

The Contextual Understanding Of War Commands In The Qur'an: An Interpretative Study Of The Indonesian Mujahedeen Council

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ABSTRACT

This study intends to present the contextual understanding of the Indonesian Mujahedeen Council (MMI) on war commands. It uses a qualitative literature approach with hermeneutical and comparative analysis methods. Subsequently, the study showed that MMI, according to Muhammad Talib, understands war in Islam as defensive (*difā'i*), not offensive (*ibtidā'i*). Hence, only the unbelievers who are hostile to Islam and Muslims are ordered to be fought. This is because the goal in war is to eliminate interference or slander from the Islam enemy against Muslim life. Therefore, MMI, through Muhammad Talib, viewed that the correct translation of the Al Qur'an is *tafsiriyyah*, not *harfiyyah*.

Keywords: Contextual, War Command, Harfiyyah Interpretation, Tafsiriyyah Interpretation.

Introduction

The Islamic stereotype in the West as a religion of war or the sword has long emerged and become a stigma, though it was later denied by some Western Islamologists. This perspective is not entirely historically or normatively correct¹, as facts show that Islam developed simultaneously with the expansion of its dynasty.² It extended to the Arabian Peninsula, Africa, and Europe and spread rapidly to other parts of the world.

¹Thomas W. Arnold, *Al-Da'wah Ilā al-Islām; Baḥṡ Fī Tarīkh Nasyr al-'Aqīdah al-Islāmiyyah* (Cairo: Maktabah al-Nahḍah al-Misriyyah, 1970), 27.

²Adang et al., *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfīr* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Arnold, *Al-Da'wah Ilā al-Islām; Baḥṡ Fī Tarīkh Nasyr al-'Aqīdah al-Islāmiyyah*; Engineer, "Asghar Ali, Islam and Doctrines of Peace and Non-Violence," *International Journal Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* 3, no. 2 (2001): 119–28.

Some of these expansions proceeded peacefully, and others through war. These peaceful events, for example, occurred through trade routes and Sufi travelers, such as the Islamization of the Archipelago³ and other Malay islands. However, the expansion by war occurred during the time of al-Khulafā 'al-Rāsyidn, the Umayyad, and Abbasid dynasties.⁴

This history proves that, in Islam, there is a war doctrine for Muslims against their enemies. The Al Qur'an also contains several verses that instruct Muslims to fight unbelievers as a form of jihad in the way of Allah. There are approximately twelve verses about the command to fight for Muslims, namely al-Baqarah: 190, 193, 244; Ali 'Imran: 167; al-Nisa': 76; al-Taubah: 12, 14, 29, 36, 123; al-Hujurat: 9; and al-Anfal: 39. Meanwhile, the war command for Muslims with shigat "uqtulū" is found in al-Taubah: 5, al-Baqarah: 191, and al-Nisa': 89, 91⁵. Another war verse stated with the sentence ikhbāriyyah [informative], not şigat amr [command] is al-Hajj: 39. This message concernsthe permission of Allah SWT to fight against the polytheists that have long been hostile to, fighting, persecuting, and expelling them from their residence and homeland.⁶

Even so, the war verses in the Qur'an, according to al-Shāmī, erase each other (tanāsakha ba'duha ba'dan)because the law is chronologically determined by the Qur'an through four phases⁷. Initially, the war was prohibited for the Prophet and Muslims, then the permit was specifically stipulated, namely only to fight the polytheists that expelled and were hostile to the Muslims. Later, it developed into an obligatory war command, especially against those who fought them, and in the last phase, to all polytheists, without exception, therefore all religion belongs to Allah SWT.

This interpretation by some Islamic intellectuals is considered odd and even a separate anomaly in the perspective of modern reasoning, which recognizes religious freedom as part of human rights. Therefore, some scholars, such as Abduh (1849-1905 AD), al-Saqa, and Zaid, stated that the war verse has its context and needs to be applied as such.⁸ On that

³Faisal Ismail, "Paving The Way For Interreligious Dialogue Tolerance and Harmony Following Mukti Ali's Path," *Al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies* 50, no. 1 (2012): 165.

⁴Syafa'atun Elmirzana, "Freedom of Religion, Pluralism and Interreligious Dialogue; Islamic Perspective," *Al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies* 38, no. 2 (2000): 331–53.

⁵Muhammad Fu'ād Abd al-Bāqī, *Al-Mu'jam al-Mufahras Li Alfādz al-Hadits al-Nabawi* (Liden: Mathba'ah Baril, 1965), 644.

⁶Musthafa Zaid, *Al-Naskh Fi al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm; Dirāsah Tasyrī'lyyah Tarīkhiyah Naqdiyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Wafa, 1987); Hibbah Allāh Ibn Sallāmah, *Al-Nāsikh Wa al-Mansūkh Fī al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm* (Damascus: al-Yamāmah, 1987).

⁷Khan, S., Arshad, M. A., & Khan, K. (2018). Self-Development Through Soul Management: Context of Islamic Spiritual Intelligence. *Research Journal of Commerce Education & Management Sciences*, 1(1).

⁸Zaid, *Al-Naskh Fi al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm; Dirāsah Tasyrī'lyyah Tarīkhiyah Naqdiyyah*, 510.

basis, the topic "The contextual understanding of the war command in the Qur'an from scholars and MMI perspective" is interesting to be examined. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the interpretation of some scholars regarding the war command verses and their contextualization in contemporary social settings.

Textual and Contextual Interpretation

Textual and contextual interpretations have substantively existed since the beginning and emergence in science. The textual interpretation can be understood as an effort to interpret the Qur'an outwardly, according to the text meaning.⁹ This is because the essential meaning of the Qur'an in this interpretation model lies in the sound, not behind the text. Therefore, the Qur'an should be understood as it is written, not as implied, and interpretation can be justified as long as it does not go out of the text provisions (nass).

The rule that forms the basis of this interpretation model is "al-'ibrah bi 'umūm al-lafdz lā bi khusūs al-sabab." This model puts forward the general text meaning rather than analyzing the reasons for the revelation.¹⁰ Therefore, this model is not oriented to develop the substance of the text's meaning into contemporary problems or involve various social phenomena in the frame of the Qur'an revelation.¹¹

This textual interpretation model is considered to be loaded with Bayani logic and deductive reasoning, where the basis is the text sound of the Qur'an, and the only analytical tool is language, without involving the historical context. Hence, the measure of truth considered in this interpretation is textual, which is the meaning of the text as stated.¹² According to Safroodin, this model is considered more similar to the thinking paradigm, namely methods and approaches that only refer to the text meaning. Therefore, textual interpretation can be understood as an attempt to interpret or deduce the literal meaning of the Qur'an according to the meaning of the text. This meaning is deduced after

⁹Safroodin, *Memaknai Hadits Politik Secara Kontekstual; Mengurai Hermeneutika Hadits Ibn Taimiyyah Tentang Politik Syar'i (Contextually Interpreting Political Hadith; Unraveling the Hermeneutics of Ibn Taimiyyah's Hadith on Sharia Politics)* (Semarang: Bima Sejati, 2006), 38.

¹⁰Nashruddin Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir (New Insight in the Science of Tafsir)* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2011).

¹¹Joel Hayward, "Warfare in the Qur'an," in *War and Peace in Islam* (Cambridge: MABDA, n.d.).

¹²Safroodin, *Memaknai Hadits Politik Secara Kontekstual; Mengurai Hermeneutika Hadits Ibn Taimiyyah Tentang Politik Syar'i (Contextually Interpreting Political Hadith; Unraveling the Hermeneutics of Ibn Taimiyyah's Hadith on Sharia Politics)*, 39.

the belief, as stated by previous research, that there are no internal (linguistic) or external indicators (asbāb al-nuzūl), which require the verse to be understood contextually.¹³

Conversely, contextual interpretation makes historicity, and not the text sound, the keyword in the Qur'an interpretation. It involves a historical context that includes the situation and conditions surrounding the revealed text and the reader. The term 'context' comes from (1) qarīnah, which means indicator, or siyāq al-kalām, meaning background or problem, and (2) bi'ah muhit, which means the surrounding situation and conditions.¹⁴

According to the terminology, the contextual interpretation model does not solely rely on the external meaning of the text but also involves the socio-historical dimension and the interpreter's subjective participation. The assumption built by this model, as well as textual interpretation, is that the Qur'an is a holy book that is shālih li kull zamān wa makān, but with a slightly different framework. Hence, this interpretation views the Qur'an as a guide that should be understood with a substantive, progressive, and contextual spirit. It should be in dialogue with contemporary reality to produce solutions to continuously developing human problems.¹⁵

The universal values of the Qur'an often have to be explored implicitly, not explicitly, with an understanding that is not merely literal but also looks at the historical context. Therefore, it attempts to understand the implicit meaning of the Qur'anic verse, which is different from the text, after finding internal and external indicators that require contextual understanding.¹⁶

One of the intellectuals trying to understand the place of the Qur'an in several issues is Fazlur Rahman with his double theory or movement. This theory involves two steps, the first includes (1) revealing the meaning and content of the Qur'an through a study of historical situations and problems in which its statement is the solution and answer. (2) Generalizing various statements from the particular to the universal meaning or value. Second, the movement of the Qur'an's universal meaning towards particular and contemporary meanings or values.¹⁷

¹³Amalina Setiani and Muhammad Labib Syauqi, "The Perfection of Religion in the Qur'an: QS AlMā'idah Verse 3 in the View of Ibnu 'Abbas and Hamka's Interpretation," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion (IJSSR)* 1, no. 3 (2020): 213–232.

¹⁴Abdel Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 20, no. 1 (2018): 47–66.

¹⁵Muhammad bin Yusuf al-Shālihi Al-Shāmi, *Subul Al-Hudā Wa al-Rasyād Fī Sirah Khair al-'Ibād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1993).

¹⁶Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir (New Insight in the Science of Tafsir)*.

¹⁷Baidan.

War Verses' Discourse

The often-debated issue among scholars involves the relationship between the war and peace verses, alongside among the war verses themselves. Therefore, there is a view that there is naskh between the war verses, which, according to Ibn Sallamah, occurs between several war verses in the Qur'an. These include al-Baqarah: 190, which contains the war command against unbelievers that fight against Muslims, and the prohibition of 'crossing the line' or excessive fighting. Some verses are mukamah, while others are manskhah.¹⁸ The manskhah part is "wa lā ta'tadū," which prohibits crossing boundaries or excessively fighting or against fighting unbelievers that are willing to live peacefully with Muslims. This verse snippet is manskhah by al-Taubah: 36 and al-Taubah: 5, and was only valid in the early days of Islam¹⁹ [when Muslims were not yet politically and socially strong or dominant, as well as before the revelation of the sword verse].

Similar to the verse above is al-Baqarah: 191 concerning the prohibition against fighting the polytheists in the Masjid al-Haram, unless they fight the Muslims first, which is also considered mansūkhah by the sword verse. Likewise, in al-Baqarah: 192, which means "And if they cease, then indeed, Allah SWT is forgiving and merciful." This verse contains the command to forgive and let the non-believers (al-'afw wa al-ṣafḥ).²⁰

The determination of the naskh status in these verses in Ibn Sallamah's view seems to be caused by the contradiction (ta'ārūd) between the two types of verses, hence the solution is the al-naskh theory. Because the tolerant verses were considered to have been created first, they were naskh or replaced (mansūkhah) with war verses, which were revealed later. In this context, naskh seems to be understood by Ibn Sallamah as its removal and replacement with the proposition of the Shari'ah law (raf' al-hukm).²¹

Also, a similar view was expressed by al-Syāmī, who stated that the chronology of the war laws in the Qur'an is set out in three stages. First, war was originally forbidden to the Prophet and his people. Second, it was permitted for those that had been driven out and fought. Third, war was commanded and obligatory for the Prophet and his people but limited to the polytheists who fight them. However, it later became obligatory to be

¹⁸Ibn Sallamah, *Al-Nāsikh Wa al-Mansūkh Fī al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm*, 33.

¹⁹Ibn Sallamah, *Al-Nāsikh Wa al-Mansūkh Fī al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm*.

²⁰Baidan, *Wawasan Baru Ilmu Tafsir (New Insight in the Science of Tafsir)*; Ibn Sallamah, *Al-Nāsikh Wa al-Mansūkh Fī al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm*, 34.

²¹Bahri Media Zainul, "Esoterisme Dan Kesatuan Agama-Agama (Esotericism and the Unity of Religions)," *Titik Temu Jurnal Dialog Peradaban (Meeting Point Journal of Civilization Dialogue)* 2, no. 1 (2009): 117–44.

executed more broadly against all polytheists without exception. Therefore, all religions belong to Allah SWT.²²

The above opinion is based on historical arguments surrounding the journey of Muslims at that time. This period was when Muhammad SAW had conveyed the message of Islam for thirteen years to the Arabs in Mecca and its surroundings while under pressure and threats from the Quraysh unbelievers. Many sufferings were experienced by the Prophet and his followers in various ways and forms. Hence, Allah SWT reminded the Prophet to be steadfast and patient every time he felt sad to see his people's condition until they finally migrated to Medina.²³ Allah SWT repeatedly conveyed the message that the Prophet and his followers be patient and steadfast in dealing with these conditions, as stated in li 'Imrān: 187 and al-Baqarah: 109.²⁴

Then, Allah SWT allowed (al-Hajj: 39) the Prophet and his people to fight the polytheists who had long been hostile to, expelled, and persecuted them. The permission at this stage had not become an obligation²⁵ but was only commanded to the Prophet and his followers in al-Baqarah: 190.²⁶ In the next stage, the war obligation became wider against all polytheists that fought Muslims. This more general call for war is found in al-Taubah: 36 and al-Baqarah: 216.

Meanwhile, Abdullah bin Baz agrees with the premise above, explicitly justifies the offensive jihad (jihād alabi), and believes that the saif verse is enforced because it was the last one revealed in connection with the war Sharia. However, he also understands the meaning of naskh as a postponement, in certain respects, and not an abolition. This was gathered due to his corroboration of Ibn Taymiyya's opinion that the patience verse is valid when Muslims are in situations of weakness.²⁷

Furthermore, Abdullah Bin Baz (1909 – 1999 AD) stated that all non-Muslims were targets of both the ṭalabī and difā'ī jihad, except those who paid the jizyah (tax). These two types of jihad have the intent and purpose of conveying and proclaiming Allah SWT,

²²Al-Shāmi, *Subul Al-Hudā Wa al-Rasyād Fī Sirah Khair al-'Ibād*, 5.

²³Al-Shāmi, 5.

²⁴Caner K. Dagli, "Conquest and Conversion, War and Peace in the Qur'an," in *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperOne, 2015), 25.

²⁵Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *Introduction to War and Peace in Islam* (Cambridge: MABDA, 2013).

²⁶Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh Al-Jihad*, 3rd ed. (Cairo: Maktabah Wahba, 2009).

²⁷Mohammad Hassan Khalil, *Jihad, Radicalism, and the New Atheism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

bringing mankind out of darkness to guidance, and exalting Him on earth, as all religions belong only to Allah SWT.²⁸

Contrary to the above scholar, Mustafa Zaid completely rejects the perspective that recognizes the contradiction (ta'ārud) between the two kinds of verses. He asserts that there is no contradiction (ta'āruḍ) between the peace and sword verses or al-saif, therefore there is no need for a naskh claim between the two.²⁹ He proved this objection by analyzing the tolerance, war, and sword verses from the socio-historical perspective and the semantic aspect.

He gave an example that the war command in al-Taubah: 5 was not intended for polytheists in general, but those with a certain character and at a certain time.³⁰ The polytheists referred to are those that were hostile to the Prophet and his people, hindering the freedom of his da'wah, expelling Muslims from their homeland, and even deviously reneging on mutual agreements.

Therefore, the war only applies to the polytheists and unbelievers that fought the Prophet and the Muslims. Hence, al-Baqarah: 256, which emphasized the concept of 'no compulsion in religion,' is still valid and its content is also confirmed in al-Yunus: 99, which explains that forcing humans to become Muslims is impossible.³¹

In this verse, Allah SWT gave a command to save the polytheist who asks for protection, invite him to believe in Allah, and explain the goodness in that faith. However, if they persist in their misguidance and disbelief and ask Prophet Muhammad SAW to take them to a safe place, the Prophet is obliged to fulfill their request and ensure their safety to their destination.³² According to Zaid, the verse above is firmly seen as eliminating all forms and types of religious coercion in Islam.

A Brief History of the Mujahedeen Council (MM)

The Mujahedeen Council (MM) departed from the thoughts and concerns of Islamic movement leaders educated and trained in "New Order Islamic Boarding Schools," such as Irfan Suryahardi, Deliar Noer, Syahirul Alim, Mursalin Dahlan, Mawardi Noor, and so on. There was an urge within them to form a small forum for discussion, which then led to the

²⁸Richard Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur'ān to Bin Laden* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²⁹Zaid, *Al-Naskh Fi al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm; Dirāsah Tasyrī'Iyyah Tarīkhiyah Naqdiyyah*, 506.

³⁰Moh. Haris Hariyadi, "Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahideen Council)," News, 2011, 506, <https://sejaha.wordpress.com/2011/06/10/majelis-mujahidin-indonesia/>.

³¹Zaid, *Al-Naskh Fi al-Qur'ān al-'Adzīm; Dirāsah Tasyrī'Iyyah Tarīkhiyah Naqdiyyah*, 106.

³²Zaid, 506.

formation of an institution that considered uniting the vision and mission of Muslims who wished to fight for the Islamic Sharia enforcement. The institution was called the Mujahedeen Council.³³

To mark the creation of this institution, the first congress was held in Yogyakarta on 5-7 August 2000 and attended by around 1500 participants from various movements throughout the country. There were also several representatives from friendly countries, such as Moro, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia.³⁴ The congress had the topic "Enforcement of Islamic Sharia" and mandated 32 Indonesian Islamic leaders listed as Ahlul Halli wal Aqdi (AHWA) to continue the mission and objectives of upholding Islamic Sharia through a forum called the "Mujahedeen Council". This council was declared in Yogyakarta on Monday 7, Jumadil Ula 1421 H, coinciding with August 7, 2000 AD, and centered in Yogyakarta with representatives from Indonesia and abroad.

The council aims to unite all the potential and strength of Muslims or the so-called "Mujahedeen." They are willing to fight together to uphold Islamic Sharia in all aspects of life so that it becomes the sole reference for the government and state policy system nationally and internationally.

MMI's vision is to uphold Sharia in Islamic life, while its mission is to uphold it as a whole (kaffah). Therefore, happiness and safety can be obtained in this world and the hereafter, and blessings are given to the nation, state, mankind, and the universe. This single mission is described or elaborated in five points.

First, Islamic Sharia should be practiced properly and correctly. Second, it should be based on aqidah without the various forms of polytheism. This includes a country where the majority of the population is Muslim, but a secular democratic system, which is a government that abandons or rejects Allah SWT as the source of law, is practiced. Third, the leadership of Muslims should be without unbelievers who disobey Allah, including hypocrites and people with secular views. Fourth, Islamic Sharia must be thoroughly enforced (kaffah), and fifth, the enforcement should be in all areas of human life, including individual-ritual issues. These include mahdah worship, family problems, comprising those concerning husbands, wives, children, and inheritance, as well as social and state issues, such as in electing leaders, establishing positive laws, and regulating the country's economy.

³³Hariyadi, "Majlis Mujahidin Indonesia (Indonesian Mujahideen Council)," 2011.

³⁴Hariyadi.

The Indonesian Mujahedeen Council adheres to the paradigm or manhaj struggle, namely the authentic (sahih) al-Qur'an and Sunnah. Also, it has a tansiq character, involving the use of movement alliances ('amal) among Muslims or, in their terms, "mujahid," based on ukhuwah, common aqidah, and the manhaj struggle. This alliance (tansiq) by the MMI was developed in 3 formulations, which entails togetherness in the mission (tansiq al-fard), program (tansiq al-'amal), and in one institution (tansiq al-nidāam) of Islamic Sharia enforcement.

MMI's View on War

MMI, through Muhammad Talib, views that the harfiyyah translation of the Qur'an is often ambiguous and substantially contradicts the intent of the verse and asbāb al-nuzūl, hence definitions and understandings are also ambiguous and completely confused. Therefore, the correct translation, in his view, is the tafsiriyyah.³⁵ The harfiyyah translation also causes logical errors in the Indonesian translation. Wrong logic often also leads to misguidance, such as an inaccurate understanding of the war verse. Here, an incorrect translation can lead to an understanding that Islam justifies killing unbelievers anytime, anywhere, including those that are not fighting Islam, because of the translation in al-Baqarah: 291.³⁶

In this view, Muhammad Talib believes that this Qur'an verse never commanded the killing and fighting of unbelievers absolutely or without any reason that requires such actions. There is an implicit understanding of the statement above that there are provisions regarding the time, place, and reasons that allow fighting the unbelievers.

In fact, the radicalism in Indonesia that creates acts of terror is actually a form of victimization from a harfiyyah translation error of the Qur'an. Although this is very factual, the fact is denied because the number of terrorists is small and the majority of users are Muslims, hence it is considered a mere apology.³⁷

The Contextualization of War on al-Taubah

The above assumptions can be traced from the translation of MMI interpretation of several war verses. For example, Muhammad Talib understood al-Taubah: 2 as, "So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout the land [during] four months but know that you cannot cause

³⁵Haleem, "The Role of Context in Interpreting and Translating the Qur'an," 50.

³⁶Al-Shāmi, *Subul Al-Hudā Wa al-Rasyād Fī Sirah Khair al-'Ibād*, 20.

³⁷Ismail, "Paving The Way For Interreligious Dialogue Tolerance and Harmony Following Mukti Ali's Path," 165.

failure to Allah SWT and that Allah SWT will disgrace the disbelievers."Also, his understanding of al-Taubah: 3 was that on the day of the Great Hajj, Allah SWT and His Messenger announced to all mankind that the peace treaty with polytheists was annulled. "O polytheists, if you repent, it is better for you, but if you continue to disbelieve, then know that you cannot defeat Allah. O Muhammad, inform them of the coming of a very painful punishment for the disbelievers." Meanwhile, he translated al-Taubah: 4 as, "O believers, as for the polytheists who have made a peace treaty with you and have not broken the promise of peace in the slightest and have not helped anyone who is against you, then complete your peace treaty with them until the time is up. Verily, Allah SWT loves those who are pious, obedient to Allah SWT, and monotheistic".³⁸

In the tafsiriyyah translation of al-Taubah: 4, there is an impressive understanding that good and fair treatment is highly recommended to non-Muslims. It includes polytheists who are consistent and honest in their agreements with Muslims and have never been hostile to or abetted such hostility. This means that war is only recommended against non-Muslims on a limited basis, specifically those that are hostile to Islam and Muslims.

The verse above continues with al-Taubah: 5, which is understood as, "O believers, when the forbidden months have passed, then declare war against the polytheists wherever you find them, it is not unlawful. Fight, surround, dominate, and watch over them from all sides. If the polytheists repent, pray, pay zakat, and give freedom to them. Allah SWT is Forgiving and Most Merciful to all His creatures." In al-Taubah: 6, there is a tafsiriyyah translation, "O Muhammad, if someone from the polytheist group asks for protection from you, protect him so he can listen to the Qur'an, then take him to a safe place. That is Allah SWT's provision for the polytheists who seek protection from you because they do not understand Islam."³⁹

Allah SWT's statement in al-Taubah: 7 means, "O believers, you are no longer worthy of making a peace treaty between Allah SWT and His Messenger with the Meccan polytheists who repeatedly violated the agreement with you, except for the hudaibiyah agreement that was made with you near the Haram Mosque. As long as the polytheists keep the peace treaty with you, keep the agreement. Allah SWT loves those who keep their promises." The explanation of the Mecca polytheists' character at that time was continued

³⁸Hasan Abu Thalib, *Tatbiq Al-Syariah al-Islamiyah Fi al – Bilad al-Arabiyah*, vol. III (Cairo: Dar al-Nahdah al-Arabiyah, 1990), 220–21.

³⁹Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 25.

in al-Taubah: 8, "O believers, you cannot possibly find the polytheists keeping their peace treaty with you. When they can defeat you, they will not want to respect the rights of kinship and agreement. They do not want to keep the agreement in any matter and only please you with promises, even though their hearts are insincere. Most polytheists are wicked people and like to break their promises".⁴⁰

Allah SWT continued the description in al-Taubah: 9-10, "The polytheists exchanged their faith for little worldly pleasures, then they turned away from His religion. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing. They do not pay attention to the right of kinship with a believer in the slightest, even though an agreement has been made. They are the ones who broke the agreement." However, Allah SWT still gave them a chance to be converted and repent or be dealt with firmly. This can be understood from al-Taubah: 11-12, which means, "If you polytheists want to repent, pray and pay zakat, then they are your brothers in religion. We explain our Sharia to people who want to understand. O believers, if the disbelievers who have made a peace treaty with you break their oath and criticize Islam, then fight them. The leaders of disbelief have absolutely no sincerity in keeping their promises⁴¹. Fight them, so they want to stop breaking treaties"⁴²

The series of verses in al-Taubah above explain the war command for Muslims against the polytheists of Mecca at that time. They were non-Muslim worshipers of many gods and had some special attitudes and characteristics towards Muslims. First, some polytheists who were hostile to Islam and Muslims, and second, those that were wicked and never kept their agreements. These people used agreements as a ruse and political trick against the Muslims.⁴³

Third, the people who glorified the interests and pleasures of the world above all else. Hence, Allah SWT commanded war against polytheists with these characteristics, except those who wished to repent, pray, and pay zakat. Therefore, the war command in the translation of these verses is very contextual and corresponds with the context of certain non-Muslim characters found in the Meccan polytheists.

⁴⁰ Ahmed Al-Dawoody, *The Islamic Law of War Justifications and Regulations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴¹ Khan, S., Arshad, M. A., Mahmood, A., & Khan, Q. (2020). Proposed Soul Management Model for Organizational Performance: An Islamic Perspective. *Journal of Talent Development and Excellence*, 12(2s), 3624-3634.

⁴² Hayward, "Warfare in the Qur'an."

⁴³ Majid Daneshgar, "Indonesian Manuscripts in Iran," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 49, no. 143 (2021): 130, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639811.2021.1857988>.

Contextualization of War at al-Baqarah

There is a war command in al-Baqarah: 191 against Muslim enemies, as contained in the tafsiriyyah translation, "O believers, fight your enemies wherever you find them on the battlefield and in times of war. Drive them out of the land from which you were expelled. Slander and interference with the religious life of Muslims are worse than murder. However, do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. If they do, then kill them, for such is the recompense of the disbelievers."⁴⁴

The term "your enemies" provides a limitation that only unbelievers that are factually hostile to Islam and Muslims are commanded to be fought. Likewise, the war must be fought at the time and the battlefield, as there is a special context about the object to be fought, the right time, and the justified field. Therefore, wars in Islam are organized ethically.

Furthermore, the wars and expulsions commanded by Islam for Muslims are also defensive (difā'i) and recompensive. Islam does not seem to teach starting wars or expulsion first against non-Muslims absolutely. This is because there is a goal in the war, namely to eliminate interference or slander against the religious life of Muslims. Hence, there are limits on the characteristics, times, and places related to wars in Islam.

Given that non-believers start waging war in areas where there is no war, such as Masjid al-Haram, then Muslims are commanded to defend themselves with weapons, and they will not be in perdition. However, if they have stopped waging war at Masjid al-Haram, then Muslims are commanded to stop. This view can be understood from al-Baqarah: 192 with its tafsiriyyah translation, "If your enemies stop fighting you around the Masjid al-Haram, then do not fight them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Most Merciful to all His creatures".⁴⁵

In al-Baqarah: 193, there is an understanding of the goals and limits of war in Islam. The goal is to eliminate disturbances to the religious life of Muslims, such as oppression and terror that eliminates the dimensions of religious freedom and Islamic da'wah, performed by non-Muslims who are hostile to Islam. If they have quit waging war or disruptive actions, there is no reason for Muslims to continue. This can be understood from the translation of the verse, "O believers, fight against your enemies until the disturbance of religious life

⁴⁴Abdul Rouf, "JIHAD: BETWEEN TEXT AND CONTEXT," *Mumtaz: Jurnal Studi Al-Qur'an Dan Keislaman* 4, no. 1 (2020): 69.

⁴⁵Abdul Hamid Abū Sulaymān, *Towards an Islamic Theory of International Relations: New Directions for Methodology and Thought* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1987), 36.

disappears. Humans are religious solely because they are obedient to Allah. Therefore, if your enemies want to stop interfering with your religious life, there is no reason for you and them to be enemies. Enmity is only allowed against people who interfere with religious life".⁴⁶

Al-Baqarah: 194 reiterates that the forbidden war in the month of Haram performed by the enemies of Islam must be recompensed accordingly, hence the Muslims will not be in ruin. This is contained in the translation of the verse, which reads, "Your enemies who fight you in the month of Haram will be fought in the same month. Those who violate the laws of war in the month of Haram are punished appropriately. Whoever fights you, obey Allah in matters of war. Know that Allah always helps those who do not want to start a war."⁴⁷

Since the importance of war for Islam and Muslims is emphasized in the Qur'an, physical and financial support is highly recommended, as stated in al-Baqarah: 195. This verse means, "O believers, donate your wealth to defend Islam. Do not be stingy to finance wars in defense of Islam. If you are miserly in funding wars to defend Islam, you are destroying yourself. Donate your wealth to defend Islam. Allah loves those who donate their wealth to defend Islam."⁴⁸

The Tafsiriyyah Translation

MMI, through Muhammad Talib, views that the correct translation of the Qur'an is tafsiriyyah, not harfiyyah. This is because many negative impacts can arise among Muslims from reading and understanding the harfiyyah translation of the Qur'an. One of the impacts, according to MMI, is the completely ambiguous translation, which substantially often contradicts the intent of verses and the *sabab al-nuzūl*, causing a disoriented and obscure meaning. Therefore, this translation has been agreed upon by scholars as haram.⁴⁹

Another reason given by MMI is that many Muslims who read the Al Qur'an and its harfiyyah translation feel confused and ambiguous. In fact, it negatively impacts the character of Islamic institutions in addressing issues concerning the products of laws, regulations, and government policies. These institutions seem hesitant to assess and justify

⁴⁶Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, *The True Jihad: The Concept of Peace, Tolerance and Non-Violence in Islam* (New Delhi: Goodwords Book, 2002), 36.

⁴⁷Detik. News, "M. Thalib-Abu Jibril Menjadi Amir Dan Wakil Amir Mujahidin (M. Talib-Abu Jibril Becomes Amir and Deputy Emir of the Mujahideen)," News, 2008, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-986096/m-thalib-abu-jibril-jadi-amir--wakil-amir-mujahidin>.

⁴⁸Bonney, *Jihād: From Qur'ān to Bin Laden*.

⁴⁹Khalil, *Jihad, Radicalism, and the New Atheism*.

wrong policies and regulations from the perspective of Islamic Sharia. Likewise, MMI's view of radicalism in Indonesia, which creates terrorism movements, is also a direct or indirect result of the harfiyyah translation that was performed by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion.⁵⁰ Some errors are shown by analyzing and criticizing the product of the harfiyyah translation issued by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. Here, the al-Baqarah: 191 was translated as, "And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you (Mecca), and slander is worse than killing. Do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they do. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recommendation of the disbelievers."

According to MMI, the term "kill" in Indonesian connotes individuals, not unbelievers. The translation seemed as if every believer may kill unbelievers that are hostile to Islam wherever and whenever they are found. Therefore, this harfiyyah translation, in their view, is very dangerous for social relations between religious communities.⁵¹ The phrase "kill them wherever you find" can be understood by ordinary people that killing the enemy outside the battlefield is permissible. This is very dangerous for the peace and safety of lives because killing enemies outside the battlefield inevitably create anarchism and terrorism. Hence, this situation is not justified in Islamic law, as there is a command to create peace and brotherhood in social life.

According to them, the correct translation is tafsiriyyah, "O believers, fight your enemies wherever you meet them on the battlefield and in times of war. Drive your enemies out of the land from which you were expelled. Disruption in the religious life of Muslims is a more serious sin than murder. But do not fight your enemies in the vicinity of the Masjid Al-Haram until they fight you in that place. If your enemies fight you, then fight them. Such is the punishment for the disbelievers."⁵²

Another example is the al-Anfal verse: 39, with the harfiyyah translation; "And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah. And if they cease - then indeed, Allah sees what they do." In MMI's view, the term "fitnah/slander," which is explained in the footnote, cannot yet include the word slander in this verse correctly because the real meaning is sometimes "shirk" or "idol worship" in Mecca City. If the term

⁵⁰Detik. News, "Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Mundur Dari Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Abu Bakar Ba'asyir Resigns from the Indonesian Mujahideen Council)," news, 2008, <https://news.detik.com/berita/d-983179/abu-bakar-baasyir-mundur-dari-majelis-mujahidin-indonesia->.

⁵¹Dagli, "Conquest and Conversion, War and Peace in the Qur'an."

⁵²Ungaran Rashid, Fadzilah Din, and Abdul Salam Muhamad Syukri, "THE CONCEPT OF PEACE IN THE BIBLE AND THE QUR'AN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY," *Afkar*, <https://doi.org/10.22452/afkar.vol22no2.7>, 22 (2020): 250.

"slander" is given the meaning as in the footnote, then it has never materialized in the history of Islam, and they are only preoccupied with war to destroy Muslim disturbers around the world. However, during the heyday and golden era of Islam, Muslims never waged war against non-Muslims to destroy them. Therefore, the translation of the word "slander" in the harfiyyah translation issued by the Ministry of Religion is considered to possibly disrupt the harmonious social relations of Muslims and non-Muslims.⁵³

Another case was found in al-Taubah: 5, whose harfiyyah translation is, "And when the sacred months have passed, kill the polytheists wherever you find them, capture, besiege, and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is forgiving and merciful".⁵⁴

MMI also views the sentence, "kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them," differently. According to their opinion, it gives the impression that polytheists in all parts of the world, both in and outside Mecca, need to be killed after the forbidden months, namely the Rajab, Dhul Qo'dah, Dhul Hijjah, and Muharram, have passed. However, this command only applied specifically to the forbidden land of Mecca and was given to fight the polytheists in Mecca City who were disturbing and fighting Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims at that time. Therefore, the command of this verse is not to kill but fight.⁵⁵

The reason is killing activities can be executed individually without any command and announcement to the enemy. However, war should first be announced to the enemy and implemented under the command of the leader or head of state. Therefore, the harfiyyah translation above can cause a dangerous understanding for ordinary readers who do not understand the true teachings of Islam regarding the social relations of Muslims with non-Muslims. As a result, everyone can do whatever they want and kill any polytheist considered an enemy of Islam.

Another case was found in the harfiyyah translation of al-Taubah: 14 "Fight them; Allah will punish and disgrace them by your hands and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people." According to MMI, the phrase "Allah will destroy them through your hands" can convey the sense of physically destroying or killing the polytheist so that they perish without remaining on earth. However, the question is whether total annihilation was intended by this verse. Allah does not allow humans to try to destroy and

⁵³Ismail, "Paving The Way For Interreligious Dialogue Tolerance and Harmony Following Mukti Ali's Path."

⁵⁴Engineer, "Asghar Ali, Islam and Doctrines of Peace and Non-Violence," 125.

⁵⁵Adang et al., *Accusations of Unbelief in Islam: A Diachronic Perspective on Takfir*.

eliminate each other from the earth, even though they are disbelievers, as stated in QS 2:251, "If Allah had not restrained the human desire to kill one another, this earth would have been torn apart." Hence, the harfiyyah translation above cannot be justified, because it contradicts QS. 2:251 above. Furthermore, this harfiyyah translation can also be considered as justification for the terrorist acts in the world.⁵⁶

Another harfiyyah translation highlighted by MMI is al-Taubah verse 29, "Fight those who do not believe in Allah or the Last Day, do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful, and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly and are humbled." According to MMI, this translation contradicts verse 256 of al-Baqarah (2), which gives the understanding that forcing a person to convert to Islam is not permitted. Allah and His Messenger never commanded believers to fight and force people to convert to Islam. Unbelievers who live in Islamic lands are given the choice of converting to Islam or paying the jizyah (security insurance tax) voluntarily. Hence, the person becomes a full citizen if they choose Islam.

The harfiyyah translation of the verse above gives the impression that Islam commanded unbelievers to fight until the person concerned is willing to pay jizyah and is no longer fought after paying. This kind of understanding can trigger a movement of extortion against unbelievers living among the Muslims and will certainly lead to endless social conflicts. Therefore, the harfiyyah translation above, according to MMI, is incorrect.⁵⁷ The exact translation is "O believers, fight the Jews and Christians who do not believe in Allah and the Hereafter, do not leave the prohibitions of Allah and His Messenger, and do not want to convert to Islam, even though they promised to follow the last prophet unless they pay the jizya willingly and humbly."

Also, the harfiyyah translation of al-Tahrim: 9 was criticized by MMI. It says, "O Prophet, strive against the disbelievers and the hypocrites and be harsh upon them. Their refuge is Hell, and wretched is the destination." The sentence "fight the disbelievers and hypocrites" in the translation gives a connotative impression and means believers are justified in using weapons against these two groups. This has a very negative impact on the social relations of Muslims with hypocrites, such as the Ahmadiyya group, Shia, and other deviant sects,

⁵⁶Arnold, *Al-Da'wah Ilā al-Islām; Baḥṡ Fī Tarīkh Nasyr al-'Aqīdah al-Islāmiyyah*.

⁵⁷Media Zainul, "Esoterisme Dan Kesatuan Agama-Agama (Esotericism and the Unity of Religions)."

that outrightly claim to be Muslims.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, another verse states that using weapons to confront them is not justified, but only arguments and evidence should be used in defeating them. If they continue to disturb the believers by argument, then they can be threatened to stop.

According to MMI, the harfiyyah translation above causes the emergence of physical violence by some Muslims against the hypocrites without being preceded by an argument. This also causes the emergence of anarchic actions against groups that are considered heretical by Muslims when, in fact, these hypocrites do not use weapons or physical force. Therefore, the tafsiriyah translation in MMI's view is "O Prophet, fight against the unbelievers who violate the peace treaty with weapons, and against the hypocrites with evidence and threats. Take strong action against the disbelievers and hypocrites, whose abode is Hell, the worst place to live."

Conclusion

Based on the explanations above, the Islam Mujahideen Council, through Muhammad Talib's view, understands war in Islam as defensive (*difā'i*), not offensive (*ibtidāi*). This is seen in the term "your enemies" in their tafsiriyah translation, which provides a limitation that only unbelievers that are hostile to Islam and Muslims are ordered to be fought. Likewise, war should be fought at a time and on the battlefield, not in an unpermitted situation. There is a special context about the object to be fought, the right time, and the justified field, meaning war in Islam is regulated ethically. Furthermore, war and expulsion commanded by Islam for Muslims is also defensive (*difa'i*) and has the character of appropriate retaliation. This is because the goal in war is to eliminate interference or slander against the religious life of Muslims. Therefore, MMI, through Muhammad Talib, views that the correct translation of the Qur'an is tafsiriyah, not harfiyyah. The reason is many negative impacts can arise among Muslims from reading and understanding the harfiyyah translation of the Qur'an.

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⁵⁸Salam Online, "Ustadz Muhammad Thalib Kembali Pimpin Majelis Mujahidin (Ustadz Muhammad Talib Returns to Lead the Mujahideen Council)," News, 2013, <https://www.salam-online.com/2013/08/ustadz-muhammad-thalib-kembali-pimpin-majelis-mujahidin.html>.

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Note on contributor

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