
Concept of Jihad in the Qur'an (A Moderate and Contextual Approach in The Contemporary Era)

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Abstract:

This research discusses the interpretation of verses on *jihad* in the Qur'an, emphasizing the importance of a moderate and contextual approach in facing contemporary challenges. To date, the concept of jihad has often been misunderstood and reduced to only the aspect of war (qital), leading to misinterpretations that result in violence, extremism, and even terrorism. In fact, the Qur'an uses the term jihad in various contexts that indicate a broad meaning, including spiritual, intellectual, socio-economic, and physical jihad. This research method uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis related to modern interpretations based on primary sources (the Qur'an) and secondary sources (classical and contemporary interpretations). This study shows that classical interpretations emphasise jihad as defensive warfare due to the historical context of Muslims at that time, while contemporary interpretations emphasise *maqashid al-syari'ah*, so that jihad is interpreted as a comprehensive struggle to uphold the values of humanity, justice, and peace. The results of the study show that jihad is a multidimensional concept that cannot be narrowed down to violence. Jihad is a spiritual energy that drives Muslims to build civilisation, uphold tawhid, and fight against various forms of falsehood and injustice. A moderate understanding of jihad has important implications, not only for Muslims in maintaining their internal unity, but also for the global community in creating harmony, tolerance, and peace.

Keywords: *Jihad, Contemporary Interpretation, Moderation, Extremism, Maqashid al-Shari'ah*

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INTRODUCTION

Muslims have a guideline for life which is referred to as the holy book of the Qur'an. Every content in the holy book must be understood first before practicing it in daily life (Djamdjuri & Kamilah, 2021). Correct understanding will lead to a good path, on the other hand, a wrong understanding will give birth to a deviant attitude. Based on the study of the science of interpretation, to understand the Qur'an in a good way, it is necessary to pay attention to the method used. If you interpret the Qur'an freely, there will be various perspectives of interpretation that can be ascertained to be indiscriminate. Multi-interpretation that is built on a foundation that is not based on the science of correct interpretation is what then triggers various kinds of deviations of understanding and even gives birth to extreme attitudes. Every human being has freedom. He is free to choose and do whatever he wants. However, freedom here is not as free as it is and there is no risk or consequence, especially in matters of religion (al-Ghazali, 2005).

The interpretation of Qur'anic verses with their various methods and patterns has been researched, discussed and debated among scholars. According to Shaykh Abdurrahman al-Midani, if freedom goes beyond the predetermined limits, then freedom will only become wild, uncontrollable (al-Maidani, 1991). Until today, Muslim students and researchers have enjoyed the fruits of the work of scholars related to these methods and patterns. The study of knowledge about the methods and steps of interpretation has also been written in their books such as the

books of *'Ulumul Qur'an* and so on. Various literature in the science of interpretation will be found the characteristics and characteristics of *Musafir* when trying to explore the meanings of Qur'anic verses. To this day, even *Musafir Muta'akhirin* has developed methods that still can be able to emerge to farify the Qur'an in accordance with the progress of the times without damaging the essence of the fasir.

As for the issues discussed in this study, it is narrowed down to the interpretation of jihad verses. Jihad has been understood with various interpretations and distorted practices that cause various problems. The understanding of jihad is varied and broad, especially in the modern context (Sali, 2023). It is not jihad that is a problem in the life of the nation and the state but the wrong interpretation of the meaning of jihad which actually creates problems and leads to acts of violence without a correct basis. Jihad is a spiritual power and driving force for Muslims. Without jihad, Islam would be more likely to become a stagnant doctrine, not progressive to the development of the times (Almascaty, 2001). One form of violence is the occurrence of acts of terrorism that are often used by extremists to justify their actions. They are in the name of jihad in order to impose ideology and group interests. Lately, the reason of the consciousness of Muslims has clashed with various levels such as radical Islam (Elkarimah & Mahfud, 2024). It should be noted that radicalism and terrorism are two different things. Radicalism is related to a person's way of religion, both the strength of his beliefs and his practice, while terrorism is clearly an act of interference and even a harsh attitude that threatens the tranquility of life with the intention of achieving goals such as politics and others. Preaching and practicing *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar* is an obligation for all Muslims and has been practiced by the prophets. They invite mankind to follow it in the truth (tawhid) (al-Qudhah, 1999).

Islam has a sacred sharia called jihad. The term jihad is used in the Qur'an under different conditions. That is, the Qur'an mentions the word *jihad* in various forms and contexts. This gives a signal that the word jihad has various meanings and needs that cannot be summed up in just one aspect. The various meanings in question make it possible that the Qur'an requires a wider interpretation. Jihad etymologically has two meanings; if it comes from the word Al-Juhdu, it means ability (Ath-Thāqah), if it comes from the word Al-Jahdu, it means difficulty (Al-Masyaqqah) (Al-Furaih, 2008). These two meanings, if considered, are related. That strength is very commonly used to rise from a weak state. People who are in trouble must need a strength to get up. So, to alleviate a difficult condition, one needs strength so that the difficulty can be eliminated. Jihad which consists of three root letters of the word "*jahada*" is interpreted in the form of a noun as, effort, effort and work; use, maintenance, squeezing and deployment of energy; activities and enthusiasm; craft and perseverance, suffering and distress (Triana, 2018). Some experts say that etymologically, the word *jihad* means to be earnest or to fight with all one's ability. Based on a broad understanding, *jihad* contains the value of sacrifice, earnestness, and struggle that involves the inner and outer aspects in order to achieve the vision and mission of upholding truth, justice, and divine values. Not a few Muslims are of the view that jihad is synonymous with war (Mas'ud, 2003).

According to historical developments, in the modern and post-modern eras, the concept of *jihad* began to undergo a significant shift in meaning. Some groups with extreme beliefs narrow the meaning of *jihad* solely as an act of physical violence. There are many deviations by using *jihad* verses carelessly to justify damage, and committing acts of violence in the name

of jihad and takfiri movements. This is often referred to as *ghuluw* (excessive in religion). *Ghuluw* in terms is a model or type of religion that results in a person deviating from religion (Ibn Manzur, 1985). This deviation occurs not only because of ideological motives, but not infrequently because of the interpretation of the Qur'anic text that is purely literalistic but not comprehensive, ignores contextual, and is independent of the correct rules of interpretation and does not pay attention to *maqashid al-shari'ah*.

Some of the existing circles are more inclined to avoid discussing jihad, because they are afraid that it will be pinned with violence or terrorism. It even distances itself from the interpretation of *jihad qitali* (war) from contemporary Islamic discourse. This extreme attitude and an attitude that is too fluid are both inappropriate, because they ignore the breadth and depth of the meaning of *jihad* in the science of Qur'anic interpretation. Therefore, serious scientific efforts are needed to reinterpret to a fairer understanding of the concept of *jihad* based on a comprehensive and methodological approach.

In addition, the thematic approach also provides space to see the continuity between *the verses of jihad* and the universal values of Islam and the goals of the sharia (*maqashid al-shari'ah*). In this framework, *jihad* is not only interpreted as war, but also as an intellectual struggle (*jihad bil-ilm*), a struggle against lust (*jihad an-nafs*), and an effort to defend the oppressed and fight for human rights within the framework of social justice. Therefore, understanding *jihad* only in terms of *qital* or armed battle is a form of reduction that narrows the great message of the Qur'an.

The urgency of this research is even stronger considering the challenges of Muslims today who are faced with two extreme poles: religious radicalization on the one hand, and secularization of spiritual values on the other. Religious narratives circulating on social media, digital lectures, and doctrines in certain circles have created a lot of disinformation about the meaning of *jihad*. A person should not easily disbelieve others, because it has long legal implications such as halal his blood, separation from his wife, not inheriting each other, and so on (Qardhawi, 1996). Therefore, there is a need for a counter-narrative that is not only normative, but also academic and methodological, rooted in Islamic scientific authority and the scientific interpretation of it.

In addition, in the context of nationality and statehood, a misunderstanding of *jihad* can be a serious threat to religious harmony, national security, and the image of Islam itself. Therefore, a moderate interpretation of the meaning of *jihad* is not only in the interests of Muslims internally, but also a collective need in building a peaceful and just civilization. The development of the world with all its progress also colors the dynamics of religious life. In fact, there is growing anxiety that online media that gives birth to the spark for the growth of social media will completely change the life of an online-based person (Muhammad & Khaerunnisa, 2020). In this case, the role of the science of interpretation becomes very central as a scientific tool to uncover the divine intentions contained in revelation.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the socio-historical verses of *jihad* in the Qur'an through a qualitative analysis approach, focusing on a moderate interpretation of the meaning of *jihad* that is complete, contextual, and in accordance with Islamic principles that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. This research also seeks to dismantle the roots of the distortion

of the meaning of *jihad* and offer an alternative interpretation that is more relevant to the reality of the ummah and humanity today.

Through this research, the author hopes to contribute to the development of thematic interpretation treasures, as well as strengthen the Islamic narrative that is a solution to the problems of the ummah. This study is not only academically important, but also strategic as part of efforts to overcome misunderstanding of religion and is useful for the formation of a moderate and civilized Islamic society. The stigma and negative stereotypes surrounding the concept of jihad need to be clarified, as a form of obligation for Muslims to their religious teachings. Especially in this day and age, to respond to the new developments and tendencies that are taking place between the Islamic World and the West (Hanafiah & Saidah, 2021).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research was a qualitative study that applied a contemporary interpretative approach to analyze Qur'anic verses related to jihad. It adopted a descriptive-analytical method by examining verses on jihad from primary sources (the Qur'an) and secondary sources (books of tafsir, classical and contemporary literature) and analyzing deviations in meaning found in extremist interpretations.

Data collection was conducted through library research, tracing verses of jihad using *mushaf* references and digital tafsir tools and incorporating interpretations from classical scholars such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir, as well as contemporary scholars including Sayyid Qutb, al-Qaradawi, and Muhammad al-Ghazali. The researcher also referred to modern Islamic thought discussing jihad in its contemporary social, political, and global security contexts.

Data analysis was carried out in stages: identifying relevant verses, classifying themes and derivative contexts, exploring linguistic meaning and interpretation, and synthesizing findings to form a coherent framework for understanding jihad. This approach aimed to produce a concept of jihad that was faithful to Qur'anic sources while aligned with the principles of justice and peace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Inventory of Jihad Verses in the Qur'an

Understanding the concept of jihad in the Qur'an cannot be done based on a literal meaning alone. In the Qur'an, the word jihad and its derivatives are mentioned 41 times, the word jihad itself is mentioned 4 times, this word comes from the word *jahd* which is mentioned 5 times or *juhd* which is mentioned only once (Fahrurrozi, 2017). This is because the word *jihad* and its related meanings are scattered in a wide variety of verses, which are quite numerous, and appear in a variety of different contexts.

The word *jihad* comes from the Arabic language that is widely used in the Qur'an. Jihad is taken from the root word *al-Juhdu* which means strength and difficulty (Sabiq, 2010). This meaning is very broad and is not limited to wars or military conflicts only. This word can refer to any form of struggle, whether it is against self-temptation, striving to do good, or defending the truth. Therefore, in the Qur'an, this root appears in various grammatical forms spread across more than 40 verses with diverse contexts.

Verses about jihad can be found through letters that came down in two periods, namely the Makkah and Medina periods. Surah that descended in Mecca or called Surah Makkiyah

tended to give messages and signals related to jihad as a spiritual struggle as well as character formation and moral improvement. In this period, Muslims were still in the early stages of da'wah and maintained the faith because at that time Muslims faced social pressure and oppression from the Quraish polystry. The jihad mentioned in Surah Makkiyah is more about the struggle against lust, increasing patience in the face of fitnah, and being consistent in spreading Islam. A prominent example is QS. Al-Ankabut [29]: 6 which affirms that jihad is a struggle to maintain one's personal faith. The struggle of Islam began from the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in Mecca, where he and his followers faced rejection and persecution from the Quraysh. This initial phase is marked by da'wah secretly and then openly (Hayani et al., 2025).

After the order to migrate, the Prophet and the new Muslims had a great opportunity to form a more resilient identity and ummah. The migration to Medina became an important turning point, allowing the formation of a more structured and strong Muslim society. Muslims in this period have begun to form a more mature social and political structure, so that the verses of jihad related to physical or military struggle have come down. The conditions at that time were a very good moment to train and tidy up the ranks in an effort to prepare to defend themselves from threats and attacks by Islamic enemy groups. This is illustrated through verses such as Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 190-193 and Surah At-Taubah [9]: 5, which speak of war as part of jihad in the context of defending themselves and protecting Muslims from oppression.

In addition to verses that speak directly using the word *jihad*, the Qur'an also contains verses that discuss the wider issue of struggle. Without mentioning the word *jihad*, the Qur'an also mentions fighting for justice, helping the poor and oppressed, and rejecting tyranny and various forms of colonialism. This proves that jihad does not only discuss war, but also covers a very wide range of social, intellectual, and spiritual dimensions.

By knowing all the context and meaning it contains, further analysis can be carried out with a strong and comprehensive foundation. In addition to the difference in context between the Makkiyah and Madaniyah letters, it is also important to pay attention to the variation in language and style of delivery of the jihad verses. In some verses, jihad uses firm and strong language, especially when talking about jihad in the context of weapon contact with the enemy such as self-defense and war. However, there are also verses that use more subtle and metaphorical expressions, so that jihad is understood as a continuous and never-ending mental struggle. This clearly shows that jihad also has another context, not just physical actions, but also a process that requires patience, steadfastness, and a constant commitment to increase obedience to Allah. It should be noted that hoping to meet the enemy or boasting that you will be ready to wait for the arrival of the enemy is an act of *ujub* that destroys the reward of deeds (Ash-Shiddieqy, 2003).

The command of jihad against the disbelievers can of course include all forms of jihad such as war as well as moral and spiritual struggles, especially in an effort to stem their evil influences (Cawidu, 1991). Although the socio-political background and cultural conditions in the time of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH were not the same as today, the basic principles of jihad contained in the Qur'an about the values of struggle and spirituality can be applied in the life of Muslims in the modern era as it is today. Along with the development and advancement of technological civilization, jihad in the millennial era can also be carried out through various social media means, both through WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, Facebook and so on by building a positive narrative that motivates good deeds and increases religious awareness (Rahman & Maulasa, 2021). Thus, the interpretation of jihad verses that are relevant to current conditions can be an important foundation for formulating and understanding jihad that is more comprehensive and adaptive to the needs of the times, without ignoring the sharia and ethical principles contained in the Qur'an.

Thematic Classification of Jihad Verses

After conducting a socio-historical search of the verses of the Qur'an that discuss jihad, an equally important step is to classify or classify the form of jihad based on the values of struggle contained in it. This classification is useful to show clearly that jihad in the Qur'an is not singular, but when faced with the modern world jihad can include a very rich, multidimensional, and dynamic concept according to the context and needs of the times.

By doing thematic groupings, we can get a more complete and comprehensive picture of the various dimensions of jihad, to avoid using the term jihad in haphazard acts of violence. In this case, jihad will be widely understood, namely the struggle in various fields of life, both spiritual, intellectual, social, and physical. The thematic classification can be divided into several main categories that complement each other and form a comprehensive unity of the meaning of jihad, including:

4. Jihad *An-Nafs* (Jihad Against Lust)

One of the most fundamental and essential aspects of jihad taught by the Qur'an is jihad against lust and temptation. To fight oneself means to train oneself to obey Allah because the essence of obedience subdues lust. The foundation that must be built in order to become obedient is to improve monotheism. When monotheism is understood as a *way of life*, then one of the consequences is that monotheism becomes a source of the spirit of charity. Because Islam is a religion of charity (Syaifuddin, 2018). This is known as *jihad an-nafs*, which is the struggle to control the tendency to evil, the temptation of lust, and all forms of behavior that can weaken the heart to stay away from slump in sin or bad deeds. The word *nafs/anfus* in the Qur'an sometimes means life, sometimes it also means heart, sometimes it means kind, sometimes it also means the totality of human souls and bodies (Nizar, 2015).

The verses related to jihad in this context give commands as well as encouragement on the importance of patience, determination, and determination to always uphold religious values and goodness. Patience is the main character that will appear in jihad education, where a person is very much required to have this quality if he is engaged in jihad (Triana, 2018). For example, as mentioned in Surah al-Ankabut [29]: 69 which discusses jihad with all the soul and body will get a reward from Allah. The understanding of jihad in this case is not only in the form of war, but directs people to move towards self-improvement. Ibn Qayyim laid down jihad *al-nafs* (jihad against lust) and jihad against Satan as the first jihad that must be done before facing the greater and visible enemy, which is jihad against the disbelievers, hypocrites, and tyrants (Al-Jauziyyah, 2019).

Jihad of self-control is important because it affects all religious activities and social life of the community. If it is difficult for a person to carry out this jihad, it will also be difficult to carry out religious orders properly, let alone contribute positively to society. Therefore, jihad *an-nafs* is often referred to as a fairly severe jihad and is mainly because it involves a constant internal struggle in a Muslim.

2. Jihad *Bil-Verbal* and *Bil-Qalam* (Jihad with Verbal and Pen)

The Qur'an preaches various kinds of jihad that can be done by believers. There is another jihad that is also affirmed, namely that intellectual and verbal struggle is an important part of jihad. This jihad can be carried out by struggle through da'wah, the dissemination of religious knowledge, conveying the truth, and efforts to uphold justice. In Islam, such jihad is said to be

amar ma'ruf nahi munkar. The obligation to be amar ma'ruf nahi munkar is mandatory and permanent. Indeed, da'wah is equivalent to all of that (Shukri, 2021). This form of jihad is often called *bil-verbal jihad* (with oral) and *bil-qalam jihad* (with pen or writing). In the early days of spreading religion, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and even other Prophets always received rejection and exclusion from the people who lived during the time of the Prophet (Musthofa, 2024). This is sunatullah which will always be valid until the Day of Judgment. *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar* is also interpreted as an act to invite obedience to Allah SWT, to draw closer to Him, to do good to humans, and everything that is commanded by the sharia (as-Shawi, 1999). Every call for kindness or efforts to prevent evil will get a different response, and it is not uncommon for people to experience opposition from the community to physical violence.

Jihad *bil-lisan* and *bil-qalam* are important, especially in this modern era, where information and communication are the main means to increase the awareness of the ummah and fight for rights in the wider community. Nahi mungkar is forbidding doing something that does not contain the pleasure of Allah, either in the form of words or deeds (az-Zabidi, 1994). Da'wah through lectures, writings, books, mass media, and the internet is an intellectual jihad that seeks to prevent Muslims from being easily influenced by negative ideologies or deviations. Muslims are the absolute best people, and these best qualities are shared by the first and last generations of this ummah more than by other people (al-Khalidi, 2002).

3. *Jihad Qital* (War or Physical Jihad)

The wider community often only knows that jihad is only a war or a physical struggle against the enemy, so it seems that when talking about jihad is imagined as violence. In the Qur'an, war jihad is a form of struggle by using weapons to defend oneself, elevate religion, and uphold justice for humanity against the threats and actions of oppressors. This is the highest peak of jihad because it sacrifices many elements including, property, time, family and life. The order to wage jihad in physical acts (war) was carried out for the first time by the Prophet PBUH in the Medina period, precisely two years after the migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina, namely in the Battle of Badr which occurred on 17 Ramadan 2 H/17 March 623 AD (Darajat, 2016).

However, war jihad/qital in the Qur'an is not a teaching to carry out aggression or attack without a clear reason. Qitâl is the root of the word qatl which is composed of the letters, qaf, tha, and lam, which has the basic meaning of subjugation/conquest and murder. In the Indonesian Contemporary Arabic Dictionary, Qitâl comes from Arabic translated as war (Ali & Muhdlor, 1998). The Qur'an provides rules in the form of ethics and limits in war jihad, including the prohibition of destroying the environment, the prohibition of mutilation, the prohibition of betraying agreements and the recommendation to prioritize peace if the opponent wants it on the condition that the enemies of Islam must pay jiziyah as a contract for security protection and ceasefire. In many Muslim countries, local political, social, and economic challenges often trigger certain groups to adopt the jihad narrative as a means of mass mobilization (Haikal, 2025). The action is a response to the injustice of the rulers. State officials have been acting arbitrarily to take state property and oppress its people. As a result of this problem, a movement has emerged that seeks action to reduce injustice by carrying out physical resistance. This mistake in the application of jihad needs to be found a real solution so that physical jihad is not used by a group of people in Muslim countries. This is the duty of Muslims, especially to the da'is to straighten it out through seriousness in preaching to the community as well as giving regular advice to officials who are still Muslims. In addition, there are efforts that must be made, namely providing direction, guidance and straightening out deviant

understandings. Extreme groups deviate from religion because they only use violent methods to overcome every socio-political problem of a country.

In the historical context, war jihad emerged when Muslims had become a political community formed in a country such as the country of Medina in the time of the Prophet PBUH. Therefore, this type of jihad has a strong historical context and cannot be equated with an act of violence without reason. To increase the enthusiasm for Muslims, it is very important to pay attention to the message of the Prophet about the purpose of jihad itself. In a hadith it is mentioned;

4. Social and Economic Jihad

In addition to considering spiritual, intellectual, and physical jihad, jihad in Islam also has a broader meaning in the social and economic context. Social and economic jihad is part of a more general meaning of jihad that includes efforts to eradicate poverty, injustice, and various forms of evil that occur in society. Train the community to love to do infaq for the benefit of the ummah, including this part of jihad. In jihad education, a person is trained to have a generous nature, able to give his wealth in the way of Allah SWT (Triana, 2018).

Although the term jihad is not always explicitly mentioned in verses that discuss social and economic aspects, Islam emphasizes the importance of helping the weak, improving social conditions, and rejecting all forms of colonialism. These efforts can be made by officials to fight for it from the path of policy making so that equitable development is carried out as it should be and the improvement of the community's economy develops properly. For example, helping the poor in financing education and providing decent housing, giving zakat according to their portion, fighting corruption, and fighting for the rights of the oppressed. These can all be seen as a very important form of socio-economic jihad. This is because without justice and social welfare, it is difficult for society to develop in harmony and civility. While the state has guaranteed the welfare of its citizens in the law. This kind of social and economic jihad is particularly relevant in the modern context, as Muslims around the world still face great challenges in the form of widespread poverty, economic inequality, and various forms of structural injustice. Jihad has educated a person to have the value of caring for others (Triana, 2018). Therefore, jihad in this form is also an important part of the effort to build a just, prosperous, and peaceful society in accordance with Islamic principles. Tawhid education is a jihad to lead to faith as well as economic improvement. The reason is that the monotheistic person believes that sustenance comes from Allah and has been regulated. With this understanding, fraud in the state on the rights of the people should not have to occur. Tawheed as the foundation of life should make Muslims strong economically, politically, educationally, scientifically and technologically (Syarifuddin, 2018).

Study of the Lexical and Contextual Meaning of the Word Jihad

Understanding the meaning of *jihad* in the Qur'an is not enough based only on its literal meaning, but it is necessary to conduct an in-depth study that includes the lexical aspects and context used in the Qur'an. Understanding nash textually, means that they only hold on to the literal meaning of the postulate texts without trying to understand their content and meaning (Azra, 2003). In short, people will understand it as it is because they do not pay attention to the

historical side or other desired intentions. Not all verses can be understood spontaneously because they require a more comprehensive interpretation.

Lexically, classical Arabic dictionaries such as *Lisan al-'Arab* explain that the word *jihad* is not limited to physical warfare, but rather encompasses various strenuous efforts in life. The hard work can be in the form of da'wah, as well as coaching to the people so that these efforts produce the correct understanding. Thus, the lexical meaning of the word *jihad* is very broad and flexible, requiring a thorough understanding so that there is no misinterpretation.

In addition to the lexical aspect, it is important to pay attention to the historical and social context in which the verse is derived. In the science of tafsir, the method of tafsir al-siyasi wa al-tarikh is known to pay close attention to the cause of its descent (*asbabun nuzul*), the socio-political background/condition, and the historical condition of Muslims at that time. The words of 9751ulfi found in the verses of Makkiyah, on average, have various interpretations that are narrowed down to one core meaning, namely to obey Allah, although there are also some mufassir who still associate it with war (Fitriawan, 2023). For example, in Surah Luqman [31]:15, the word *jihad* appears in the context of fighting for monotheism, this is done by a child to his infidel parents so as not to associate with Allah. In this verse, *jihad* means facing difficulties in surviving the faith from the threat of infidelity experienced by a believer. This shows that the word *jihad* in the Qur'an sometimes has other meanings and is adapted to the circumstances that are the cause of the struggle.

Semantic studies are crucial in interpretation so that there are no distortions of meaning. Without paying attention to proper contextual understanding, one can fall into a misinterpretation of jihad's verses. He would tend to use jihad for unlimited acts of violence, even though the Qur'an itself places jihad in a different context. Therefore, good hermeneutic skills are indispensable so that we can distinguish between jihad with the real intention of war and acts of violence that deviate and are contrary to Islamic values.

A correct lexical and contextual study of the meaning of the word *jihad* can open up opportunities to understand jihad in a broad dimension, but still relevant to the needs of the times. Some ways to create peace, such as the exchange of gifts or peace negotiations, are implementations of the core of Islam's teachings on religion as a peacemaker (Khadduri, 1995). With this understanding, seeking the path of peace is more important than physical war. Jihad is a dynamic and adaptive concept, which is able to answer the needs of Muslims in various aspects of life without causing violence and conflict. In the aspect of da'wah, Islam's relationship with the outside world is basically built on the principle of peace. But under certain conditions, such as the emergence of parties who are hostile to Islam or declaring war against Muslims, then Islam permits war (Hadi, 2023). Although war was originally disliked, the sharia allows it if necessary.

Based on the above description, the lexical and contextual meaning of the word *jihad* in the Qur'an can lead a person to a closer understanding of what the Qur'an wants. It is also a tool to counter the distortion of meaning that is sometimes used by extreme groups for the benefit of their own groups or ideologies. Islam distinguishes four ways to 9751ulfil the obligation of jihad, with heart, tongue, hand and sword (Mohsen et al., 2019). Through this approach, Islam will be known as a friendly religion, providing solutions to various problems in life and it is hoped that the wider community will be able to understand jihad correctly,

proportionately, and contextually in accordance with the principles of sharia and *maqashid al-shari'ah*. Contextual readings of jihadist verses offer significant potential to form moderate characters (Km et al., 2025).

A Study of the Interpretation of Classical and Contemporary Scholars

Knowing jihad well through the interpretation of Qur'anic verses is inseparable from the important role of scholars who interpret jihad verses throughout Islamic history. The existence of methods and patterns that emerge based on the progress of the times will bring a culture of interpretation that supports each other between the interpretation of classical and contemporary scholars, thus providing an overview of the significant development of thought on the concept of jihad. Among the scholars of fiqh, Sayyid Sabiq defines jihad as putting all effort and effort into enduring difficulties in fighting the enemy and resisting aggression (Sabiq, 1983).

Classical scholars such as Ibn Katsir, Al-Qurtubi, and Al-Thabari, who wrote their tafsir in the context of the Islamic world, elaborated interpretations that contained many narrations so that the main focus was on the aspect of qital jihad or war jihad. In the past, Muslims were still alive during times of war for the sake of upholding kalimatullah, so jihad at that time was indeed relevant if it was often associated with physical war. They explained in detail the laws of jihad, its mandatory requirements, and the ethics of war based on the text of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet. In their work, physical jihad became an important and dominating discussion because of the collective obligation (*fardhu kifayah*) that had to be carried out by Muslims at that time. However, although they also acknowledge the existence of non-military jihad such as jihad against lust, these themes lack the same portion in the main narrative of their interpretation. The approach of the scholars at that time was appropriate because the situation was indeed very tied to the historical context where Muslims at that time faced real threats from external and internal enemies.

In modern times, contemporary Muslim scholars and scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Fazlur Rahman offer a more contextual approach to jihad. They emphasized that jihad must be returned to the spirit of *maqashid al-shari'ah*, which is the main goals of Islamic sharia that emphasize justice, humanity, peace, and the welfare of the ummah. In this contemporary view, jihad is understood not only as physical warfare, but also as terrorism. Wahbah al-Zuhayli, a mufassir and scholar of fiqh wrote that jihad is to devote one's energies to fighting the disbelievers with the treasures of soul and speech (al-Zuhayli, 1989). Modern interpreters seek to open up space for jihad in the form of socio-economic struggle, peaceful da'wah, scientific development, and efforts to improve the condition of society as a whole. However, this understanding does not close the understanding of the interpretation that jihad is carried out by taking up arms. Non-military efforts are only the main alternatives that take precedence.

This contemporary approach is relevant in answering various challenges of globalization and modernity that bring issues of novelty in Muslims, such as the misuse of the concept of jihad by extremist groups. Modern interpretations also seek to counter Western doctrines that associate Islam with brutal violence. Understanding jihad as a constructive struggle and beneficial to the welfare of humanity in general. Jihad means the ability that requires the mujahid to use all his abilities to achieve the goal. Jihad in this case means sacrifice, When giving it does not stop until its goal is achieved or what it has is exhausted (Fahrurrozi, 2017).

The study of the interpretation of classical and contemporary scholars provides important information in order to build an authentic understanding of jihad, balanced with the conditions of the times, while being able to avoid distortions and dangerous doctrines. The two models of interpretation are mutually supportive and complementary where classical interpretation provides a legal and historical basis, while contemporary interpretation provides a more moderate context by looking at social conditions and universal values relevant to today's modern world.

The correct understanding of jihad through the verses of the Qur'an has never been separated from the interpretation used by scholars throughout the history of Islam. Classical scholars such as Ibn Kathir and Al-Qurtubi lived in an era where Muslims faced many military and social challenges, so their interpretation of jihad focused a lot on armed warfare jihad, which is physical struggle or war in the context of self-defense and the enforcement of justice. They strengthened their interpretation with their explanations of the text of the Qur'an supported by hadith that was in accordance with the historical context of the time.

Classical scholars feel the need to make Muslims aware collectively to the spirit of fighting to defend religion to uphold the kalimatullah on earth, especially when the ummah is attacked by the enemy. In addition, they provide detailed rules about who has the right to go to war, when war is allowed, and how war ethics must be upheld because war is not just about contact with arms. Any researcher who studies Islam will observe that all jihad in the early days of Islam was a defensive jihad (Mohsen et al., 2019).

In the view of contemporary interpreters, jihad means more complex. Farid Esack formulated jihad as a struggle, devoting energy and efforts to transform the stage, individuals and society (Esack, 1997). This means that considering the elements of modernity or contemporary reality is important to interpret jihad. Being *Wasatiyyah* will actually be able to ward off extreme thoughts that are too ideal, weak thoughts that are far from ideal, wild thoughts that lack control, the deviations of the makers of falsehoods and the interpretations of fools (Al-Qardhawi, 2003). This modern interpretation is carried out in order to face the challenges of globalization and modernity that bring new issues. With this approach, Muslims are encouraged to understand jihad as a constructive and peaceful struggle, not as an instrument of violence.

The development of the meaning of jihad produced by contemporary scholars will not reduce the meaning of jihad expressed by classical scholars. This is because Islam answers every problem based on its time. The point is that the suitability of the teachings of Islam applies throughout the ages, where Islam is not left behind with issues of novelty. In another sense, Islam that teaches the sharia of jihad brings benefits in every era. Without the teachings of jihad, justice is difficult to obtain. Without jihad, the main occupation is carried out by the oppressors. The ideal of Islam is actually how to stop the war and also create peace, so that religious freedom is realized which is born from sincerity not due to pressure or coercion (Syaltut, 1983).

The hermeneutic and contextual approach embraced by modern interpreters helps the ummah to adapt the values of Islamic teachings to the socio-political realities of today. This is important so that the concept of jihad remains alive and meaningful for the ummah without causing misinterpretation. Muslim thinkers seek to adapt Islamic law to contemporary realities that in modern times da'wah is an effective way to spread Islam (Reiter, 2022). The role of jihad from the past to the present is the same, namely exalting the religion of Allah, upholding

justice on earth and eliminating human slavery towards servitude to Allah. By blending classical and contemporary interpretations, Muslims can build an authentic, balanced, and relevant understanding of jihad, while avoiding deviations that can undermine the teachings of Islam. This understanding will also strengthen the position of Islam as a religion that brings peace and justice.

Analysis of the Distortion of the Meaning of Jihad by Extreme Groups

Jihad deviations by extremist groups are a serious problem that has a wide and complex impact, causing unrest and threatening the stability of social life. In sharia terminology, extreme attitudes are often also called *ghuluw* which means excessive in religion, but this attitude also applies to another matter or extreme attitude to one issue by going beyond the limits that have been sharia (Afroni, 2016). In terms of *ghuluw*, what is meant is a model or type of religion that causes a person to deviate from the religion (Ibn Manzur, 1985). Usually this understanding gives rise to an attitude of hopelessness in disbelieving others. Some hardline groups often easily disbelieve their fellow Muslims simply because of differences in manhaj, ideology and direction of struggle (Afroni, 2016). Extremist groups such as ISIS, and the like, often take verses of the Qur'an related to war jihad, to act brutally in violent acts of killing anyone. They ignore the historical context, the ethics of war, and the values of *the sharia maqashid* that underlie the teachings of Islam.

Extreme groups practice jihad verses in a partial and superficial manner, resulting in the emergence of extreme ideologies that claim to be the only defenders of religion, even though they have deviated far from the teachings of Islam that are merciful. An example is the use of a verse from Surah At-Taubah [9]:5, known as the sword verse, which is often quoted carelessly not in the context of the peace treaty that was violated by the polytheists in the time of the Prophet, but is used for acts of violence by extremists even though this verse applies in special situations where the rules are very clear. The result of such distortions of interpretation is the emergence of acts of violence, terrorism, and social conflicts that cause physical and psychological damage, as well as cause widespread hatred and fear against the general public. This not only harms the image of Islam, but also worsens the da'wah path of the da'is in spreading Islam, because they will be suspected of being a terrorist group. True Jihad is also not based on hatred, hostility, and is not to destroy humanity (Jailani, 2024).

The distortion of the meaning of jihad by extremist groups is a serious problem that not only disrupts the social order of Muslims, but also adversely affects the world's perception of Islam as a whole. Internally, religion, the phenomenon of religious violence can occur because it is a response to claims of deviation from religious teachings committed by a group of people (Elkarimah & Mahfud, 2024). These extreme groups often use certain verses of the Qur'an selectively and are disconnected from the actual historical context and sharia rules. They interpret jihad only as physical struggle and boundless aggression. The Isis group strongly believes in their struggle as the absolute jihad recognized by Islam (Razak et al., 2020).

This is the era when humans must adapt to all kinds of progress. Social and cultural changes in society need to be controlled with Islamic guidance. From this Islam has shown that this religion teaches the ummah to always be moderate. Facing Western hedonism must also use contemporary strategies, especially now that Muslims in general are in a weak state, both

weak in character and weak in unity. The word moderate in Arabic is known as *al-wasathiyah* as recorded from the Qur'an surah al-Baqarah [2]: 143 (Akhmadi, 2019). Through a moderate scientific approach, Islam will be easily accepted, spread and bring good to nature. This approach is very well done at the state level, for example through the ministry of religion. For example, in Indonesia, religious extension officer is one of the functional positions in the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. Religious Extension Workers are the spearhead of the government in conveying religious messages and government program messages (Akhmadi, 2019). Official state institutions that approach moderately with the aim of exalting the word of Allah can be said to be jihad efforts in this modern era.

Jihad Moderate Perspective Builds the Progress of the Ummah

The progress of Islam can be shown by the response to human needs according to the times. It has been proven that Islam is not anti-modernity. Contemporary interpretation is the effort of Muslim experts or scholars in order to explore modern values regarding jihad verses in the Qur'an. This is done to answer the challenges of the times and the increasingly complex problems of the ummah. Jihad in Islam has a comprehensive concept and does not only refer to war. This can be proven by the fact that the term jihad in the Qur'an has various meanings (Razak et al., 2020). This modern meaning is to eliminate misconceptions and negative stigmas that have been deliberately associated with the word jihad by some groups who misunderstand it. Contextual understanding also helps to avoid misuse of the concept of jihad by extremist groups that manipulate religious texts to justify their acts of violence (Wahyuni, 2014).

Jihad is a religious teaching and command that is the main foundation for the formation of a strong and pious Muslim character. The scholars consider *da'wah* and *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Mungkar* to be no different, both have the same purpose and purpose, namely the call for humans to be on the path of truth (bin Abdurrahman, 2004). The truth that leads to monotheism is upright and does not mix with any sharia. So *da'wah* that is carried out to elevate Islam includes non-physical jihad. Jihad is considered good if carried out in the midst of society in the current conditions.

Jihad of *da'wah* which is manifested through words and pen, that is, conveying the truth with wisdom, good advice, and polite argumentation, is also a very important form of jihad. Through this intellectual jihad, Muslims can spread the values of Islam that are merciful and build a civilized and peaceful civilization. To carry out intellectual jihad well, Islamic religious education plays a central role. A strong Islamic religious education allows individuals to develop a strong understanding of religion and think critically (Sali, 2023).

Social and economic jihad is also part of the struggle that is no less important, namely against poverty, injustice, corruption, and all forms of oppression that hinder the progress of the ummah. Jihad in this realm requires the active participation of the ummah in building a just and prosperous civil society, in accordance with the main goals of sharia. If social injustice, the temperament of those in power who always oppress the people is allowed to continue, it is feared that violent acts will arise in the name of jihad. In fact, it is not uncommon for this jihad to be politicized to cover up dirty political issues.

Jihad of *da'wah* which is carried out through good words, setting an example in society and teaching with the pen is a great form of struggle. Spreading knowledge, inviting goodness, and upholding the truth argumentatively and wisely, will bring more productive Muslims such

as building a harmonious and advanced society. This da'wah is no less important than physical jihad. Sayyid Quthub said, Islam came to direct man and preserve human life (Quthub, 2002).

Social and economic jihad has a great place in today's understanding of jihad. Fighting poverty, social injustice, corruption, and oppression is part of the jihad that every individual and community must do. Technically, this jihad can be carried out by making pro-people policies. This jihad emphasizes more to be carried out by those who have important positions. Thus, jihad becomes a tool for social change that brings great benefits to the wider community. However, this jihad is also not easy, as the linguistic meaning that jihad means difficult or bearing, then the difficulty in voicing justice and fighting for pro-people policies can be considered as jihad in a modern perspective.

In relation to this jihad, sometimes the Qur'an also mentions another term, namely *fii sabilillah*. This mention exists because they have similarities in terms of their goals and positive impact. In terminology, the meaning of *fii sabilillah* according to Rashid Ridha is all actions for the common good of Muslims with which religious and government affairs are upheld and not for personal interests (Ridha', n.d.). From this meaning, it can be seen that jihad also means *fii sabilillah* because its purpose and function are the same. However, the word *fii sabilillah* is rarely misused for certain interests as the word jihad. Even though there are deviations, violent acts are often juxtaposed with the word jihad. The Qur'an emphasizes that one of the functions of jihad is to eliminate fitnah. As Allah says in Surah al-Anfal verse 39 below;

Thus, jihad in the modern era is not only an academic need, but also a moral and social responsibility so that jihad can be carried out in accordance with the noble values of Islam and in accordance with the times to make a positive contribution to humanity. Indeed, a foolish person sometimes even invites to things that are wrong, commands things that are unright, forbids things that are ma'ruf, sometimes behave harshly in a place where one should be subtle and be subtle in a place that should be harsh (al-Jawi, 2017). This understanding shows the rigidity of religion that arises from staying away from modern attitudes. Islam is a religion that is suitable for all conditions, places and times. Therefore, jihad in the Qur'an is not always interpreted as war, because long before the advancement of technology or modern times, Islam through the word of Allah and the words of the Prophet has provided a lot of pictures and information about the current situation.

CONCLUSION

This study revealed that *jihad* in the Qur'an is a multidimensional and contextually adaptive concept encompassing spiritual, moral, and social struggles rather than being confined to warfare or violence. Classical scholars such as al-Tabari, al-Qurtubi, and Ibn Kathir emphasized the defensive dimension of jihad shaped by early historical realities, while contemporary thinkers like Sayyid Qutb, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, and Muhammad al-Ghazali interpreted it more broadly through *maqashid al-shari'ah*, linking jihad to civilizational progress, education, justice, and human development. The research underscored that extremist misinterpretations—rooted in literal, ahistorical readings—distort jihad's essence, leading to radicalism and negative perceptions of Islam. Reaffirming jihad as a holistic effort to uphold truth, resist injustice, and promote peace, the study highlighted the need for moderate and contextual interpretations to strengthen religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*) and global harmony.

Future research should further examine the practical application of moderate jihad in diverse sociopolitical settings, including its role in peacebuilding, interfaith cooperation, and counter-radicalization strategies in contemporary Muslim societies.

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