

# TRACKING THE ROOTS OF RADICALISM IN INDONESIA: INTERPRETATION OF THE VERSIONS OF JIHAD AND WAR IN THE QUR'AN

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**Abstrak:** Wars and fundamental actions in Indonesia, such as terrorism, seem to be a stigma attached to Islam. If you look at previous history, this stigma appeared for the first time when the WTC incident on September 11, 2001, in the United States, was followed by the bombings in Bali (2002), Madrid (2004), London (2005), and in Paris (2015). carried out by the radical Islamic movement, al-Qaida. This is where the world community is haunted by the discourse of Islamophobia and attaches various negative stigmas to Islam, such as radical Islam, fundamental Islam, extreme Islam, militant Islam, terrorist Islam, and so on. This research will focus on the problems above, with the formulation of the problem; How is the interpretation of the verse of jihad and war, and how is it related to the Qur'an?

**Keyword:** Radicalism; Jihad; al-Qur'an

## Introduction

Linguistically, radicalism comes from Latin, namely "radix," which means "root" (Rodin, 2016). In Arabic-citing the Thematic Tafsir al-Qur'an of the Ministry of Religion, radicalism (violence) consists of various terms, namely *al-'unf*, *al-taṭarruf*, *al-ghulum*, and *al-irhāb*. Meanwhile, in the English dictionary, radical also means extreme, comprehensive, fanatical, revolutionary, ultra,

and fundamental (Vocabulary, 2021). When connecting the basic meaning of radicalism with religion, it can be interpreted as the religious nature of a person who understands his religion thoroughly down to its roots. However, if the word radical is developed into radicalism, a new meaning will be found that shifts from its primary meaning. In the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), radicalism is an "understanding or sect that wants social and political change or renewal using violence or drastic." (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2021).

War and other fundamental acts like terrorism seem to be a stigma attached to Islam. If you look at previous history, this stigma appeared for the first time when the WTC incident on September 11, 2011, in the United States, was followed by the bombings in Bali (2002), Madrid (2004), London (2005), and in Paris (2015). carried out by the radical Islamic movement, al-Qaida. This is where the world community is haunted by the discourse of Islamophobia and attaches various negative stigmas to Islam, such as radical Islam, fundamental Islam, extreme Islam, militant Islam, terrorist Islam, and so on (Basid, 2020).

From these various events, it is interesting to explore how radicalism is actually in the Qur'an so that there are no deep-rooted misunderstandings and make some groups, especially Muslims themselves, misunderstand the meaning of the verses about radicalism (Najiburrohman & Zulfa, 2019).

### **Study the Verse of Radicalism**

The verses of the Qur'an that are often misunderstood and used as arguments for radical actions are the verses of jihad and the verses of war. If you look at the context that occurred at the time of the Prophet, it is normal for the verse about this term to be mentioned in the Qur'an because it is necessary to expand the symbols of Islam. Therefore, it is essential to understand these

verses according to the context and purpose of the law (Husna, 2021). The following will describe the two groups of verses:

### 1. Jihad Verses.

For some groups, jihad is sometimes defined as a war against the enemies of Islam, so acts of violence against anything considered an enemy of Islam is a noble acts of jihad. As a result, the word jihad became something terrible and resulted in Islam being accused. Islam is seen by people outside Islam and the West as a terrorist religion. Thus, it is no exaggeration to say that the term jihad is one of the most misunderstood Islamic conceptions, especially among Western experts and observers. If we search for the word jihad in the Qur'an, as will be explained in the following explanation, it is different from radicalism and war. Jihad, apart from being one of the core teachings of Islam, cannot be simplified and identified with war (*qitāl*). War always refers to self-defense and physical resistance, while jihad has a broader meaning. On the other hand, *qitāl* as a new religious term in the Medina period, while jihad has been the theological basis since the Meccan period (A'la, 2009).

According to Seyyed Hossein Nasr, of the 36 verses of the Qur'an containing (about) 39 words *ja-ba-da* with various derivations, no more than ten verses related to war. The rest of the words refer to all outward and inner activities, as well as intense efforts to present God's will on earth, which is the development of noble moral values, from upholding justice to peace and welfare of humanity. In other words, jihad is the sincerity of the heart to exert all abilities to ground Islamic values in life. At this level, sincere and sincere devotion (worship) and relationships between human beings based on honesty and sincerity are part of jihad (Nasr, 2003).

According to Ibn Manzur, the word *jāhada-yujāhidu-mujāhadah-jihādan* means to try seriously by devoting toil to carry out Allah's commands; struggling (Manzur, 2003). According to *al-Raghib al-Asfahānī*, jihad (and *mujāhadah*) is an effort to exert all efforts to defeat the enemy (Al-Asfahani, n.d.). In general, the Qur'an describes jihad in various contexts of discussion. However, they all explain that jihad, according to the Qur'an, is a struggle to realize *al-salām*, *al-salāmah*, *al-salāh*, and *al-ihṣān*, namely struggle to realize peace, and prosperity, and improve the quality of life according to the teachings of the Qur'an. The struggle to make it happen is called jihad *fī ṣabilillāh* (a struggle in Allah's way). In Q.S. al-Mā'idah [5]: 35, the struggle to realize the well-being of physical and spiritual life and the world and the hereafter is an obligation for every believer that must be carried out based on piety to Allah and the efforts (efforts) of believers as Allah's vicegerents on earth to change conditions to be better and of more quality physically and mentally in order to get *al-Falāh*, the luck of the world and the hereafter (Fawaid, 2021).

Jihad in the way of Allah must also begin with hijrah, namely changing thoughts, beliefs, emotions, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors that are not by the message of the Qur'an. So, hijrah is a necessary pre-condition to carry out the command for jihad after a person has faith and is pious. Therefore, in many verses of the Qur'an, Allah puts hijrah after faith and before jihad, as stated in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 218 and Q.S. al-Anfal [8]: 74.

The Qur'an emphasizes two ways to carry out jihad in the way of Allah, namely with wealth (*māl*, *ammwāl*) and soul (*nafs*, *anfus*) as stated in Q.S. al-Nisā' [4]: 95; Q.S. al-Anfāl [8]: 72; Q.S. al-Taubah [9]: 20, 44, 81, 88; Q.S. al-Hujurāt [49]: 15; and Q.S. al-Ṣāf [61]: 11. As explained previously, the various goals of jihad will not be achieved without the willingness to sacrifice property because wealth is the primary support for jihad in the way of Allah. Jihad with assets can be channeled through *waqf*, *infaq*, alms, or

fundraising programs for various interests of the people (Husna & Sholehah, 2021).

The word *nafus* in the Qur'an has many meanings, such as life, heart, type, and the totality of humans where the soul and body are integrated, as well as everything that cannot be separated from it. The Qur'an describes a person's existence before Allah and society in the language of the *nafus*. So, it is not wrong if the word in the context of jihad is understood in the sense of the totality of humans, which includes life, emotions, thoughts, knowledge, energy, time, and places associated with it. This meaning is reinforced by the command in the Qur'an to carry out jihad without mentioning the *nafus* or property, as in Q.S. al-Hajj [22]: 78. According to M. Quraish Shihab, the misunderstanding of jihad, which is more defined as a physical struggle, is, among other things, caused by an inaccurate translation of the verses of the Qur'an that speak of jihad with *nafus*, where the word *nafus* is often translated as the soul (life) which is then given the impression as a sacrifice of life (physical) only (Shihab, 2010).

Thus, interpreting jihad only in physical struggle or armed resistance is wrong. Especially if you look at the use of the word in the Qur'an. Verses about jihad have been revealed since the Prophet Muhammad was in Mecca, long before the order for war and permission to take up arms was issued for self-defense and religion. Q.S. al-Furqan [25]: 52 agreed by the scholars to descend on Mecca. Generally, the verses about jihad do not mention the object to be faced. The object explicitly stated is jihad against infidels and hypocrites, as stated in Q.S. at-Taubah [9]: 73 and Q.S. at-Tahrim [66]: 9. However, this does not mean that only these two objects must be faced with jihad, because in other verses, it is mentioned enemies who can plunge humans into evil, namely Satan and human desires themselves. Both must be faced with

struggle. It is as in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 168, Q.S. al-Qashash [28]: 50, and Q.S. Yusuf [12]: 53 (Rodin, 2016).

## 2. Qital (War) Verses

War verses, apart from jihad verses, verses that are often used as the basis for developing stereotypes to identify Islam as a religion of pro-violence and supporting acts of terrorism are verses of war. Therefore, in the following explanation, these verses will be studied according to their context and meaning from the perspective of the Qur'an. The word *qital* (war) in various forms is mentioned in the Qur'an 12 times. Linguistically, *qital* comes from *qa-ta-la*, which forms a noun, *al-qatl*, which means eliminating the spirit/life from one's body (Al-Asfahani, n.d.). According to Ibn Manzur, the word *qa-ta-la* has several meanings, namely *la'ana* (cursing), *al-muqāṭalah* (killing each other), and *al-muharabah* (annihilating each other between two people) (Manzur, 2003).

According to the Qur'an, war is the last alternative to various options that must be pursued in realizing peace which is the essential message of the Qur'an. When this peace is disturbed and unappreciated, and Muslims are oppressed, Allah allows Muslims to fight against it. It is a kind of emergency exit that is only permitted under certain conditions.

Q.S. al-Hajj [22]: 39-40 is the first verse revealed regarding the order of war in Islam; after more than ten years in Mecca, the Muslims were persecuted. Before being allowed to fight, they were ordered to refrain (Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]: 77) and remain patient and determined (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 109; Q.S. al-Ankabut [29]: 59, and Q.S. an-Nahl [16]: 42). After the Muslims were expelled from their hometowns and those who remained were subjected to even more cruel treatment, only then did Allah allow them to fight.

However, as stated by Syalabi, those who study the verse will see that Islam does not want war. This can be seen from the use of the verb at the beginning of the verse, which uses the term *mabniy majbul (uzīna)* where the actor (*fa'il*) is hidden, in this case, Allah. This illustrates how God does not like war. Humans tend to dislike war and violence (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 216). Therefore, when this verse was revealed, there were Muslims who were not sure enough about this verse to be used as an excuse to wage war (Syalabi, 1994).

From here, the relationship between Islam and the outside world is built based on peace. However, under certain conditions, such as those who fight against Islam and interfere with religion, then war is justified. War in defense of religion is not only justified by Islam. Christianity, which is often described as a very tolerant and loving religion, also allows war in situations where it is seen as dangerous (Gospel of Luke [22]: 35-38, Luke [12]: 49-52).

After that verse, Allah revealed a verse that emphasized the permissibility of war as a reinforcement of the above verse, namely Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 190. The granting of a permit for war in this verse is not absolute but on the condition that the war is carried out only for those who fight and do not exceed the limits. When sending troops to war, the Prophet Muhammad and his successors always instructed not to attack the civilian population, namely women, the elderly, and religious people who were worshipping or destroying their crops and livestock. That is, Islam sees war more as a defensive act. Offensives are only seen as legitimate to defend religious freedom (Q.S. al-Hajj [22]: 39-41), against attacks and self-defense (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 190), defending people who are oppressed against the oppression of other groups (Rodin, 2016), betrayal of the agreement, and persecution (slander) as explained in the past verses and these

verses: Q.S. al-Nisa' [4]: 75, Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 251, Q.S. al-Anfal [8]:55-57, Q.S. al-Anfal [8]: 39, and Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 191-193.

If Q.S. al-Anfal [8]: 190 talks about when the war is allowed to start by the Muslims, verse 193 explains when the war should be stopped and the consequences that will be borne by those who refuse to stop it. It can be started when an enemy attacks. They are being fought while the war must be stopped, not when the religion of Islam is spread throughout the world, but it must be stopped when the persecution ends because the purpose of war is to stop the persecution. So important is the cessation of war and the desire of the Qur'an to create a peace that Allah reminded in Q.S. al-Anfal [8]: 61. Even when the war was over, the Qur'an and the hadiths gave various provisions regarding treating prisoners of war and new relations with non-Muslims. War, of course, is not seen as a tool to change other peoples' religions. The division of the territory into *dar al-harb* and *dar al-Islam* does not exist in the Qur'an and hadith but is the result of *ijtihad* by scholars. Those who used the term, at that time, were talking about fighting the enemy in countries around Muslim countries. In fact, for these scholars, there is not a dichotomy, but a trichotomy, namely, with the third part being *dar al-sulh* (a country bound by an agreement with a Muslim country) (Halim, 2012).

So, even in war, the Qur'an links the command to fight with the command not to transgress, be ready to forgive, and prioritize peace. The retribution for the injustice of the other party is reminded by the Qur'an so that in a commensurate way and return the situation to a regular (balanced) state, as the word of Allah Q.S. an-Nahl [16]: 16.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The command to retaliate appropriately and not excessively is also stated in Q.S. al-Shūra [42]: 40 and Q.S. al-Hajj [22]: 60.



This verse was revealed in connection with the anger of the Prophet Muhammad. for the death of his uncle, Hamzah bin Abdul Muttalib, who was very sad and treated inhumanely in the Battle of Uhud. Seeing this, the Muslims intended to kill 70 Meccans for their lives. Therefore, when examining religious texts and the history of the war in Islam, Islam provides several ethics in warfare that align with humanitarian principles (Rodin, 2016).

### **Deconstruction of the Interpretation of Radicalism**

As a religious doctrine, jihad is doctrinal ammunition that functions as a tool for religious struggle in responding to the challenges of the times. What needs to be realized is that jihad is not the product of individual authority or the interpretation of any particular organization. Instead, it is the product of various individuals and authorities interpreting and applying the principles of sacred texts in specific historical and political contexts. For that, we must read and understand the verses of the Qur'an historically (Basid & Miskiyah, 2022).

The contents of the verses above emphasize jihad as an inherent struggle with difficulties and complications towards a better life. Struggle against the passions within oneself to achieve virtue, make earnest efforts to do good, and help improve people's lives. At this point, it is interesting to examine the views of Asghar Ali Engineer on the concept of Jihad in Islam by saying (Engineer, 2001):

“In fact as far the Qur'an is concerned the concept of “jihad” has nothing to do with violence. The Qur'an does not use this word in any sense of war at all. It is much later usage with which we are not concerned here. It is highly regrettable that not only non-muslims even Muslims in general think that the Qur'an uses the term jihad for war and that is duty of Muslims to wage jihad (i.e. in the sense of war) in the way of Allah. The word jihad unfortunately has been so misused in the history of Muslims

that even an Arabic dictionary al-Qamus al 'Asri by Elias Antoon (Cairo, 1972) gives its meaning as “militancy, fighting” and jihad fi sabil al din as “holy or religious war”. This is how original meanings are distorted through popular practice”.

Engineer's proposition above confirms the concept of jihad in Islam which is not identical to violence and radicalism. The distortion of the meaning of jihad seems to have been carried out by Ellian Antoon in his dictionary, which defines jihad as the same as holy war in the name of religion. If we look more deeply into the word “jihad” which comes from the word *jabada* and its various derivations, none of them explain that jihad is closely related to radicalism or war.

None of the verses related to jihad have the connotation of fighting and legalizing acts of violence in solving every problem. On the other hand, jihad is only emphasized to increase worship both vertically and horizontally, which is only intended to achieve the pleasure of Allah. This is the starting point for misinterpretation of jihad, which in turn is used as a justification tool by some interpreters to express religious radicalism. As explained by al-Qardawi in his book *as-Sahwah al-Islamiyyah Baina al-Juhud wa al-Tatarruf*, the main factor in the emergence of radical attitudes in religion is the lack of a correct and deep understanding of the essence of the teachings of Islam itself. Islam is only understood superficially and partially (Qardawi, 2001).

Peace is the desire of every human; as long as peace is, there is no obstacle for Muslims to accept peace; it is even recommended to offer peace as long as there is a benefit. It even prohibits mutual enmity, hatred, or prejudice (Q.S. 49 11-12).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the construction of the analysis above, it can be noted that the methodology of interpreting the radicals. By the

principle of fundamentalism, namely: "Returning to the first teaching (al-Qur'an) they understand the texts of the Qur'an literally (literally) according to what is stated in the text. They do not want to know what the real purpose of the Qur'an was revealed to humans through Muhammad, nor do they look back at the social conditions (*asbāb al-nuzūl*) of these verses. There are many approaches that can be used in understanding the texts of the Qur'an so that the Qur'an can benefit the people.

Finally, it should be emphasized here that the Qur'an is a universal book, so its verses must be understood holistically-comprehensively and not taken in pieces (atomistic). Therefore, an understanding approach is offered in a *munāsabah* way between verses; another approach offered is to look at the historical background (*asbāb nuzūl*) of the revelation of certain verses. Therefore, with these theories, it is hoped that the Qur'an will become a "book of reference" in all places and at all times to achieve peace and benefit. So that in the end, the Qur'an will be *Rahmatan lil a'alam* for all time.

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