hermeneutic instrument explaining textual meaning into an analytical instrument for identifying performative patterns in Qur'anic reception. Revelatory Situation Matching is proposed as an integrative model combining performance, revelatory context, and audience design to explain how the structure of a revelatory situation is reactivated on a diplomatic stage. Revelatory situation matching explains the verse–audience matching mechanism itself, while Qur'anic Framing denotes the communicative consequence that emerges once the matched verse is performed before a public audience; the two are not alternative names for the same finding, but sequential stages within a single process revelatory situation matching as the selection mechanism, Qur'anic framing as the communicative effect it produces.

Positioned against this literature, three points of departure can be specified more precisely. Rippin's account treats *asbāb al-nuzūl* as a device for anchoring textual meaning to a fixed historical referent; the living Qur'an scholarship discussed above documents contemporary reception mainly within ritual, education, or everyday piety. Neither strand asks whether a historical revelatory situation can be systematically re-identified in a contemporary, non-ritual, state event. Revelatory situation matching addresses this specific gap by treating structural correspondence rather than thematic resemblance or ad hoc media commentary as the unit of analysis, coded independently from both corpora rather than asserted after the fact. Qur'anic Framing extends the contribution from the analytical to the communicative register: framing research has so far been developed almost entirely on media texts, and this study relocates framing analysis to the performative reception of scripture, a connection the existing literature has not yet drawn.

B. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design focusing on delegation–verse pairs, namely Qur’anic verses recited when each foreign delegation paid its respects during Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s official funeral at the Grand Mosalla, Tehran. Each delegation–verse pair constituted a single observable event, producing a qualitative dataset of 20 cases. Secondary analytical units included delegation identity, diplomatic status, protocol sequence, audiovisual interactions, and media framing. Primary data were obtained from approximately nine hours of publicly accessible official livestream footage. Using systematic event observation, the researcher recorded each delegation–verse pair, including delegation identity, represented country, Qur’anic verse, surah, and protocol order. Every observation was verified through repeated replay before inclusion in the dataset. Only official foreign delegations were included, while domestic Iranian participants were excluded.

Historical revelatory situations were reconstructed from classical *asbāb al-nuzūl*, primarily al-Wāḥidī’s *Asbāb al-Nuzūl* (al-Wāḥidī, 1992) supplemented where necessary by classical and contemporary *tafsīr*. Contemporary ceremonial situations were reconstructed from audiovisual observations and corroborating international media reports. Data analysis employed two parallel qualitative coding procedures informed by Grounded Theory. The first coded the historical corpus (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), while the second independently coded the contemporary corpus (ceremonial observations and contextual reports). Both datasets underwent open, axial, and selective coding to reconstruct their underlying situational structures. The Revelatory Situation Matching framework was established only when the historical revelatory situation and the contemporary ceremonial situation demonstrated structural correspondence rather than merely thematic similarity. Correspondence strength was expressed through three qualitative analytical categories: High, Moderate, and Tentative rather than a statistical scale. A High correspondence was assigned when the historical and contemporary situations matched closely across their core structural elements (the situational problem, the parties involved, and the moral or symbolic resolution). A Moderate correspondence was assigned when the situations shared the same general structure but diverged on one or more of these elements. A Tentative correspondence was assigned when the structural link was plausible but could not be fully substantiated from the ceremonial sequence alone, and required cautious interpretation. These labels reflect the researcher’s analytical judgement of structural fit between the two coded corpora, rather than a quantitative or statistically derived measure. Analytical rigor was strengthened through an explicit codebook, audit trail, constant comparison, and negative-case analysis. As all materials were publicly available archival sources, the study involved no human participants or interviews. One limitation is that all coding was conducted by a single researcher without formal inter-coder reliability testing.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Result

Historical Coding of Revelatory Situations

The first finding shows that the procession did not apply a uniform pattern of Qur'anic recitation across delegations. Instead, each delegation received a different verse despite attending the same ritual. This variation indicates that the Qur'an functioned as a communicative instrument tailored to each delegation's political identity, geopolitical position, and diplomatic relationship with Iran. The unit of communication in this procession was therefore no longer recitation as such, but verse selection as a form of differential symbolic framing.

Systematic observation of the audiovisual archive identified twenty delegation–verse pairs involving international delegations. The verses recited were drawn from seven Qur'anic surahs: Al-Baqarah (2:153–154; 2:154), Āli 'Imrān (3:13; 3:104; 3:139; 3:139–141; 3:169; 3:169–170; 3:173), Al-Nisā' (4:69; 4:71; 4:74; 4:95), Al-Isrā' (17:1), Al-Ḥajj (22:39), Al-Aḥzāb (33:1–2; 33:23), and Al-Fath (48:26; 48:29). Several verses were recited more than once for different delegations, including Al-Nisā' 4:95, Al-Baqarah 2:154, Āli 'Imrān 3:139, and Āli 'Imrān 3:169, whereas other verses appeared only once. This variation indicates that verse selection was not uniform across delegations. Accordingly, each delegation–verse pair was treated as a single case unit and analysed by reconstructing its historical revelatory situation alongside its contemporary ceremonial situation within the Revelatory Situation Matching framework.

Table 1 Historical Coding of Revelatory Situations (*Asbāb al-Nuzūl* Corpus)

Verse	Open Coding (Data-derived)	Coding (Data-Axial Coding)	Selective Coding (Historical Situation)
Al-Aḥzāb 33:23	Missed Allah; while ultimate martyrdom	Badr; pledge to steadfast retreat; sacrifice;	Faithful Fulfilment of Covenant through Sacrifice
Āli 'Imrān 3:139	Military divine renewed counterattack	defeat; despair; encouragement; courage;	Recovery after defeat
Al-Nisā' 4:69	Separation anxiety; longing for the Prophet; fear of losing companionship in the Hereafter; divine reassurance	Eschatological belonging	Moral after Defeat
Al-Nisā' 4:95	Obligation; exemption; clarification	disability; moral divine responsibility	Communion with the Righteous
			Differentiated Moral Responsibility

Āli ‘Imrān 3:140	Collective grief; wounded community; divine perspective; shared suffering	Meaning-making after loss	Collective Reinterpreted Loss
Al-Baqarah 2:154	Martyrs; misconception about death; divine correction	Eschatological reinterpretation	Theological Reinterpretation of Death
Al-Aḥzāb 33:1	Diplomatic negotiation; theological compromise; prophetic refusal; covenant respected	Integrity under political pressure	Prophetic Integrity under Political Pressure
Āli ‘Imrān 3:169–171	Martyrs alive; consolation; message to survivors; perseverance	Consolation through revelation	Divine Consolation after Collective Martyrdom
Al-Ḥajj 22:39	Persecution; patient endurance; migration; permission to defend	Legitimated resistance	Transition from Patient Endurance to Legitimate Defence
Āli ‘Imrān 3:173	Fear campaign; psychological intimidation; increased faith; trust in God	Faith under intimidation	Faith Strengthened under Psychological Threat

Source: Compiled by the author based on ‘Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī, Asbāb al-Nuzūl, ed. ‘Iṣām ibn ‘Abd al-Muḥsin al-Ḥumaydān (2nd ed.; Beirut: Dār al-Iṣlāḥ, 1992).

Open coding identified 47 initial codes extracted directly from classical *asbāb al-nuzūl* reports. These included expressions such as *military defeat*, *collective grief*, *fear campaign*, *longing for the Prophet*, *political compromise*, *martyrdom*, *divine reassurance*, and *permission to resist*. Through axial coding, these codes were reorganized into broader situational structures including recovery after defeat, covenant under crisis, collective mourning, moral responsibility, political integrity, and psychological intimidation. Selective coding subsequently generated ten historical revelatory situations that constitute the historical dimension of the revelatory situation matching framework.

Table 2 Contemporary Coding of Funeral Situations (Contemporary Corpus)

Delegation	Contemporary Evidence	Open Coding	Axial Coding	Contemporary Situation
Saudi Arabia	Battle of Badr verse recited after Saudi delegation; Iran portrays itself as victorious after war; Saudi maintained cautious alignment	Post-war diplomacy; symbolic signalling; asymmetrical victory; rival recognition	Diplomatic signalling after conflict	Symbolic Recognition of Asymmetrical Victory

	with US during conflict				
Hezbollah	Martyrdom verses; Iran frames Hezbollah within Axis of Resistance	Resistance; sacrifice; loyalty	Resistance identity	Recognition of Sacrificial Resistance	
Hamas	Covenant verse; fulfilment of divine pledge	Loyalty; martyrdom; steadfastness	Covenant identity	Recognition of Faithful Resistance	
Iraq	Martyrdom verses	Shared sacrifice	Collective martyr memory	Shared Martyr Narrative	
India	"Do not grieve" verse; partner but outside resistance axis	Partnership; reassurance	Friendly partnership	Encouragement without Ideological Alignment	
Turkey	Verse on striving and sacrifice; diplomatic support without joining war	Regional partnership; effort; strategic distance	Cooperative but independent	Committed Partnership without Military Alignment	
Thailand	Verse permitting defensive struggle	Muslim minority context (if corroborated); endurance	Defensive legitimacy	Recognition of Endurance under Pressure	

Source: Compiled by the author based on systematic observation of the official funeral livestream and contextual triangulation from international media reports.

Contemporary coding was conducted independently from the historical corpus using video observation, delegation sequencing, and corroborating geopolitical reports. Rather than analysing theological meanings, this phase reconstructed the symbolic situations represented by each delegation, including post-war diplomacy, resistance identity, reassurance toward strategic partners, and diplomatic signalling directed at regional rivals. These situations formed the contemporary corpus used for comparison with historical revelatory situations.

Table 3 Revelatory Situation Matching

Delegation	Historical Situation	Contemporary Situation	Structural Correspondence	Match Strength
Saudi Arabia	Moral restoration after asymmetrical battle (Badr)	Iran framing itself as victorious despite numerical	Victory after asymmetry; divine vindication; strategic messaging	High

		and geopolitical disadvantage		
Hamas	Fulfilment of covenant through sacrifice	Iran honours Hamas as steadfast resistance	Covenant; sacrifice; continuity	High
Hezbollah	Collective loss reinterpreted; perseverance after defeat	Hezbollah portrayed as steadfast despite wartime losses	Endurance; martyrdom; resilience	High
Iraq	Theological reinterpretation of martyrdom	Shared remembrance of resistance martyrs	Martyr memory	High
India	Recovery after defeat	Friendly diplomatic reassurance rather than resistance identity	Encouragement; resilience	Moderate
Turkey	Moral responsibility through sacrifice	Recognition of political support without military participation	Commitment; contribution	Moderate
Armenia	Prophetic integrity under political pressure	Diplomatic engagement amid regional tensions	Integrity under negotiation	Tentative
Thailand	Legitimate defence after oppression	Requires corroborating evidence beyond ceremonial sequence	Limited evidence	Tentative

Source: Compiled by the author from the comparative analysis of the historical and contemporary coding results.

Comparison between the two coded corpora demonstrated that the funeral recitations did not merely reproduce thematic Qur'anic motifs. Instead, the selected verses frequently recreated historical revelatory situations whose structural characteristics corresponded to the symbolic circumstances represented by each delegation. The strongest correspondences appeared among delegations associated with the Axis of Resistance, where historical situations of covenant, sacrifice, martyrdom, and perseverance closely paralleled contemporary narratives of resistance and wartime endurance. In contrast, delegations representing regional partners or rival states displayed more moderate or tentative correspondences, suggesting that Revelatory Situation

Matching operates along a continuum of symbolic proximity rather than binary equivalence.

As contemporary evidence, several international media outlets framed the recitation of Āli ‘Imrān 3:13 to the Saudi Arabian delegation and Al-Nisā’ 4:95 to the Turkish delegation as “hidden messages” addressed personally to each country. This coverage is consistent with rather than a substitute for the comparative coding entries in Table 3: the Saudi Arabian case shows a High-strength structural correspondence (the historical situation “Moral restoration after asymmetrical battle (*Badr*)” corresponding to the contemporary situation “Iran framing itself as victorious despite numerical and geopolitical disadvantage”), while the Turkish case shows a Moderate-strength correspondence (“Moral responsibility through sacrifice” corresponding to “Recognition of political support without military participation”). Media framing therefore functions as corroborating material for the revelatory situation matching findings, not as an independent basis for analysis (Eye, 2026).

The comparative analysis of historical revelatory situations and contemporary ceremonial situations demonstrates that the structural correspondences identified through revelatory situation matching generate a consistent pattern of Qur’anic framing. Once the situational matching has been established, the selected Qur’anic verses function not merely as textual references but also as symbolic communicative devices that shape how the ceremonial event is interpreted.

2. Discussion

The comparison between the Historical Corpus and the Contemporary Corpus in Table 3 shows that verse selection in this procession was not a uniform ritual recitation, but the outcome of Revelatory Situation Matching: a process matching a verse’s historical revelatory situation to the contemporary ceremonial situation faced by the receiving delegation. The strongest structural correspondence (High) was found among delegations associated with the Axis of Resistance Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iraq, whose historical situations (e.g., “Recovery after defeat,” “Moral restoration after asymmetrical battle”) closely matched the contemporary situation of post-war resilience. Delegations representing regional partners or more distant states Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Armenia instead showed Moderate to Tentative correspondence, indicating that revelatory situation matching operates along a continuum of symbolic proximity rather than binary fit. This finding grounds the discussion that follows: Revelatory Situation Matching is the analytical mechanism explaining the logic of verse selection, while Qur’anic Framing discussed below is the communicative consequence that emerges once the matched verse is performed before a public audience.

Analysis using Robert M. Entman’s (1993) framing theory indicates that the distribution of Qur’anic verses across delegations represents a structured pattern of symbolic communication. According to Entman, framing operates through four principal functions: defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting remedies (Entman, 1993). All four functions are visible in the verses selected for each delegation. The chosen verses did not function merely as ritual recitation within

the procession, but can be read as constructing a particular emphasis of meaning regarding each delegation's identity, condition, and relationship to the narrative of struggle being built at the event. Qur'anic recitation in this context can therefore be understood as a symbolic communicative practice that mobilises revelatory authority to construct social and political meaning.

At the High correspondence level, historical situations such as "Covenant under battlefield crisis" and "Moral restoration after asymmetrical battle" (Table 1) correspond to the contemporary situations of post-war resilience and symbolic recognition of asymmetrical victory (Table 2), as observed for the Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iraq delegations (Table 3). Within Entman's framework, this correspondence operates through the functions of defining problems and making moral judgements: defeat or material loss can be read as redefined into dignified resilience, while sacrifice appears to acquire moral legitimacy through parallel with a structurally equivalent revelatory situation.

At the Moderate-to-Tentative correspondence level, historical situations such as "Moral responsibility through sacrifice" and "Prophetic integrity under political pressure" correspond more loosely to the contemporary situation of diplomatic partnership without military involvement, as observed for the Turkish, Saudi Arabian, and Armenian delegations (Table 3). Here, the dominant framing function is suggesting remedies in a more diplomatic register: the verses selected signal recognition and support without equating these delegations' position with actors directly involved in the conflict.

This pattern is consistent with the Living Qur'an premise that a revelatory situation does not remain a static historical record but is continually reactivated through recitation practice in new social contexts. At the same time, the variation in correspondence across delegations is consistent with an operationalisation of audience design (Bell, 1984): verse selection appears to have been differentiated according to each delegation's specific geopolitical position, rather than applied uniformly to the entire diplomatic audience.

Applying Entman's theory to this study nonetheless requires a conceptual qualification. Unlike the media texts that are framing theory's primary object, the Qur'an as revelation cannot be positioned as a text that inherently frames in order to attack, favour, or disparage a particular party. Within the Islamic tradition, the Qur'an functions as *hudā* (guidance), *bayān* (elucidation), *furqān* (the criterion distinguishing right from wrong), and *rahmah* (mercy) for humankind. This study therefore does not treat framing as a property of the Qur'an itself, but as the outcome of human communicative practice in selecting particular verses to be recited to a particular audience in a particular context. In other words, framing operates at the level of human agency, not at the level of revelation (Felsenthal & Agbaria, 2023). The conceptual sequence in this study accordingly moves from Historical Situation to Matching, Verse Selection, Public Recitation, Audience Reception, and finally to Qur'anic Framing as its end point.

This finding also shows that the meaning of framing is strongly shaped by the audience's epistemological position. From an internal (emic) perspective particularly for the Muslim community that receives the Qur'an as revelation verse recitation is

understood as conveying universal divine guidance. The verses are not perceived as insinuation or political propaganda, but as a reminder of faith values genuinely relevant to the delegations' circumstances (Hasbullah, 2019). From an external (etic) perspective, however such as international media or political observers the assignment of different verses to each delegation is more readily read as a form of diplomatic communication carrying a specific political message. This divergence shows that framing does not arise from the text alone, but from the interaction between text, ritual context, and the audience's interpretive horizon.

On this basis, this study proposes the concept of Qur'anic Framing: the practice of selecting and positioning Qur'anic verses as a symbolic communicative device within a public event, without altering the Qur'an's ontological status as revelation. This concept does not claim that the Qur'an itself frames; rather, social actors perform the framing process by selecting particular verses that resonate with meaning for the audience within a specific communicative context (Asad, 1996). This concept thus extends Entman's framing theory from media communication into religious communication. Where Entman's model has media perform framing through issue selection and salience, Qur'anic Framing operates through verse selection actualised in a religious performance. This perspective also engages the literature on religious mediation and the performativity of sacred texts, which holds that the meaning of religious symbols derives not only from textual content, but also from how a text is presented, recited, and received in public space. Qur'anic Framing accordingly treats verse selection as a human communicative act that mobilises the Qur'an's symbolic authority to construct a particular orientation of meaning, while the Qur'an's normative authority as revelation remains outside the framing process itself. This formulation extends framing theory's application into religious communication studies and bridges it with the international literature on Qur'anic performativity, religious mediation, and the anthropology of Islam bodies of work that have so far developed largely in isolation from one another.

Secondary data in the form of international media coverage provides a non-participatory observational layer for this event. Reuters and the Financial Times framed the procession primarily through its security, post-war, and diplomatic dimensions (Hafezi & Choukeir, 2026). Beyond this, a smaller set of cross-language analytical media framed two specific verse readings as explicit "hidden messages" (see Results); these two cases were the only delegation-verse pairs, out of twenty, to receive this framing in the available coverage.

Against the fuller dataset, this media framing of two cases is disproportionate to the overall pattern of the corpus: the data show the same verses and themes also recited to delegations in no controversial position (e.g., New Delhi, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Sri Lanka) delegations with no plausible reason to receive a political "insinuation." This is consistent with Entman's salience thesis: media coverage foregrounds the most controversial cases within a far larger corpus, so that framing these two cases risks implying that the whole procession carried individualised diplomatic codes, when the overall pattern indicates otherwise. As a comparative case, this study also examines the

Shia intellectual tradition's reading of the human relation to the Qur'an, as attributed to Imam Ali in the *Nahj al-Balāghah* (al-Sharīf al-Raḍī & Qutbuddin, 2024). One saying attributed to him affirms the Qur'an's authority as an elucidating book that must be "brought to life" through those who hold its authority.

In this tradition's reading, the Qur'an is understood not merely as a text read at ritual moments, but as a frame of reference that must be activated in reading reality a Qur'anic mindset that directs the reading of every event through Qur'anic values (Akhtar, 2008). Viewed through this lens, the assignment of verses on themes such as testimony, struggle, patience, or solidarity to various delegations can be understood as an effort to connect the funeral to Qur'anic values relevant to a moment of grief and struggle, rather than as diplomatic criticism personalised for each state.

This finding extends the growing international literature on the relationship between sacred text, social practice, (Pink, 2019) and public communication (Gade, 2012). Research across Qur'anic Studies and the anthropology of Islam shows that Qur'anic meaning never rests on the text alone, (Asad, 2017) but is continually produced through recitation practice, performativity, and the social context in which verses are presented (Gade, 2012). Living Qur'an scholarship affirms that the Qur'an's function in Muslim societies exceeds its textual and ritual dimensions, since it also shapes social action, interpersonal relations, and collective identity expression (Pink, 2019). Research on media framing, meanwhile, shows that religious symbols appearing in public space are often reduced to instruments of political communication, their meaning interpreted primarily through geopolitical context and power relations.

This study's findings show that such a reading is not fully adequate when applied to this state honorific procession in Iran. The verse distribution found is not dominated by themes of struggle or victory, but instead displays a considerably wider thematic spectrum, spanning enjoining what is right, prophetic leadership, brotherhood, patience, tranquillity (*sakīnah*), compassion, and piety. This pattern is difficult to explain if verse selection is understood solely as a diplomatic code directed at particular states. Instead, the finding is more consistent with the concept of a Qur'anic worldview (Akhtar, 2020), which treats the Qur'an as a value system shaping how a Muslim understands reality, (Akhtar, 2008) such that verse selection more plausibly actualises a Qur'anic outlook than merely conveys a political message.

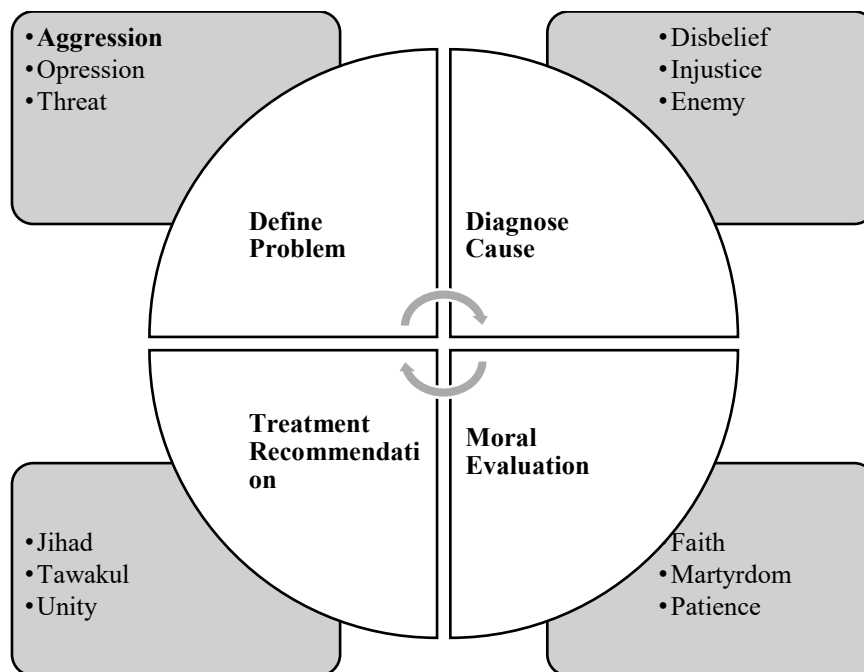
This interpretation is further supported by scholarship on Qur'anic performativity, which shows that reciting verses in public space is a religious act that produces meaning through the relation between text, reciter, and audience (Boullata, 2021). A verse's meaning is thus determined not only by its textual content but also by the social practice surrounding it (Al-Ayyubi, 2020). In this context, the thematic variation found in this study points to an effort to present Qur'anic values suited to each delegation's characteristics, rather than to convey a uniform political message to all participants.

This study therefore proposes a synthesis of two approaches that have so far developed separately in the international literature. A framing approach is essential for explaining how media construct interpretations of religious symbols, but this analysis

needs to be combined with an emic perspective drawn from the Islamic intellectual tradition itself (Hasbullah, 2019). Without accounting for this internal framework of meaning, Living Qur'an practice risks being reduced to a mere political communication strategy. By combining framing analysis, the thematic distribution of verses, and the Shia intellectual tradition of living with the Qur'an, this study instead shows that religious symbolic communication can hold religious, ethical, and political dimensions simultaneously, without being reduced exclusively to any one of them.

The media framing of the Saudi Arabian and Turkish cases as "hidden messages," as shown in Results, is consistent with rather than contrary to the correspondence strength recorded in Table 3: both cases sit toward the Moderate/High end of the correspondence continuum rather than standing apart as isolated instances of personalised messaging. These same four framing functions are observable not only case by case but across the thematic clusters of verse selection identified above.

This analytical process is summarized in Figure 1.



Source: Author's own construction (2026).

Figure 1 illustrates how the results of revelatory situation matching are translated into Qur'anic Framing through Robert Entman's four framing functions: define problem, diagnose cause, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. In this study, these framing functions are not derived from framing analysis as the primary analytical method; rather, they emerge as the communicative consequences of the structural correspondence between the reconstructed historical revelatory situations and the reconstructed contemporary ceremonial situations. Accordingly, revelatory situation matching provides an analytical account of why a particular Qur'anic verse was selected, whereas Qur'anic Framing accounts for how that verse constructs meaning for the diplomatic audience.

With revelatory situation matching established as a mechanism through Tables 1–3, this study’s conceptual contribution is twofold: for Qur’anic Studies, revelatory situation matching extends the methodological function of *asbāb al-nuzūl* from a purely hermeneutic instrument into an analytical instrument for identifying structural correspondence in Qur’anic reception; for political communication studies, Qur’anic framing the communicative effect of revelatory situation matching extends Entman’s framing theory from mass media into the mobilisation of sacred-text authority within religious diplomacy.

Qur’anic Framing as a communicative effect manifests differently according to the level of structural correspondence in Table 3. For delegations with High correspondence (Hamas, Hezbollah, Iraq), the resulting framing foregrounds moral vindication and the continuity of resilience, aligning with Entman’s functions of defining problems and making moral judgements. For delegations with Moderate-to-Tentative correspondence (Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Armenia, India), the resulting framing is more diplomatic and loose, signalling recognition and support without equating positions closer to the function of suggesting remedies. This difference in framing intensity explains why structural correspondence, rather than country-by-country verse personalisation, is the dominant pattern in the data.

A methodological consequence of this finding is the need to maintain a firm conceptual boundary between revelatory situation matching as the analytical mechanism, Qur’anic framing as its communicative effect, and revelation as the normative text that neither reduces to. For future research, the revelatory situation matching and Qur’anic framing models should be tested separately on other state or diplomatic events involving Qur’anic recitation before plural audiences, to assess their generalisability beyond the single case of Khamenei’s funeral. As this study relies solely on public archival data without interview or participant-observation data, and all coding was performed by a single researcher without inter-coder reliability testing, future research should ideally include interviews with event organisers (the *qāri*’ and the religious protocol team) and inter-coder reliability testing, to independently confirm the verse-assignment logic that is here inferred from patterns in the data.

D. CONCLUSION

This study shows that the recitation of Qur’anic verses to international delegations at Ayatollah Ali Khamenei’s funeral procession cannot be adequately explained by the purely political reading reflected in much international media coverage. As demonstrated in the Discussion, the thematic range of the selected verses extends well beyond struggle or victory, following a broader value orientation rather than conveying diplomatic messages to particular states. Taken together, the thematic distribution, media framing, and the Shia intellectual tradition indicate that the practice is better understood as the public enactment of a Qur’anic worldview than as instrumental political communication.

The study’s principal contribution is the development of Qur’anic framing, which conceptualises the use of Qur’anic verses as symbolic communicative devices in public events without altering their normative status as revelation. By extending Entman’s

framing theory into religious communication, the framework demonstrates that framing can operate through the selection of Qur'anic verses within specific social contexts. It thus connects framing theory, Living Qur'an studies, the performativity of sacred texts, and the anthropology of religion. In this case study, revelatory situation matching explains the observed ceremonial pattern, although its broader applicability requires validation through comparative studies across other diplomatic and state events.

This study nevertheless has limitations. It examines a single state event and relies on documentary evidence rather than interviews with organisers or reciters, meaning that the verse-selection process is analytically reconstructed rather than directly verified. Future research should test Qur'anic Framing across different Islamic traditions and communicative settings, including diplomacy, public ritual, and digital media using comparative, ethnographic, and interview-based approaches to evaluate the framework's broader validity.

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