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University
of Glasgow

School of Social and Political Sciences

**Peaceful Jihad:
A Contextual Analysis of the Qur'an**

September 2018

Presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the Degree of
M.Sc. in International Relations

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ABSTRACT

Jihad has become a new politico-religious phenomenon facing the world in this twenty-first century. In international relations, jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS are considered as a national threat. Some authors in the West have attempted to explain this issue by examining different sides. Then, how could jihad as a politico-religious concept be understood? This research attempts to answer this problem theoretically by exploring the most authoritative sources of jihad, i.e. the Qur'an. By contextualising the verses of jihad in the Qur'an, through analysing the socio-political conditions both in the early and current stages of Islam's development, this research concludes two theses. First, unlike what is generally believed, war is not the only step taken by Muhammad to fulfil the call for jihad. Secondly, because the understanding of jihad must be adapted to the socio-political conditions of the place and era where Muslims are, then for the present Muslims can opt to do jihad by contributing to building a better civilisation instead.

Keywords: jihad, war, Qur'an, contextualism

Word count: 12,174

INTRODUCTION

Jihad has become a new politico-religious phenomenon facing the world in this twenty-first century. In international relations, jihadist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS are considered as a national threat. Some authors in the West have attempted to explain this issue by examining different sides. Kepel (2003) and Gerges (2016), for example, explored the historical background of jihadist groups development, while Kelsay (2007) and Brahim (2010) tried to frame that notion as a just war doctrine in Islam. Then, how could jihad as a politico-religious concept be understood? This research attempts to answer this problem theoretically by exploring the most authoritative sources of jihad, i.e. the Qur'an.

By contextualising the verses of jihad in the Qur'an, through analysing the socio-political conditions both in the early and current stages of Islam's development, this research concludes two theses. First, unlike what is generally believed, war is not the only step taken by Muhammad to fulfil the call for jihad. During the Prophet's period, the essential jihad was demonstrated by disseminating the religious teachings by faith and maintaining humanity values. It was only when there was no other effort to defend religion from extinction, Muhammad ordered his people to fight or take arms. This is only one of the forms of jihad which is chosen based on the context of the situation the Muslims faced at the time. In other words, interpreting the jihad as an armed struggle is only temporary. Secondly, because the understanding of jihad must be adapted to the socio-political conditions of the place and era where Muslims are, then for the present Muslims can opt to do jihad by contributing to building a better civilisation instead. There are at least three sectors where the values of jihad can synergise, i.e. in struggling for human rights, developing good governance, and striving for a peace-building process in humanitarian conflicts.

For more details about the issue, this dissertation is divided into three chapters. The first chapter tries to answer the questions of what the Qur'an is, why it is so important especially in Islamic politics, and for whom is it intended. Despite the agreement that the Qur'an occupies the most crucial position in Muslim life, the

Scripture is not easy to understand. Manifold interpretations of both all and some parts of the Qur'an's content have been known to exist. The second chapter will discuss this issue of differences in interpretations in detail while introducing a contextualism approach, one of the methods of contemporary Qur'anic interpretation that could assist in re-understanding jihad as it is positioned in the Qur'an. Finally, Chapter three presents the proposition that by using the contextual approach, jihad can be interpreted differently both in Muhammad's time and in the present.

I

THE QUR'AN: A MUSLIMS' ENDLESS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to introduce the Qur'an. As a Muslim holy book, what is the Qur'an? Why is its position so fundamental to understanding Islamic political thought? This chapter is laid out in three sections to answer these questions. The first part explains the position of the Qur'an in Islam. Indeed, there are various explanations of the matter, but it can be concluded that according to Islam, the Qur'an is the Words of God revealed and descended to Muhammad as a miracle to act as a guide that will always be relevant to humankind regardless of the time and place. The second section then attempts to address the misunderstanding that the Qur'an is purposed uniquely for Muslims. Unlike general assumptions, the Qur'an contains a universal objective for all humankind. Then, in the final section, there will be some examples of how political thinkers use the Scripture as a source of their political views. It seeks to describe how the Qur'an is used as a foundation of Islamic politics.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE QUR'AN

Simply stated, according to the Qur'an itself, the Qur'an (2:2) is "the Scripture in which there is no doubt, containing guidance for those who are mindful of God." Structurally, it consists of 6,236 *ayah* (verses) organised into 114 chapters which are based on historical records spread to Muhammad over two periods: thirteen and ten years in Mecca and Medina, respectively. Then, what makes such a 'guidance book' so significant for Muslims? The answer is strongly correlated with Muslim's faith itself that the Qur'an is the Words of God that were revealed to act as guidance that can reach into human's mind and soul, and that they are considered as miracles.

Muslims believe that as something that is revealed (*wahy*), the Qur'an's guidance is integrated into all aspects of a human's life, either as a living being, social being or as servants of God. The Qur'an is signs revealed by God so that humans can

recognise their God and their role in a godly life. Saeed (2008, p. 24) calls it an instrument by which God communicates with human beings. Directly, the Qur'anic verses reveal God's attributes like *Ar-Rahman* (the Most Merciful) which may be felt by faith. However, these signs may not be experienced in a vacuum because the Qur'an encourages humans to be able to learn unwritten signs. Humans are intensified to observe the whole cosmos, natural phenomena, and events in the human heart (Qur'an 41:53). Hossein Nasr (2000, p. 44), one of the contemporary Islamic philosophers, interpreted the matter that people's reflection on God could be in harmony with their observations of nature. In line with this, Qur'anic verses directly guide human being to understand better their role as generations trusted by God to manage life on earth (*khalifatullah fi al-ardh*). As in observing natural phenomena, the purpose of the position also requires circumstances, i.e., the social context in which humans take a role in the sphere of divine values and humanity.

Then, as something sent down (*tanzil*), the Qur'an is glorified as God's word which is intended as a guide under certain conditions. Theologically, the entire Qur'an was initially in a place called the 'Preserved Tablet' (*al-lawh al-mahfuz*) in the Heaven. Muhammad did not accept the Scripture all at once, but verbatim received it verse by verse from what the archangel Gabriel transmitted out of the Tablet. With God's permission, Gabriel conveyed verses that were relevant to the situation faced by the Prophet (Saeed, 2008, p. 25). For instance, several war verses (Qur'an 3: 123-124) were delivered when Muhammad and the early Believers were fighting in the Battle of Badr at 624 C.E. This kind of thing implies that someone might misunderstand the verses of the Qur'an if he or she do not grasp the context surrounding the verse's descent. Then, although Qur'an was gradually descended, according to Hamka (1990, p. 7), one of Indonesia's leading Qur'anic interpreters, one cannot discriminate the position of an individual verse from the entire Qur'an itself. Both partial and whole Scripture are the Words of God which are considered sacred by Muslims. The sanctity underlies the prohibition to change even one letter from the Qur'an.

Furthermore, along with its degree as guiding revelation, Muslims assume that the Qur'an is a miracle that could touch the inner aspect of humans. Unlike prevalent view, such a miracle does not appear in the form of an unusual event that does not follow the law of nature, as when Moses divided the sea for the Twelve Tribes of Israel. In this context, the miracle is interchangeable with the signs as mentioned earlier since the

Quranic language also uses the word *ayah* to describe a miracle (Badawi and Haleem, 2008, p. 68). The Qur'an becomes a miracle when signs that are sensed by humans are perceived by their hearts and minds (Hamka, 1990, p. 12). Armstrong (2002, p. 5) illustrates this religious experience as when the Qur'an "beautifully resonated with the deepest aspirations" of the Quraysh people that made them convert to Islam.

TO WHOM IS THE QUR'AN ADDRESSED?

The Qur'an is indeed seen as the highest source in Islamic teachings, but the Scripture itself is addressed to all humankind rather than exclusively directed to Muslims. The Qur'an reveals itself as "guidance for mankind" and "clear messages giving guidance and distinguishing between right and wrong" (Qur'an 2: 185). This universal purpose also means that Muslims have the task of disseminating the messages of the Qur'an through various social activities, either through preaching, trade, marriage, education, or politics. However, the acceptance of the Qur'an cannot be performed by compulsion (Qur'an 2: 256). Historically, the universal side of the Qur'an itself has been noticed when it was addressed to the Hijaz tribe inhabiting the western part of the Arabian Peninsula since the seventh century. Moreover, regarding political order, social stratification, and religious life, the people of Mecca and Medina are very diverse, but the Qur'an is addressed to all of them regardless of identity.

Politically, the people of Mecca and Medina did not organise themselves into governmental entities such as a kingdom that could unite various clans inhabiting the region. In Mecca, people lived in tribal anarchy caused by the absence of authority that could unite the existing tribes. Some groups dominate others, but they are reluctant to form a political unity (Saeed, 2008, p. 4). Muhammad himself was from the Bani Hashim clan, but the message of the Qur'an he had brought was never reserved only for a specific tribe. Similar conditions also occurred in Madinah, when two clans, i.e., Aws and Khazraj, competed and fought each other. Even the clans in Medina had each spring in a fortified stronghold (Saeed, 2008, p. 5). It is recognised in Islamic literature that when Muhammad and his followers moved from Mecca to Medina, he managed to unite in friendship the two different societies by the guidance of the Qur'an.

In terms of social stratification, the Hijaz community is also diverse. It is known that most of them were nomads whose lifestyle contrasted the townspeople in Mecca

and Medina (Hitti, 1984, p. 23). During this period, the institution of slavery was still prevalent, which placed slaves in the lowest class of society. Moreover, tribal ego was so high that it was expressed in social norms called *asabiyah*. This character makes clan members fanatical towards their groups so that it often causes hostility with other parties (Hitti, 1984, p. 27). Then, women are seen as inferior to men. However, this social segregation was slowly being corrected by the Qur'an which presents itself as a universal guidance for humans regardless of their status. In the eyes of God, according to the Qur'an (49:13), humans are not distinguished by gender, race, tribes, or other social identities, but by their mindfulness of God.

Correspondingly, in the status quo, the Qur'an is intended to call upon everyone regardless of their faith backgrounds. The Qur'an was initially aimed at the Hijaz people who were mostly pagan. According to Saeed (2008, p. 5), the Hijaz were weak in matters of the spiritual, because they did not believe in the afterlife nor revere their idols zealously. As a pre-Islamic society, their spirituality can be said to be superficial, but they were already familiar with terms that are often identified with Islam today, such as "allah" (god), "islam" (submission or surrender), "iman" (belief) or "kafir" (infidel). However, according to Izutsu (2002, p. 4), those familiar terms were defined differently by the Qur'an to become a transformative force in their religious life. At the time when polytheists inhabited Hijaz, there was no specific term for *islam* or *muslim* that refers to particular religion and its adherence. There were only those who voluntarily submit their entire life to the teachings that Muhammad brought. In Arabic, "Islam" means submission, and those who submit are called Muslims (Armstrong, 2005, p. 5). Only then, those words institutionalised as a system of religion that distinguish between Muslims and non-believers (Qur'an 109: 1-6).

It seems difficult to understand the universal purpose of the Qur'an when its believers, later called Muslims, were increasingly different from the two other existing religions in Hijaz, i.e., Judaism and Christianity. However, the Qur'an was understood as the continuation of the teachings that Abraham, Moses, and Jesus had brought. Some Qur'anic teachings appear to be in line with the Torah content, but somehow the differences between them are also clearly visible. Indeed, then the Qur'an does not see that all religions are equal, and the scripture emphasises the importance of Islam as a True Religion in God's eyes (Qur'an 3:19). However, unlike traditional interpretation, modern Islamic scholars see the word "*islam*" in the verse to not referring to a specific

religion, but to a character who is devoted to One God (Haleem, 2005, p. 17, 35). People of different faiths will exist anytime, and the Qur'an acknowledges such conditions (Abu-Hamdiyyah, 2000, p. 36).

THE USAGE: THE QUR'AN AS SOURCE OF POLITICAL THOUGHT

The idea that the Qur'an has a universal purpose that also acknowledged the existence of a cross-faith community might be difficult to grasp. However, this also underlies Islamic scholars' duty to explore the Qur'an as a source of political thought that not only can accommodate the lives of *ummah* (Muslim community) but also in its interactions with diverse societies. At this point, the Qur'an does not merely complement the rituals of worship but is one of the sources of inspiration in political life. Indeed, it is not uncommon for Islamic political thinkers to find the fundamental principle of their thought in the Qur'an (Böwering, 2015, p. 7). Many Islamists appear with the agenda of continuing the principles of Islam as a political system. This section then will discuss how the Qur'an is used as the political source, primarily by Islamists.

However, before going further, it is important first to know that what is meant by Islamism here is very diverse because, among the Islamists themselves, there is no consensus in what way the religious teachings and political ideologies could be concordant. Osman (2017, p. ix) identifies some types of current Islamists. Some of them vigorously use the Islamic law in political and social life; while others "adopted a light-touch approach." Some back to the period of the *salaf* (the predecessors) while Islam inspiring successful government. Others "redefine the parameters for applying Islam to society", while a few scholars "had gone further to redefine Islam itself". What Osman points out is that there is no single Islamism. It is a dynamic term that depends on specific society. An Islamist who lived during the European colonial period would perceive the Qur'anic political messages differently from those who live in a peaceful democratic country.

Some literature has offered how Islamic scholars adjust the political message of the Qur'an with political challenges during their own time. Four examples are provided here. Though they cannot represent various Islamic thoughts, at least they illustrate the diversity of Islamism identified by Osman. The first one, an account of al-Nabhani and its movement Hizb ut-Tahrir, could be a cliché of ambitious Islamists to re-establish a

pan-Islamic government based on the Islamic law (sharia). The Qur'an, according to al-Nabhani (1999), offers a fundamental principle to create Islamic political ideology. Based on the Qur'an, he composed a political doctrine obligating a Muslim to devote to Islamic ideology and transcended other Islamists by arguing that such obligation is part of Islamic creed (*aqidah*). In the end, to legitimise his idea of the Islamic caliphate, he converted the Qur'an as a political doctrine text rather than politics-inspiring text.

The next one is Sindhi's manifestation of revolution. Tareen (2017) observes how the Qur'an is interpreted by 'Ubaydullah Sindhi (d. 1944), an Indian Muslim scholar, as a manifesto of revolution. Sindhi who contributed to liberating India from British colonisation formulated his political manifesto from certain surah in the Qur'an. It was structured into seven divisions covering the foundation of revolution, its principles, the revolutionary party, several steps toward revolution, its law, program, and war (Sindhi, 1997, cited in Tareen, 2017, p. 8). Comparing Sindhi's manifesto with al-Nabhani's political doctrine, it can be assumed that both are common in using the Qur'an to overthrow a non-Islamic government, i.e. the secular world order in al-Nabhani's case, and the colonial empire for Sindhi's objective.

The third example is Bencheikh's work on how the Qur'an is compatible with a secular democracy. Some might think that it cannot be an Islamist's account, but since the term is redefined in a broader sense, it can be interpreted thus. He deduced his position to defend secularism by using some verse in the Qur'an (42:38) that permits Muslim to organise their political issue through consultation (*shura*). Such a concept is considered compatible with democracy, and the Qur'an could not be a constitution for a so-called Islamic state (Bencheikh, 2010, pp. 143-146).

Finally, a study edited by al-Ahsan and Young offers the idea of using the Qur'an to establish good governance. Instead of using the Qur'an to create a government, al-Ahsan and Young (2017) points out that it can be used to support good governance. The Qur'an (3:104) requires humankind to let there a community which shall call for righteousness and justice. That is not surprising that scholars who support global governance view that any government itself cannot manage all human problem without the participation of other actors like civil society. Thus, al-Ahsan interprets the verse that is frequently used by pan-Islamists such as Hizb ut-Tahrir differently. Instead of establishing an Islamic state, Muslim should think how Islam can contribute to flourishing humanity within a sound governance framework.

CONCLUSION

The Qur'an occupies a prominent position as timeless guidance in Muslim lives. That is vital since it defines the moral character (Rahman, 1966). In the Islamic perspective, it is the holiest scripture revealed by God to His messenger, Muhammad (570-632), for the benefit of humanity. By this point, it was a common misperception that the Qur'an is addressed for Muslims only (Qur'an 2:185). However, the Qur'an (2:256) realises that it does not have to be accepted forcefully by everyone. It can only be used as a reference book for people who voluntarily submit themselves and put their faith in it (Qur'an 30:53). For those who are intellectually sceptical, it permits and challenges them to criticise (Qur'an 2:23), while it was discharged from those who blindly rejected it (Qur'an 2:6). Thus, in a universal context, the Qur'an is the God's commandment that reasonably open to acceptance, discussion, criticism, not to mention opposition. This is what legitimizes Muslim thinkers to make the Qur'an their foundation of thought. In that sense, there is no established consensus in what way Qur'anic values can be applied in political life because it can be interpreted in various ways.

II

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE QUR'AN

INTRODUCTION

The Qur'an, as described earlier, has been made by Islamists to underlie their political thinking. Indeed, it produces distinct views. Even then different interpretations from diverse parties could produce conflicting conclusions. It can be seen for instance in suicide bombings used in terrorist attacks. The study from Slavicek (2008) shows that some influential religious figures have exploited the Qur'an to position suicide bombers as noble as martyrs. However, on a different spectrum, several scholars such as the Indonesian Ulema Council - Indonesia's most significant Muslim clerical body - have issued legal opinion based on Islamic sources that any suicide bombings and terrorist acts of any kind are *haram* (prohibited) and cannot be said as jihad (Sekretariat MUI Pusat, 2015, pp. 80-82).

Thus, this raises the question: how should scholars interpret the Qur'an? To address this question, this chapter will provide four sections. The first part discusses the forms of interpretation of the Qur'an that can be taken. The next section will attempt to discuss the reasons why the Qur'an is quite tricky to interpret. In the third section, this chapter will provide a critical introduction to several methods of interpretation of the Qur'an that are already known in the Islamic intellectual tradition. Finally, this chapter provides supporting arguments for the use of contextualism approaches, contemporary interpretation method that is considered capable of interpreting Qur'anic verses for issues that are currently debated, such as the issue of jihad and war in Islam.

TOWARD APPROPRIATE INTERPRETATION

Interpreting the Qur'an is a deliberate action that requires systematic procedures. However, according to Saleh (2015, p. 1645), there is no universal route for interpreting the Qur'an. It raises not only various interpretation methods but also diverse forms of interpretation. Besides, no benchmark determines whether an interpretation is better than others. However, at least, by looking at the strengths and weaknesses of the forms taken in the interpretation of the Qur'an, an appropriate one perhaps could be produced. Arguably, an interpretation can be said to be credible if it is not only based on textual

aspects, such as an understanding of Arabic, but also on contextual aspects. It should be able to grasp in what conditions a verse was revealed, how it was understood and operationalised both in Muhammad's time and different moment, and more importantly how the outcome of the interpretation is in accordance with the fundamental values of the Qur'an's messages. Interpretations that are contrary to the fundamental things in Islam, such as the obligation to carry out compulsory worship, are not credible. For this reason, the first section of this chapter will discuss the forms of interpretation of the Qur'an as well as the extent to which their authority can be accounted for.

In Islamic tradition, it is known that the most authoritative person in interpreting God's Words is Muhammad himself as His Messenger. He was not a passive recipient who only passed verse by verse to his Companions (the term for the early generation of the Believers who knew the Prophet directly) but articulated it in his actions. According to Rahman (1966, p. 31-32), Muhammad's spirituality allowed him to absorb the messages of the Qur'an which were initially alien even to him so that he was able to project the revelation in his deeds. In Islamic tradition, this is the reason the Sunnah (words, deeds, and habits of the Prophet) were considered as the 'perfect model' to live life according to the guidance of the Qur'an. It can be seen, for example, in matters of *shalah* (Muslims' daily prayer). Even though so many Qur'anic verses require Muslims to do *shalah*, the procedure of worship in details follows the steps taken by Muhammad.

Questions raised about how the Qur'an should be interpreted after the passing of Muhammad. There are at least three forms of interpretation which are the most commonly found, namely 1) exegeses which are usually written in several volumes to describe the entire Qur'an content, 2) commentaries that seem inclined to discuss particular themes or verses, and 3) *fatwas* which are usually in the form of legal statements to answer praxis problems. Exegeses are usually produced from the intellectuality of someone who has mastered various religious disciplines. This means exegeses could be a more critical point of reference than the other two forms in understanding the content of the Qur'an. However, Muslims are required not to blindly follow an exegesis because there is a tendency for an author to be influenced by psychomilieu, or the psychological and social environment which surround an interpreter when writing his work. The study of Avivy, Dakir, and Ibrahim (2015, p. 407) illustrates how the Qur'an's interpreter who lived in a traditionalist Islamic environment and those who wrote his exegesis based on reformist Islamic intellectual tradition generate a different point of views on specific issues in The Qur'an. In their case, the difference is the

treatment of the interpreter in employing the Judeo-Christian literature to clarify the stories recorded in the Qur'an.

Two other forms of interpretation, namely commentaries and fatwas, as well as exegeses also play an essential role in understanding the Qur'an, but it is just that both of them are more often intended to discuss specific issues and are presented in a completely different form. Commentaries take specific themes or verses to discuss. For example, Imran Nazar Hosein (2007) tries to find the meaning or interpretation of the eighteenth chapter of the Qur'an, *al-Kahf* (the Cave) which is recommended to be read every Friday as a protector from slander at the End of Time, by positioning Islam amongst international orders dominated by the West. Sometimes, commentaries not only try to present the meaning of individual verses from the Qur'an but also show the spiritual height of the content of the Book through other mediums such as a poem. Nasr (2015, p. xliii) exemplifies this with *Mathnawi*, a mystical poem by the Islamic Sufi, Jalaluddin Rumi (1207-1273). Like commentaries, fatwas can also be said as one form of interpretation of the Qur'an that is devoted to particular themes. It is just that the *fatwa* is issued by Islamic clerics called muftis for legal purposes whether Muslims are permitted or prohibited from doing something. Fatwas are very bound to particular contexts and situations so that what was issued in a particular moment and place may not apply to other matters. Furthermore, although commentaries and fatwas are interpretations of the Qur'an on specific issues, in principle they must not conflict with the entire Qur'an itself following the tenet mentioned in the previous chapter that all parts of the Qur'an remain a unity.

THE DIFFICULTY OF UNDERSTANDING THE QUR'AN

The interpretation of the Qur'an not only varies in regards to form but also the methods. The main reason for the difficulty in interpreting it is the differences in human capabilities in interpreting religious experience that hypothetically affects their approach to the Qur'an. It relates to inner spiritual experience. However, other external factors such as historical, political, and even agent-structure relations in society cannot be ignored. This section will discuss both of them.

Interpreting the Qur'an is a work that involves both cognitive and religious aspects or human inner capabilities. Although a specific set of methods has been set up to be followed by interpreters, their religious experience also influences the outcome. This premise supports the view of Muhammad Iqbal (2012), one of the modern Islamic

scholars, that intellectual and religious experience are inseparable. In practice, interpreting the Qur'an is strongly related to interpreters' belief system, knowledge of God, worldview, intellectual surrounding, and perhaps political ideology. At this point, cognitive, spiritual, and moral attributes determine each other not only the results of interpretations that can be very subjective, but also one's attitude towards the Qur'an itself. Esack (2005, pp. 2-10) explains that there are various kinds of attitudes shown by people towards the Qur'an, which are likened to how a person approaches his partner. Indeed, like love, human's reception toward the Qur'an could vary and subjective. In one spectrum, one uncritically loves and takes the Qur'an as it is and mainly follows it literally. Others adore its beauty but leave space to find the reason why it is beautiful. Otherwise, one could ignore its desirability while spending the time to find out why people are attracted to the Qur'an. However, at another end, one could be polemical, in misunderstanding and hostile towards the Qur'an. At the point described by Esack, an uncritical lover with a polemicist who always suspects the book tends to produce partial and radical understanding.

Moving on from the internal dimension the difficulty of the Qur'an is also understood due to external factors such as history, politics, and social. Regarding history and politics, since the death of Muhammad, Muslims have never been united by any entity. As soon as the Prophet died, differences of opinion which led to a divergence in political attitudes emerged. That was the first time where Muslims were in disagreement on the issue of who has the right to lead Muslims after the Prophet's death but then also trapped in a civil war between Ali Bin Abi Thalib and Muawiyyah to fight for legitimate power. Some Muslims who later formed Shia believed that Ali and his descendants were the successors of legitimate leadership, while the majority who were called Sunnis surrendered the issue of leadership to the consensus, under the commands of the Qur'an (3:159; 42:38). Indeed, there are allegations that the narrations used by Shia that Muhammad before his death had instructed the Believers to be loyal to Ali were invalid. However, some Shia writers, such as al-Musawi (2009) and Shirazi (1996) argue that the history is also found in the Sunni literature. Reasonably neutral writing can be found in Ibn Kathir (2002) who mediated the perspective that Ali is one of the noble leaders of the Muslim community, but other figures such as Abu Bakr also needs to be respected. However, the disagreements between Sunni and Shia continues today, and even other branches of politico-religious of Islam have their own interpretation of the

Qur'an. According to Saeed (2008, pp. 197-202), each branch indeed uses the Qur'an to strengthen their political bargaining.

In terms of social conditions, the Qur'an has also been interpreted in various ways because Muslims in a particular time and place responded differently to the challenges they face. This premise follows the theory of historian Arnold Toynbee that human history develops when communities respond to challenges around them in diverse ways (Toynbee, 1972, p. 97). Islamic social history witnesses that Muslim communities respond to the challenges of their time in various ways, one of which is to produce intellectual works including Qur'anic interpretations. It can be seen for example in the emergence of recent feminist interpretations in response to masculinity which has so far settled in Islamic culture as a tradition. Karam (1998, p. 11) states that the Qur'an is used as a source of the discourse of gender equality.

CRITICISING THE METHOD OF INTERPRETATION

After discussion of the complexity for interpreting the Qur'an, this section provides a critical introduction to several methods of interpretation that have developed in the Islamic intellectual tradition. There is no certainty as to how many interpretation methods have emerged, but they can be categorised based on three measures: Do they appear to answer classic or modern problems? Do they tend to rely on tradition or reason? Also, do they emphasise text or context? These three categorisations will be discussed first. Then this section will take an example of two Qur'an interpretations to criticise, i.e. Sunni and Kharjities exegesis.

To begin with, let us look more detail at the categorisation. First, interpretation can be classified into classic or modern. The differentiation is not only a matter of time but also related to the problem it handles. Classical interpretation is a surviving product of *salaf* period which lasted about the first two centuries of Islamic history with the primary concern on religious matters, while their modern counterpart emerged later in response to the problems faced by Muslims at least in the last two centuries such as colonialism, the rise of nationalism, and globalization (Saeed, 2008). Second, the interpretation could be divided into traditionalist or rationalist. Occasionally, the latter can overlap with the former. Traditionalist interpretation cannot ignore sources in classical times. However, even though in the classical period it was also used by the Mu'tazillah group, rationalist interpretation tends to be more popular in answering modern problems (Saeed, 2006a). Lastly, in the third category, interpretations can be

distinguished whether they are textual or contextual. Of course, generally, the interpretation of the Qur'an is based on texts from the classical period (Saeed, 2006a, pp. 42-43). However, contextualism, which tries to understand the Qur'an based on social, political, economic and cultural conditions, is not entirely foreign in the classical period (Saeed, 2014, p. 4) as well as among traditionalists (Esack, 2005, p. 121).

Of the various interpretations that can fit the three categorisations above, two in particular should be critically examined, namely the Sunni and Kharijites. Sunni and Kharijites interpretations are products of classical times, but they were received differently. Sunni interpretation is the most popular among Muslims thanks to the fact that they are the majority branch of Islam. Kharijites exegeses are one of the minor views in Islam, which is considered partially extinct, but some consider that the Ibadi Islamic minority branch which now inhabits Oman is considered a descendant of them. Kharijites are unpopular because of their interpretation of the quality of leaders following the Qur'an leads to the murder of Ali Bin Abi Talib, one of the leading Companions who is honoured by the majority of Muslims. Euben (2002, p. 14-15) explains that Kharijites radically use Qur'anic verses, especially verses about jihad to legitimise their political views to purify power by only supporting leaders they consider pious (Saeed, 2006b, p. 116). Many Muslims consider that radical interpretations like Kharijites are invalid because they only emphasise some aspects of the Qur'an and ignore others that contradict their political bias.

In terms of more widespread belief, Sunni is renowned for its rigorous intellectual traditions of understanding texts and traditions that continues into modern times today (Pink, 2010, p. 56). However, their modern character is eclipsed by their strong literary reading of the Qur'an (Saeed, 2008, p. 197). Indeed, some consider that interpreting the Qur'an based on textual approach is the safest and best method (Saeed, 2006a, p. 47), because it is believed to have significantly contributed to the lives of Muslims in the understanding of worship and legal affairs and complementary to the development of Sunni's schools of law (Madhhab). However, the Sunni's tendency to follow the text is sometimes too rigid, so interpretations are often limited from exploring the more implicit meanings of Qur'anic verses (Saeed, 2008, p. 197) while arguably, the Qur'an should be read more flexibly to maintain its relevance on some emerging problems.

Moreover, Sunni's interpretation could be too biased due to its dominant position in politics. Political competition with Shia or other minor forces perhaps leads such interpretation hesitant to support any non-Sunni's politics. Arguably, it is quite

likely that Sunni's interpretation follows one of the logical fallacies, i.e. appeal to authority, since its reliance on some Islamic figures such as Companions or Successors from the classical period. Indeed, such fallacy could appear in any Islamic sect, but the Sunni sometimes put too much emphasis on them since there is a prevailing norm to venerate most Companions despite one another had been in mutual enmity after the Prophet passed away.

CONTEXTUAL APPROACH IN INTERPRETING THE QUR'AN

The last section of this chapter discusses why contextualism approaches can be appropriate choices for grasping certain aspects of the Qur'an that may be misunderstood by some people, such as the issue of jihad. Of course, textual approaches like the Sunnis have their ways of discussing jihadi verses, and Kharjites also understand such doctrine as the highest worship in Islam. However, contextualism does not merely understand the issues in the Qur'an in a vacuum but instead relates them to the situation in which Muslims are located. At this point, contextualism is one step ahead of other methods, although it cannot be said to be free from criticism. Then, before concluding, this session will also explain how the systematic steps taken by the contextualism approach in interpreting the Qur'an.

The contextual approach attempts to figure out the relevant meaning of some aspects of the Qur'an by analysing two macro contexts, i.e. the seventh-century context surrounding the Qur'an's revelation or what so called 'macro context 1' and the present context or 'macro context 2' (Saeed, 2014, p. 5). This method was developed by a Qur'an's scholars whose work has been quoted here, Abdullah Saeed, based on his analysis of the works of modern Islamic scholars such as Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988) and Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010). The term 'contextualism' is introduced to differentiate it from the textual counterpart. The textual approach sufficiently explains most of the Muslim's problems, but, according to Saeed (2014, p. 3-4), it fails to interpret some contemporary issues that can cause misunderstanding of the Qur'an. However, Saeed (2014, p. 4) asserts that contextualism is only complementary and not intended to replace the textual approach entirely because primarily the Qur'an should be adapted to the changing times while the adjustment is not infringing the fundamentals of Islam (Saeed, 2014: 4).

Although the contextual approach promises success in re-understanding problems that cannot be reached by textualism, it is not without weaknesses. Though

emphasising on socio-historical context of the revelation could be one of its eminences, the problem is that no one can correctly construct the chronology of every single event of revelation in Muhammad's lifetime. With this caveat, al-Dawoody (2011, p. 49) argues that one can only speculate about the revelation's context based on available reports written by other Islamic scholars. It means that contextualism cannot be separated from existing tradition.

However, such deficiency in this approach also avoids from any dogmatic believes which can trap an interpreter into unwanted bias. Arguably, contextualism is the most appropriate one among the available approaches concerning avoidance of fanatical faith for some sensitive issues such as jihad since it will contextualise jihad at the time when the Qur'an was revealed and produce a relevant meaning of jihad for the present time. Contextualism could be the least tied to any dogma of Islamic theological branches or political movement because its primary purpose is to examine how the Qur'an could be understood in the present time (Saeed, 2014). Indeed, sectarian approaches have a higher chance to be biased because of the norm to follow specific religious figures (taqlid) which is usually not accompanied by a critical attitude. Indeed, any research requires the valid conclusion (Marczyk et al., 2005). According to Johnson (1997), it is 'valid' if the study has some unbiased criteria such as plausible, credible, trustworthy, and defensible. Arguably, by avoiding fanaticism to authority, contextualism has a higher chance to maximise its validity.

If in principle the contextual approach is convincing enough to be used as an appropriate method of Qur'anic interpretation, then how will the method be used in this research? The following explanation concerning such practical issue is indebted to Saeed and would be slightly adjusted to fit this research. There are four procedures that must be fulfilled so that the conclusion of the contextual method can be said to be valid: 1) Compiling the related verses from the Qur'an, 2) Determining the hierarchy of Qur'anic values, 3) Reconstructing the so-called 'macro context 1' or the background of Qur'anic verses in the past, and 4) Reconstructing the 'macro context 2' or the present circumstances surrounding Muslim's practices.

For the first step, an interpreter has to index the jihad-related verses from the Qur'an. Of the six thousand verses of the Qur'an, there are dozens that talk about jihad, including those that associated with war, such as "*wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them*" (Qur'an 9:5). Some Qur'an printing houses also print Qur'an that comes with a glossary of thematic guides. Saeed (2014) himself include the Hadith or the

compilation of reports attributed to Muhammad as a parallel text to decipher the meaning of the Qur'an. Commonly the Hadith is used to establish religious teaching. However, that is not the objective of this study. This research is limited only to know how the Qur'an posits jihad instead of examining jihad in holistic Islamic teachings.

The next step is determining the hierarchy of values that is quite challenging since it requires adequate knowledge of Islam. The hierarchy of values is a set of measurements formulated by Saeed (2014, p. 4) to make sense the Qur'an's verses by determining the obligatory, fundamental, protective, implementational, and instructional values of the whole Islamic teachings. The order is arranged from the most to the less important ones, so contextual interpretation cannot conflict with the fundamentals of Islam. Obligatory values commonly deal with the fundamental beliefs, devotional practices, and unambiguous expression regarding what is permissible (halal) and prohibited (haram) in the Qur'an and the actual practice of the Prophet. Fundamental values are identified as fundamental 'human' values. It means that the Qur'anic teachings have the purpose of protecting the life, property, honour, progeny, religion, and today they are expanded into the protection of human rights and freedom of religion. Then, such fundamental values should be provided by legislative support from protective values to make them operational. On the next rank, such values should be implemented on the social norm. That is the reason why the implementation of some sharia law in the past is different from the modern time. Lastly, instructional values refer to a specific imperative and prohibitive verses in the Qur'an that only relevant in a particular circumstance and context (Saeed, 2014, pp. 65-68). Thus, once a researcher finds a jihad-related verse, appropriate values on its importance should be determined.

Finally, an interpreter should reconstruct the macro context 1. That is a coinage from Said (2014, p. 5) which refers to the social, political, economic, and cultural context at the time the Qur'an was revealed. This step cannot be separated from the next step, i.e. constructing the macro context 2, which is the current context by using indicators in macro context 1. It can be done by comparing and contrasting both contexts. Once the values of both context are in agreement, the Qur'an not to be questioned. Meanwhile, if the values change, an interpreter should rethink the messages. Therefore, by doing it mutually, an alternative meaning of jihad could be concluded.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the Qur'an is interpreted variously due to multiple reasons involving internal factors such as human capabilities in grasping the religious experience as well as external constituents encompassing historical, political, and social events. Then, each method of interpretation could not be free from criticism. Some appear to be inclined to support individual political views or even to follow certain Islamic sects blindly. It such interpretation sometimes is seen as incapable of answering problems that transcend the boundaries of religious, political identity. In this research, I suggest that the contextual approach can be used by readers and scholars of the Qur'an as a complement and an alternative to understanding the Qur'an's relevance in this modern times.

III

POTENTIAL FOR PEACEFUL JIHAD: ANALYSIS OF THE QUR'AN

INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has elaborated on the Qur'an's importance as a universal guide. However, a small portion of its teachings, especially the ethico-legal issues, seemed difficult to understand for some people, giving rise to different interpretations. This chapter will present an analysis toward one of the Qur'an's messages that is often questioned, misinterpreted, and sometimes considered irrelevant to the present, namely the command to every Muslim to strive (jihad) in the way of God by fighting the unbelievers. Jihad has been subject to different interpretations, with very important consequences such as creating the impression that Islam is a religion of violence and the Qur'an is an intolerant holy book. Therefore, which interpretation is correct? This problem could be resolved by looking at the 24 jihad verses in the Qur'an. This chapter will argue that by contextualising the verses, jihad which was initially associated with war, violence and bellicose, deadly ideology could be reinterpreted differently as encouraging every Muslims' contribution to building a peaceful civilisation.

How did the jihad become interpreted as such? By referring to the contextualism approach in the interpretation of the Qur'an explained in the earlier chapter, the question will be discussed in three sections. The first part addresses the reasons why the relevance of jihad needs to be questioned, in this case the misunderstandings that come from both Muslim extremists and hard-line jihad opponents. Although both have contradictory political goals, the two groups are common in deeming that jihad is an intolerant hostile ideology. To rectify this misconception, it is necessary to reexamine the most authoritative sources of jihad, namely the Qur'an itself and the Prophet Muhammad. The second section outlines the values of jihad posited in the Qur'an as well as the reasons why the Prophet Muhammad waged war. That section will look more in detail at the context of jihad verses in the time of the Prophet. It finds that initially, waging war was not an option in jihad, but later war became a single interpretation of jihad since at that time it was the last choice for the early Muslims to avoid the premature extinction of both their religion and political entity. In other words, the association of jihad with war is a temporary interpretation that is adjustable if the

socio-political context in which Muslims are also improved. The third section of this chapter discusses the relevance of jihad verses that are compatible with the present situation.

GENERAL MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF JIHAD

A BBC article explicitly explains that there are three meanings of jihad: 1) Muslims' internal struggle to live out their faith, 2) External struggles to build a good Muslim society, and 3) Armed struggle to defend Islam (BBC, 2009). Scholars also agree that in a comprehensive sense jihad means to strive wholeheartedly for the sake of God, but they also acknowledge that forms of struggle are interpreted as diverse as the three points presented by the BBC. Unfortunately, political literature, media coverage, and callings from preachers that are especially regarded as radical and fundamental, often give a one-handed and biased emphasis on jihad as an armed struggle. At this point, jihad then becomes Islamic teaching which is most often misunderstood and considered as irrelevant. This section illustrates such misconceptions that might make people question the relevance of jihad, or perhaps even discredit Islam and the Qur'an itself.

Interpreting jihad as an armed struggle for the sake of God has a justification in Islamic teachings. Several points in the Qur'an promise people who participated or fell in battle in the way of God that they will receive a divine reward and worthy life in the Hereafter (Qur'an 2:154). Moreover, in some places, the scripture satirises those who are not eager to take up arms when others risk their lives and possessions (Qur'an, 4:95; 9:81). Correspondingly, the Prophet Muhammad was noted to have been involved in combat or military operations dozens of times. That historical account was supported by the fact that most of the jihad verses were descended when Muslims were in warfare. Then, in principle, *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) also regulates when Muslims are authorised to fight which in just war tradition are called *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, respectively. The position of *fiqh* as an authoritative, practical reference makes war and jihad integration even stronger in Islamic traditions.

However, religious justification of war does not necessarily justify any armed action or practice of violence committed by some Muslims as jihad. Instead of fighting for religion, some extreme Islamist groups, such as al-Qaeda, might misunderstand or deliberately violate the Islamic principles of jihad and war. It seemed that Osama Bin Laden quoted the verses on jihad and war out of context in underlying his anti-Western attitude (Lawrence, 2005). Before the 9/11 attacks, Bin Laden intensely associated jihad

with the holy war against the United States and Israel. Bin Laden ignored diversity in Islam by imposing his interpretation of the teachings of jihad. In fact, like other conservative thinkers, Bin Laden was inclined towards fanatic textual interpretations such as the Kharjites exegeses that had been elaborated earlier. Such an interpretation certainly had many weaknesses, particularly because of its inability to place the teachings of the Qur'an in appropriate situations. Indeed, Bin Laden was free to exploit verses and Hadith which contain the words of war (*harb*), kill (*qital*), and fight (*jihad*) to underlying political views and acts of violence (Bin Laden, 1995, p. 18). Then, in addition to mixing these three things for one political purpose, Bin Laden also generalized his political enemies into one category which he calls "Judeo-Crusader" or "Judeo-American" alliance (Bin Laden, 1996, pp. 25-29), a term that is very exciting for radical groups to confront Islam with other forms of civilization.

While the U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East might draw criticism, Bin Laden's deadly ideology of providing a theological basis for terrorist attacks such as the 9/11 also posed dangers. Such an attack certainly no longer considered whether the victim is a combatant or civilian, so it is a huge mistake to consider terrorism as jihad because the Qur'an itself values the life of even one individual. One passage confirms that killing one life without justification is the same as killing all life itself (Qur'an 5:32). Then, another example of error can be found in the justification by some radical figures about suicide bombings that are equated with the glory of people who fall in the way of God (Slavicek, 2008), despite the Qur'an itself condemning suicide (Qur'an 4:29).

Unfortunately, such oversight is found not only in radical Muslim groups but also in far-right Western anti-Islamic societies that oppose the notion of jihad itself. They generally exhibit anti-Islam attitudes, ranging from connoting Islam with radicalism and terrorism to rejecting Muslim immigrant's arrival in Europe. This misunderstanding of jihad based on the actions of a few so-called terrorist groups instead have been causing Islamophobia towards Islam as a whole. The irony of such simplification is that, like Muslim radicals, they show only their lack of understanding of Islam. This erroneous conception can be seen for example on the counter-jihad movement (CJM), "a broad and loose transnational political movement consist of bloggers, political parties, street movements, think tanks, campaign groups, and pundits" antagonise Islamic world with Western societies (Lee, 2016, p. 257). The movement exerted a narrative that Muslims must be opposed because they are striving

to Islamize the continent through the flow of Muslim immigrants by utilising the weakening conditions of Europe (Lee, 2016, pp. 259-260). Unfortunately, like jihad groups, the counter-jihad movements have also been expressed by committing acts of terrorism on occasions. Studies from Lee (2016) and Önnersfors (2017) reveal that the 2011 Norway attacks by a far-right lone wolf terrorist, Anders Breivik, are a consequence of the narrative produced by CJM, even though neither the perpetrator nor target of that attacks represented Islamic identity.

After jihad is reflected on the two examples above, it can be seen that both Muslim or non-Muslim can misunderstand and politicise jihad. Therefore, a comprehensive study of jihad is needed. The possible thing to do is contextualising the verses of jihad in the Qur'an, by reviewing the reasons why the Prophet Muhammad and early believers at that time interpreted jihad as armed struggle and thinking about whether for the present, war, violence, or acts of terror are relevant jihad.

JIHAD IN MUHAMMAD'S PERIOD

Referring to the necessity to examine the social context when the Qur'an is revealed - what Saeed (2014, p. 5) calls 'macro context 1' - there are two aspects that will be explained in this section, namely the position of the jihad in the Qur'an as well as the reasons why Muhammad fought in the last ten years of his prophethood. However, both will be discussed in the form of fusion because they are interrelated and determine each other's values. The jihad verses must always be understood within the Prophet Muhammad's missions (*da'wah*). Moreover, determining the position of the jihad verses will allow people to understand the life journey of Muhammad. The lack of understanding on both might create a false comprehension of the essence of jihad that not only is irrelevant to present-day contexts but also implemented improperly by radical groups.

It can be said that the main reason why war seemed to be a single meaning of jihad was to avoid the early extinction of the existence of Islam, both as a religion and a political entity. At that time, the existence of Islam could be described as a religion that seemed unable to survive if adequate military force did not accompany it. That is in such a context, jihad verses that are often deployed in war narratives must be placed as a last resort. In other words, the association of jihad with war could not stand alone from the social, political and security conditions faced by the early Believers. Indeed,

when the situation changes, especially when there are other ways other than war to defend religion, thus the interpretation of jihad should change.

That complexity could be adequately understood through highlighting three crucial periods in Muhammad's life, i.e. the persecution experienced by the Believers while in Mecca, the events of migrating to Medina, and the initial warfare that was commanded by the Prophet since he was in Medina. Contextually, the three stages of the prophetic mission also determine the hierarchical position of the jihad verses revealed in these different events, namely the obligatory, fundamental, protective, implementational, and instructive values. The order of such values is integrated with the contextual method as mentioned in the last part of the previous chapter. Such hierarchy is determined by how important the values carried by the Qur'an so that an interpretation of a particular verse, with an absolute value, should not violate a more fundamental value. For example, verses that contain instructions for doing or not doing something should be based on a higher value, namely obligatory values, because the last values contained Islamic faith (Saeed, 2014, p. 64).

Obligatory Values of Jihad

In the beginning, the persecution experienced by Muslims in the early stages of the development of Islam in Mecca had given a picture of the primary purpose of jihad, namely to spread the messages of the Qur'an to humans which could only be done with strong faith. Doing jihad by *iman* (faith) or merely disseminating the messages of the Qur'an with determination and great deeds for the sake of God is only an obligation for every Muslims. The Qur'an indeed emphasises the importance of *iman* in nearly every single part of the Scripture. For this reason, Saeed (2014, p. 65) eventually posits the obligation to keep *iman* as the highest in hierarchical values, i.e. obligatory values. Thus, if there is a single jihad versethat obligate a Muslim to do jihad by disseminating the Qur'an with *iman*; then this verse could be perceived as most important in understanding the context of jihad. In this case, jihad has nothing to do with violence even though it could have an impact on suffering Muslim due to inappropriate treatment from the infidels. It can be proved by constructing the period of Prophet Muhammad's teaching in Mecca.

During the Prophet's time, Mecca was under the control of a mercantile Arab tribe called Quraysh which consisted of various clans, while Muhammad came from the Bani Hashim clan which was not very dominant in political and economic affairs.

Armstrong (2006) notes that religious teachings that promote the oneness of God and equality between humankind had shaken the authority that had been enjoyed by Quraysh elites. In the midst of the Quraysh community, Islam developed organically, from Muhammad's closest family, women, youth, slaves, until one by one the religion was able to attract influential figures such as Abu Bakr and Umar bin Khattab to convert. However, this development was seen as a threat by other Quraysh elites, including the Prophet's uncle, Abu Lahab. Along with other intolerant figures, he was hostile to the Prophet and also tried to disrupt Muslims during acts of worshipping, threatened anyone who followed the religion and plotted to kill the Prophet. A short chapter in the Qur'an (Q. 111: 1-5) is named after him, describing how the act of persecution was carried out on the Prophet and the Believers. This persecution forced Muslims to seek asylum under the protection of the Christian governor of Abyssinia. However, in the midst of such arbitrary treatment, God comforted the Prophet that what he was doing, namely conveying the messages of Allah with strong faith, regardless of the severity of the backlash or response from disbelievers, was a *jihadan kabiran* or 'a grand jihad' (Q. 25: 52). It was one of the earliest jihad verses revealed, and regarding the substance, it was more principled than the war verses that came later. So, it can be said that it is the real purpose of jihad.

Fundamental and Protective Values of Jihad

Furthermore, after the persecution received during the dissemination of the Qur'an could no longer be detained, until it threatened security, Muhammad and the Believers were guided by the Qur'an to leave Mecca for Medina in 622 C.E. That event was known as the Hijrah. The Qur'an repeatedly juxtaposes the verses of Hijrah with jihad, a correlation that is often missed by the jihad narrators. At least, in four other verses, God starts with "*Those who emigrated (Hijrah) and struggled (jihad) for God's cause*" (Q. 2: 218; 8:72; 8:74; 9:20), which if it is read contextually indicates that practically, the closest interpretation of jihad, even in Muhammad's time, was not war, but Hijrah. Therefore, the value of Hijrah and jihad deserves examination here.

If both are understood contextually, there will be two values that occupy the second and third positions in the hierarchy of Qur'anic values, i.e. fundamental and protective values respectively. As explained previously, these values are closely related to the basics of humanity and the necessity to protect them. In the context of the time, jihad, which was carried out in the form of Hijrah, was intended to maintain benefit,

protect the soul, and maintain the existence of Islam from extinction. Because, if Muhammad stayed in Mecca, it was likely that sooner or later, Islamic missions would be eradicated by the persecution of the polytheist Quraysh people. It might be conceivable that as in the case of Jesus, the Prophet Muhammad could have been killed, with the ensuing implication that some of his followers might be condemned as apostates and be forced to hide their beliefs or choose to suffer under persecution. However, the apparent choice was to protect the continuity of Islamic life in Medina, the place where those who have sworn allegiance called *Anshar* are. At that time, the position of *Anshar* could be described as necessary as the existence of the Disciples of Jesus (*al-Hawariyyun*) in Christianity. In the Qur'an, God recommended the Believers who struggle for His cause to take the example of the Disciples (Q. 61: 10-14). The parable, of course, increasingly gives theological legitimacy that jihad has the value of preserving one's life and acting out of love for God humanity.

Implementational and Instructional Values of Jihad

The final event, i.e. the series of wars and military operations instructed by Muhammad after being in Medina, determined the lowest value hierarchy, namely implementation and instructions. Verses of war and jihad are implementational, meaning that the order seems to be adjusted to the norms prevailing in the midst of Arab clans during the Prophet's time. Then, it is instructive, meaning that it only applies to certain circumstances only (Saeed, 2014). That is, war as an interpretation of jihad can be temporary and pragmatic.

However, these verses are exploited and mobilised by modern jihadists, as if war occupies the highest hierarchy of values, thus closing other interpretations of jihad in addition to killing infidels. One of the most famous examples, the most quoted and misunderstood in jihad and war literature is when God instructs according to the application of the Arabic clan value at that time: "*wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them*" (Q. 9: 5). The meaning of the verse is distorted by only emphasising the adverb "wherever" so that it is as if Muslims must and whenever, without any reason, to kill every person who is considered "infidel". This certainly raises the question on how to correctly and properly understand this verse as an instruction.

There are two ways to understand the verse along with ones of similar notes. The first is to reexamine the implementation of war and peace that prevailed in the Quraysh, or Arabic clans in general, during the time of the Prophet. The second one is

to understand how the general instructions were given by leaders at that time to realise the desired conditions of war or peace.

Looking at the implementation of war and peace, the standard conditions of the Arab tribes at that time were indeed in situations where one was an enemy to another (Peters, 1996: 1), especially between nomads and townsman (Rejwan, 2008: 3). These conditions describe what Hobbes calls a 'state of nature' or a state of pre-state society that allows an entity to be always an enemy of others (Steans et al., 2010: 56). They do not have a social contract, a single authority figure, e.g. king, chieftain, etc., nor written legislation. However, this does not mean that they lived without law at all. They had an unwritten norm that had been valid before the arrival of Islam (Hitti, 1984: 102) and is retained in the Qur'an (Q. 9: 36) such as a prohibition on warfare in certain months. However, even though there are such norms, wars and raids of trade tribes that cross a particular area are culturally valid.

When it comes to leading and instructing their followers, clan leaders had a significant influence on organising their members in characters called *asabiyah* (tribal loyalty). It seems impossible to understand Muhammad's leadership in creating war and peace without looking at the characteristic. Hitti (1984: 27) considers that this attribute had fostered a sense of absolute pride in honour of the clan which sometimes underlies hostility with other groups. However, if a fellow clan leader had agreed to an alliance or truce, then it became an absolute order for all members of the clan.

During this period, war was only a last resort in the resolution of conflicts. Examination of the conditions at the time; the situation of the Prophet in Medina, the military forces of Islam at that time, and the threat from tribes that did not allow peace, indicates that war became an option that could no longer be avoided. The Prophet himself tried to prevent bloodshed when confronted with Medinan Jews and Meccan polytheists. Shortly after arriving in Medina, Muhammad and the Jews formed a social contract, known as the Medina Charter, which confirmed that the Believers and Jewish clans should help one another in matters of city security, especially from the threat of Mecca. Indeed, Muhammad's steps to take agreement with the leaders of the Jewish clans followed the norms prevailing at that time, especially the *asabiyah* character in society.

However, historical Islamic literature notes that the agreement was cancelled unilaterally by the Jews by showing hostility, making conflict unavoidable. That is why the ninth chapter of the Qur'an, which says much about the war against Jews, begins

with instructions that the agreement between the Believers and them has ended, and the fight against them is justified (Q. 9: 1). Unfortunately, this verse has also been misunderstood even today, as if indicating that Muslim and Jews are justified to never able to live side by side, especially when verses like "*fight those of the People of the Book*" (Q. 9: 29) are deployed and historical records show that hundreds of Jews from the Bani Quraidzah clan were executed as part of the punishment during Muhammad's time. However, once again, the verse is temporary implementational and instructional for reasons that have been stated. Moreover, the bloodshed was the last choice after nonviolent options have been exhausted, such as giving warnings and ordering evictions failed to bring peace between the Muslims and Jews (al-Umuri, 2010).

If the context of the war against the Jews is a punishment for traitors of war, then fightings against the Meccan polytheists is interpreted in conditions that war was impossible to avoid. From the beginning, the Believers and Mecca relations were indeed full of conflicts, which meant that open battles could occur at any time. However, as in the Jewish case, the conflict is also pragmatic, for reasons that cannot be simply justified in different conditions and times. The fact that jihadists often ignore in their narrative about jihad against infidels is that Islam was still very weak politically and militarily during the Prophet's time. With only around 300 people in power, Muhammad had to lead the Believers against a thousand Meccan troops in the Battle of Badr at 632 C.E. (al-Umuri, 2010). This is recognised in the Qur'an itself (Q. 3: 121-129). Therefore, mustering military strength was the only choice for Muhammad to ensure Islam's survival.

Muslims won the Battle of Badr, but the war against the infidels continued. Regarding this matter, of course, the meaning is returned to implementational values at the time that even after Badr, there was no peace agreement with the Quraysh. That is to say; follow-up battles ethically were a legitimate course of actions. It was only at 630 C.E, the war with the Quraysh can be supposed to end when Muhammad, without bloodshed, liberated Mecca which became known as the *Fathu Makkah*, from the hands of Islam's enemies.

PEACEFUL JIHAD FOR THE PRESENT

The previous section has reconstructed how Muhammad exemplified jihad actually, and this session will reflect what kind of jihad is prioritised for Muslims in the present. This section looks at jihad verses in what Saeed (2014: 5) calls 'macro context 2'. This

reflection is carried out by sticking to the hierarchical value of jihad that has been explained, by focusing on the fundamental and protective values, because these two values are the most different between the days of Muhammad and the present. Obligatory values can be said as impossible to be changed in Islam because they are very principled, while the implementation and instructive values are more practical which follows the fundamental and protective values.

It can be said, that for the needs of the present, jihad is prioritised for the building of proper civilisation, instead of fighting. Although persecution and conflicts remain experienced by some Muslims in some places, the option of armed resistance is not absolute. Of course, there are various aspects in creating a better civilisation, but at least, the values of jihad can be applied to three critical elements, namely fighting for human rights, establishing good governance, and prioritising the peace-building process in conflict resolution. This section will not discuss the practicality in realising these, but it emphasises that the fundamental values for the present have transformed the doctrine of jihad from armed resistance to more encouragement of Muslims to participate in these three goals.

First, fighting for human rights, especially the right to life, could be synergised with the values of jihad. Of course, some view that human rights, especially those that rely on the moral values of Western society, are not compatible with Islam. However, not a few can see the similarities between human rights values with religious goals in Islam. Furthermore, in its development, it can be seen that human rights are not present naturally, but are presented as a political invention that can transform society (Goodhart, 2016). The same thing happened with Islam, which despite the teachings of divinity and wisdom in society existed thousands of years before Muhammad, the teachings of the Qur'an are something new. Human rights and Islam have the purpose of guaranteeing that every life is valued. In fact, if we look back again, the persecution experienced by early Believers were caused by the lack of guarantees to freedom of religion in the Arabian community. Then Islam came to guarantee such rights.

Second, jihad can be done by striving for the formation and maintenance of good governance, instead of building power in the form of Islamic government. International relations literature explores many themes of good governance and government and sees significant differences from both. The first requires collaboration between various parties in a favourable democratic climate, while the latter is usually limited to the authority of the government. Judging from the context of Prophet's time, he was never

recorded as acknowledging himself as a head of state or calling Madinah he led as an 'Islamic government'. However, he further exemplified himself as a fair manager of governance with Medina as a form of governance that positioned all human beings as equal. That way, the value of the Prophet's jihad to seek justice in the community seems to be integrated in the present by realising good governance for humanity, instead of concentrating power on a handful of elites and calling such a government an 'Islamic state'.

Finally, instead of fighting how to win the war, jihad for the present can be interpreted as an effort to build peace. Here, it does not mean jihad is resorting to pacifism and negating the potential for conflict between humans, but it is more about how jihad can activate the potential for peace in the midst of conflict. This change is very reasonable because many things change, from the character of war in the Prophet's time to the current world conditions, both regarding weaponry and warfare culture. The destructive power caused by explosive weapons, weapons of mass destruction, intercontinental ballistic missile, and robotic weapons undoubtedly cannot be compared to the swords and arrows that the Prophet used. Some Islamic scholars argue that the character of present-day weaponry which indiscriminately kill people has undermined the necessity of violent jihad (Satha-Anand, 2001). Then, regarding war culture, it cannot be denied that the world is currently built on the remnants of two world wars, cold wars, and various civil wars. The early Believers may not imagine such experiences, but perhaps empirically perceived by Muslims today. The physical and psychological damage that might arise as a result of the war between Islam and polytheistic Mecca is not comparable to what is caused by the clash of civilisations between Islam and the West in this present time. The implication of that difference, arguably, is that at present what is more needed by humankind, including Muslims, is how to prevent war and seek peaceful resolutions of conflicts.

CONCLUSION

From the description above, it can be concluded that in principle, war is not the only interpretation of jihad, both during the Prophet Muhammad's time and now. The association of jihad with war is pragmatic which cannot be separated from the culture of war and peace at certain times and societies. In Muhammad's time, jihad itself was realised in various ways. The most principle is to spread the messages of the Qur'an by faith. Then, the closest practical interpretation is Hijrah, which can be interpreted as an

effort to protect humanity. Only when there is no other option, war is the only way to fight. In the present, jihad can be emphasised more on the protection of humanity by creating a good society. There are various ways to make this happen, such as by fighting for human rights, realising good governance, and prioritising conflict resolution rather than fighting. The values of jihad that have been reconstructed in Muhammad's time can be integrated into three forms of struggle to achieve the good society. In other words, radical Muslim's views, as well as far-right European's opinion that see jihad only in the aspect of violence, are a form of misunderstanding in the contextual interpretation of jihad verses in the Qur'an.

CONCLUSION

The present century witnesses a tendency from the international community to confront Islamic teachings with other civilisations, especially the West. The clash can be seen by placing the teachings of the Qur'an as something irrelevant to the global community at large. When peace efforts are mobilized to overcome various problems of global conflict and security, Qur'anic verses, especially calls for jihad are deployed in such a way, which is certainly by radical Muslims, but then supported by hard-line Westerners who oppose Islam, for collided with the aspirations of the world to form a more peaceful international community. We can see that the jihad interpretations mistaken by Muslim radicals, such as al-Qaeda, have transformed into bloody ideologies that legalise acts of terrorism everywhere. Many parties have certainly realised it, and they may conclude that jihad is an example of how intolerant the Qur'an and Islam are. Studies in political science, including international relations, tend to take for granted that jihad is a kind of holy war in Islam. The question rises whether it is possible to find the true meaning of jihad by criticising the current interpretation of radical jihad, which is produced by the fanatical detention of Qur'anic verses.

This research reinterprets what is jihad by reexamining the Qur'an. The simple reason for this is because the Qur'an is the primary source of every Islamic political thought. Indeed, various interpretations of the Qur'an appear to provide a variety of understandings. With such conditions, how to present an appropriate interpretation of the Qur'an? This research has argued that Qur'anic verses should not be interpreted strictly only by relying on textual sources, but by contextualising them. Rereading how the Prophet Muhammad conduct jihad could be helpful in understanding the relevance of jihad for the present time. This study concludes that the central jihad is to spread the messages of the Qur'an, which are words of Allah (God), with faith, then try to protect human values. Only when there is no other option to defend the religion of Islam, may war then is permitted. In terms of today's global situation, there are various peaceful ways other than war that can be carried out to maintain both religion and humanity in general, for example by fighting for human rights, creating good governance, and striving for peace-building in conflict resolution.

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